Finally, we would like to add that Hegyi's transcription of the legends and narrative texts renders them quite understandable to a non-Arabic reading public. The author usually gives the translation of the Arabic words – which often obscure the text – in parenthesis, thus saving the reader the nuisance of constantly consulting the glossary. (He is not completely consistent here, though, for the word *aljāri'ata* [young girl] appears on p. 193 and is only explained on p. 194). Also, we feel that Professor Hegyi should have given the non-Arabic reader the translation of the long Arabic prayer in p. 200. I have found quite useful, on the other hand, Hegyi's clarification of the authors so often quoted in the legends (Ka'bu al-Aḥbār, Abbī Hurayrat, etc.), even though some extra information on their specific relevance for the *morisco*'s secret literature would have been welcome.

All in all, Professor Hegyi's *Cinco leyendas y otros relatos moriscos* is a true scholarly achievement that will be of the essence for the proper understanding of *aljamiado* literature and, thus, of Spain's profoundly original Renaissance, which we are barely beginning to understand in all its linguistic, literary and historical complexity.

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Notes

- 1 Thanks mostly to the efforts of Prof. Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes from the Universidad de Oviedo, who sponsored the first international symposium on *aljamiado* studies some years ago and who has established a special collection for the publication of *aljamiado* manuscripts in the publishing house of Gredos in Madrid.
- 2 Prof. Hegyi had explored this subject brilliantly in his article "El uso del alfabeto árabe por minorías musulmanas y otros aspectos de la literature aljamiada, resultantes de circunstancias históricas y sociales análogas" (Oviedo: Actas del Coloquio sobre Literatura Aljamiado-morisca, CLEAM, Gredos, 1978).
- 3 See also his "'Arabiya y 'ağamiya: hacia una interpretación de la literatura aljamiada" (Under publication in the Actas del 30 Congreso Internacional de Ciencias Humanas en Asia y Africa del Norte, México, 1976); "Reflejos del multiculturalismo medieval: los tres alfabetos para la notación del ibero-romance" (under publication in the *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* of México); "Algunos aspectos del sistema de escritura aljamiado-español" (*Iberoromania*, Nummer 8, Neue Folge, 1978, págs. 30–41).
- 4 See his *Leyendas moriscas sacadas de varios manuscritos existentes en las Bibliotecas Nacional, Real y de P. de Gayangos. Madrid: Imprenta y Fundación M. Tello, 1886. (3 vols.)* and his *Leyendas de José, hijo de Jacob y de Alejandro Magno. Zaragoza: Imprenta del Hospicio Provincial, 1888*. Prof. Hegyi carefully edits again some of the legends that Guillén de Robles, without any scientific pretensions, had already published.

David B. Ruderman. *The World of a Renaissance Jew. The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981. Pp. xvii, 265. \$20.00.

The need to study the Jews in Renaissance Italy with binocular vision has long been recognized, but until now has not been accomplished. The subject needs to be considered against an ample background that must be reconstructed from both Jewish and Italian sources. Substantial studies of this sort have been long in coming, not

because of the conceptual novelty, but because the required scholarly skills have been rare enough in practice not to have been applied to this subject. The scholarly requirements include thorough historical professionalism, solid grounding in the Hebrew, Latin and Italian primary sources, and command of the vast secondary materials in the half-dozen languages of scholarship on the period. The lack of one or another of these requirements has prevented much advance beyond Cecil Roth's popular survey, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (1959) and Moses A. Shulvass' *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance* (Hebrew original, 1955; English, 1973).

Recently, however, the flourishing field of Renaissance historiography and new academic programs in Jewish studies have combined to pay renewed attention to the Jews in Italy during the Renaissance. Kenneth R. Stow's *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy* (1977) and, in Hebrew, Roberto Bonfil's *The Rabbinate in Renaissance Italy* (1979), are both institutional studies about one or the other side of the encounter of Renaissance Italy with the tiny Jewish minority scattered across it.

In *The World of a Renaissance Jew*, David Ruderman employs contemporary, but not faddish, methods of intellectual and social history, with good sense and command of all the relevant background, to scrutinize a sizable amount of previously unexamined material. His diligent efforts have gone a long way towards providing a model for the study of Jewish figures in Renaissance Italy and, beyond that, to establishing standards of plausibility for Jewish and Christian cultural relations there.

The book, a study of Abraham Farissol (1451-ca. 1528), is divided into three sections: "The Life" (Chapters 1-3), "Dialogue with Christianity" (4-8), and "Encounters with Philosophy and Science" (9-11).

The first part is organized around the chronology of Farissol's life. Farissol was a native of Avignon who moved to Ferrara and was active also in Mantua, Bologna, Rome and Florence. His professional responsibilities in the Ferrarese Jewish community as copyist, cantor and teacher, along with his interest in medicine and the natural sciences, disposed him to awareness of a wide variety of developments among both Italians and Jews: philosophy, religious polemics, the explorations of Asia and America, music, commerce, astrology and magic, as well as traditional Jewish study. As Ruderman states from the beginning, Farissol deserves attention more as an exemplar of Jewish culture in Italy than as an influential or innovative figure in his own right. Consequently, Ruderman treats Farissol's writings as documents of social and intellectual history, rather than as integral compositions. Throughout, the goal is to locate Farissol's action or thought against a reconstruction of the intersection of Italian and Jewish worlds. Ruderman seeks to reconstruct contexts and backgrounds, rather than to discover "sources" and "influences," through systematic apposition of documentation from both cultures.

Part II, "Dialogue with Christianity," places Farissol's apologetic work, *Magen Avraham* (*Shield of Abraham*) against the background of medieval Christian-Jewish polemics and concentrates on several topics of interest to Renaissance historians: Farissol's awareness of the career of Giovanni Mercurio da Coreggio; the religious discussions between some Jews and Ficino's circle; debates in Ferrara between Farissol, a Dominican and a Franciscan; Farissol's defense of usury; François Tisard's account of Farissol and the Jews in Ferrara.

This section of the book, devoted as it is to the relations between Italian society and Jews, provides opportunities to test various earlier characterizations of relations

between Jews and Christians and of the phenomena of "The Jews in the Renaissance." It is clear that Farissol was well acquainted with Christian thought of his time and was consequently an effective defender of the Jews where they were challenged.

Farissol's defense of usury in *Magen Avraham*, for example, justifies the fundamental economic function that northern Italian Jewish communities were obligated to fulfill. Ruderman's analysis shows that Farissol used scholastic definitions and arguments to contend, against critics of usury, that money could be considered a commodity, for which a just price could be fixed. In this, as in the dozens of other specialized investigations that the book demands, Ruderman musters the apposite background from the relevant sources and applies it to the problem at hand.

Chapter Four examines the discussion, in *Magen Avraham*, of the self-proclaimed Christian-Hermetic prophet, Giovanni Mercurio da Coreggio, as well as some Jewish sectarians. The contention that Farissol was one of those (*Helias et Abraam hebrei medici atque peripatetici*) whom Ficino heard disputing with Flavius Mithridates in 1487 is quite plausible. The attempt to identify those whom Farissol calls "some erring Jews" as Jewish apostates connected with Christian cabbalists in Florence (p. 44) is less convincing. According to my reading of the Hebrew passage, Farissol's opponents remained Jews, however heretical their opinions appeared to him. Ruderman scrupulously acknowledges another scholar's disagreement with the suggested identification.

Chapter Five traces the medieval background of Jewish-Christian disputations and the careers of the Dominican and Franciscan who debated with Farissol in Ferrara. This series of debates led Farissol to compose his *Magen Avraham*, one of his two important books. Ruderman concludes, "Unlike many of the earlier disputations between Jews and Christians, the debate probably resembled an intellectual exercise rather than an intentional effort on the part of the Christians to publicly degrade Jews and their faith" (p. 79). This sounds likely. If indeed these debates were a series of discussions like those memorialized in Castiglione's *Courtier*, Ruderman has documented a major difference between the setting and function of Jewish-Christian disputation in Italy and in Spain.

Chapters Nine and Ten compare Farissol's thought in *Magen Avraham*, and in his commentaries on Job, Ecclesiastes and the mishnaic tractate *Avot*, with the philosophy, theology, astronomy, astrology and natural science of his Jewish predecessors and Christian contemporaries. Farissol, as might be expected in commentaries on the Bible, deals most clearly with the questions of providence and God's knowledge of particulars, the immortality of the soul and reward and punishment. On these subjects Ruderman finds parallels between Farissol and Giles of Viterbo. Farissol's interest in medicine made him receptive to astrological explorations, but he exempted human freedom of the will, and at least the Jews, from stellar influences.

Farissol's best known book, printed nine times – in Hebrew and Latin – before the twentieth century, is the geographical compendium, *Iggeret Orhot Olan* (*Epistle on the Ways of the World*). In the discussion of this book in his final chapter, Ruderman asks whether it shows Farissol to be reevaluating his society through comparison with remote societies, and whether the expansion of the known world through exploration affected the Jews' faith. Tracing of Farissol's sources shows that he drew heavily on Francanda Montalboddo's account of recent voyages of exploration, as well as Ptolemy, but disregarded medieval Jewish sources, even though he was interested in

any evidence about Jews everywhere in the world. Farissol surveyed the known world and found, reassuringly, that the Hebrew Bible had anticipated the findings of modern travelers.

In addition to the eleven chapters of text, the book has four appendices, which untangle the complicated manuscript traditions of *Magen Avraham*, identify the manuscripts that Farissol copied and the commentaries that he wrote, and survey the nine editions of the *Iggeret*. Further, more than seventy pages of notes, in tiny but clear print, copiously document and supplement the hundred and fifty pages of text. These notes, in both Roman and Hebrew type, and the extensive bibliographies and index make the book a reliable and current compendium of the scholarship relevant to Jews in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The one weakness of the book is inherent in the evidence, rather than in its treatment, and seems more an obstacle overcome than a flaw: the attempt to construct a biography and a coherent picture of the subject's intellectual world requires more evidence than is available on some topics. Inevitably, the effort to extract historical information from terse notations in colophons or communal documents leads to frequent speculation. The results of Ruderman's detective work are plausible and his judgment is consistently sober. Although use of the rhetorical question to propose what the available evidence is too meager to prove could try a reader's patience, I think that Ruderman's judgment justifies the attempt.

At the beginning of the book, Ruderman declares his intention is to test, on the life of Farissol, the various interpretations of the Jews in Renaissance Italy that have been suggested. Summarizing his findings in the Conclusion, he challenges the established notion that Italian Jews participated in Renaissance culture with little tension. Ruderman concludes that threats to the Jews were more subtle in Italy than, for example, in Spain, but the Jews were troubled by conversionary efforts and antagonism to moneylending, and that Jews were as challenged as Christians by astrology, philosophy and explorations. In responding to these challenges, "Farissol upheld a position which directly paralleled that of his more conservative Christian contemporaries" (p. 147).

Ruderman's approach, more than his conclusions, makes this book most valuable. His diligent and usually successful tracking, across linguistic and disciplinary boundaries, of apposite references is engrossing and, on occasion exhilarating. To prevent the multiplicity of varied investigations here from harming the cohesiveness of the book, Ruderman sensibly uses a flexible organizational framework. The book accomplishes its task: it reconstructs, with greater sophistication and success than its predecessors, large regions of "the world of a Renaissance Jew."

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