**EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources**

**Volume 21: The Land of Israel**

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**“Pinkas Jerusalem” and the Ashkenazi Jews of Ottoman Palestine**

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[Note: I have omitted some honorifics for the sake of brevity and clarity.]

**Selection 1: Of Cheese and Charity**

[f. 136v]

I received 3 gold florins from the traveler R. Yehuda Levi Ashkenazi. I repaid 3 ½ gurush to R. Shimon Uri for the citrons and I took 1 gurush for myself, as he commanded me.

Also, I purchased a small chest for the holy community of Jerusalem and I repaid ½ gurush by borrowing from the perfect sage R. Hiyya Rofe […]

Also, I purchased five sections of the books of R. Moshe Al Sheikh from R. Shmuel Tardioli and I repaid by borrowing from R. Hiyya Rofe, a value of 7 gurush […]

Also, in the year 5372 [1612 CE] I bought 13 rotl of cheese, a value of 3 ¼ gurush.

Also, I purchased 26 rotl of cheese from R. Menahem Friniro and I gave him 9 gurush, and [distributed] 8 gurush to R. Benjamin and 1 gurush to myself.

Also, I paid ¼ gurush to bring the cheese to my house, and also salt and also ropes.

Also, I paid ¼ gurush and bought iron forms for cheese.

Also, I paid ¼ gurush to bring the other cheese to my house, which includes what I gave the agent <for the grater [*reib eisen*]>. Also, I paid 3 ½ gurush to R. Simon Uri for the citrons.

Another 25 pieces [*hatihot*] for the olives.

I received 15 gurush from R. Elia Hatna of the rabbis of Fez, from which I bought all the cheeses.

Also, I purchased a prayer-shawl [*tallis*] from R. Avraham Badukh for 1 gurush and 13 quarters and I only remained indebted for 1 ¼ gurush.

Also, I received 14 gurush for the account of R. Benyamin from the rabbis of Fez. I repaid 2 gurush to *kersha* [!] for a manuscript of kabbalah, another 12 gurush.

Also, today, Tuesday, the 10th of the counting of the Omer, I repaid 1 gurush to the messenger who came from Jerusalem <from my pocket> and another 9 pieces.

Also, today, Friday, the Torah portion of *Va-Yelekh* 5374 [1614 CE], I bought two citrons on credit for the value of 1 ¾ gurush. Also, I repaid from my pocket 22 pieces [for] kosher myrtles.

I found a reminder to notify, if God so desires, R. Isaac Segal the judge, son-in-law of R. Leib R’ Shimons from his relative R. Jacob son of R. Hayyim son-in-law of R. Abraham Philip.

[f. 137r]

The record book [*pinkas*] of Jerusalem, the Holy City, may it be rebuilt swiftly in our days.

Today, Tuesday, 11 Heshvan 5372 since creation [1612 CE], all the deposits that belong to the holy community of Jerusalem were transferred to me, whether belonging to the collective or to individuals.

I received one sack upon which was written “To R. Elia ha-Kohen and to R. Shliml, may God protect them, who dwell in Jerusalem,” and in it are 91 ½ gurush, and this amount is to be distributed. I took 10 gurush from it as a loan and I signed for it, as I was commanded by the *gabbai* R. Benjamin b. R. Yekutiel. Another 5 gurush for cheese which I bought for this same R. Benjamin. I remained indebted for another ½ gurush to R. Simon Uri and the citrons which I sent to the holy community of Jerusalem. Another 26 gurush *real* and I left them here in the city to exchange them <and among these 26 gurush was one counterfeit gurush *Çelebi*> and in the sack there remained 55 gurush, and I sent them to Jerusalem.

Today, Thursday, the Torah portion of *Vayishlah*, I sent 25 gurush and ½ gurush <*reales*> and in them a gurush *Çelebi* which remained in my hands to give to someone and was discovered to be counterfeit. In its place, I gave a gurush *real* and I disbursed ½ gurush, and this is the account: ¼ gurush and 6 parrts from the letter of R. Tebele, another 5 pieces for the myrtle which I sent before the Sukkot holiday and the rest to be kept for any expense. Another ¼ gurush I sent to give to my donkey driver [*muqeri*] to untie the bag of the perfect sage R. Hiyya Rofe and to tie it <and to place the 25 gurush inside> and the perfect sage did not want to untie it. Then I gave it to a traveling man named R. Abraham Soriano from the holy community of Manisia, and the ¼ gurush remained in my hand. In total are to be found 26 gurush and these are the aforementioned 26 gurush *reales*. Another 5 [gurush] to the beadle of the communities to gather the rabbis of the city about the matter of R. Eliezer Araha.

I also received another sack which belongs to the holy community [of Jerusalem] and the seven *tovim* of the Ashkenazi community in Safed took 145 thaler [from it]. 122 thaler <from this amount> are from the debt since the holy community of Ashkenazim in Safed lent to the holy community of Jerusalem. Until such a time as it is determined that this aforementioned amount, that is 122 thaler, are a total debt <they shall be repaid from those 122 which they withheld in their hands> and if it is determined that these 122 thaler are from their portion, the holy community of Ashkenazim in Safed will be obliged to give the remainder which belongs to their portion. Another 18 <gurush> which makes 25 gold Polish, from the yield of the money of the great sage R. Fish to distribute to the poor of Jerusalem, which were taken by R. Solomon Fish by permission of R. Hiyya Rofe and the sages of our community. Another 3 Löwenthaler to the messenger, another 2 old thaler, also to the messenger, for I hired him for 5 gurush. Another 3 thaler for my donkey driver who brought the clothes from Sidon to Safed, including the tax at Sidon. Another ¼ gurush which I gave to Hayyim Shammes because he gathered the seven *tovim* [leaders] of the community and helped me to make the ballots.[[1]](#footnote-1) Another gurush to the *Çelebi* for cheese for the aforementioned R. Benyamin. 160 ½ thaler remained in the sack. From the aforementioned 3 Löwenthaler which I gave to the messenger, one was found to be counterfeit, and I repaid 1 good gurush of my own to the messenger.

Another 96 *dreier*, another 3 *vierer*.

Other deposits: One volume belongs to R. Yakos. Another deposit belongs to R. Benjamin from Poznan. Another volume belongs to two women, Rebecca wife of Sender and Liabent wife of Baruch. I sent these three deposits to Jerusalem, but the volume which belongs to the *rabbanit*, the widow of R. Samson Bak, was taken from my hands by R. Aaron ha-Kohen due to the letter of R. Moshe Bak.

[f. 137v]

Also, from the money of R. Falk which came to the holy community of Jerusalem, 29 ½ gurush. ¼ gurush of this ½ gurush I spent on the cheese which I bought for the aforementioned R. Benjamin, for the sum of all the cheese which I bought for is 6 ¼ gurush. I also spent ¼ gurush on small things, [which I will note] one by one to make an account. I bought a needle, also a cord to ties the sacks, also to the porter who carried the loads on his shoulder from the *khan* to my house. Another ¼ gurush to the *muqaddim* who is customarily appointed over the messenger.

Also, in the year 5373 to creation [1613] <on Hanukkah> I received 33 thaler which belong to the holy community of Ashkenazim in Jerusalem from the holy community of Ashkenazim in Safed, from R. Israel Uri, and this is their account:

I paid 5 ½ thaler to the messenger who I sent on their behalf about the matter of excommunication.

Another 3 thaler to Pessel. Another 2 ½ thaler to myself, the writer, for the account of money which Hayyim Shamash of Prague sent to us. Also, I withheld 2 thaler in my hands to restore to Pessel the 5 gold coins which were sent to her by Hayyim Shamash from Prague which come to her portion, once we know the account.

Another 3 thaler to Ruhama for the travel expenses with which the holy community of Jerusalem will help her, for I was commanded to send her there.

Another 5 thaler for the distribution of R. Yom Tov Zahalon.

Another ½ thaler to the scribe and beadle for the letters which the rabbis of the town sent.

Another 7 florins cash, another gurush all told. […]

Today, Friday, the Torah portion of “And the complaints of the children of Israel ended” [*Korah*] I bought cheese for R. Benjamin and I exchanged his soap for the cheese. […] I also paid a *shahi*[[2]](#footnote-2)to bring the cheese to my house <and to transport the soap to storage>. Another 3 pieces to transport the cheese from my house to the *khan* when the caravan left […] Another 7 rotl to R. Simon Uri, a value of 1 ¾ gurush, which I owed him for the citrons of the year 5373. Another rotl of soap to Doña Dina for a value of ¼ gurush. Another rotl for a value of ¼ as well to my mother-in-law for my account […]

**Selection 2: Diasporic Networks**

[f. 140r]

Venice, a letter to the holy community, may it be saved and protected.

A letter to R. Leib Saraval [d. 1617] and his sons R. Jacob and R. Abraham.

R. Simha Luzzatto Luzzatto [!] was appointed in place of R. Leib Saraval.

Another letter to the holy communities in Ashkenaz in general.

Another letter to the holy community of Vienna.

Gorizia

A letter to the holy community and a letter to R. Issachar Ber Eilenburg.

Prague

A letter to the holy community and a letter to the head of the rabbinic court, R. Ephraim, and a letter to R. Moses the judge with R. Hayyim Wahl and a letter to R. Isaac ha-Kohen, son in law of R. Leib Bezalel of blessed memory and a letter to R. Israel Hendels.

A letter to my relatives, R. Pinhas Philip and his brother-in-law R. Moses Halfan <and [his] son-in-law> R. Feivush son of R. Eliezer Ashkenazi of blessed memory from Worms.

And a letter to R. Hayyim son of R. Samuel the beadle [*shamash*] of the holy community of Prague, with his wife Teltsel, with Mushkatle the widow of Meisele, both with their holy fellowships.

Another letter to the house holder named Elia Berl Schneider.

Another letter to the sons of R. Joseph Hazan from Prague and they are R. Abraham Gabbai and his brother Moses and his brother Meir and his brother Hayyim.

To Frankfurt

A letter to the holy community.

A letter to R. Isaiah Sheftels Segal.

A letter to R. Juspa son of R. Pinhas of blessed memory.

A letter to my beloved Asher Levi, my student, who is known by the name R. Koppel Levi, and his brother Jacob Levi, who live in the holy community of Frankfurt.

Another letter to his brother R. Sender Levi who lives in the city of Wimpa […]

[f. 140v]

Poland

Poznan

To the holy community of Poznan.

~~R. Joseph son of Kerza head of the rabbinic court of Poznan.~~

R. Isaac son of R. Samuel Sender of blessed memory.

R. Samuel son of R. Judah ha-Levi, son-in-law of R. Moses Heilprin of blessed memory.

R. Isaac son of R. Jonathan Philip of blessed memory.

R. Joel son of R. Abraham of blessed memory.

The great judge R. Benjamin b. R. Hayyim of blessed memory Moraptschik.

The nobles R. Israel and his brother R. Avrish, sons of the noble Mendel Avrish.

Kremnitz

A letter to the holy community.

R. Issachar son of R. Petahya Moses.

R. Leib Muzerlish.

R. Moses Harif.

Brisk

A letter to the holy community.

R. Abraham son of R. Moses Heilprin.

R. Saul son of R. Judah of Padua and his sons and sons-in-law.

Przemysl

A letter to the community.

Lwow

A letter to the community.

R. Meir son-in-law of the genuis R. Isaac Kohen.

R. Leib son of R. Mordecai from Lwow.

R. Nahman.

R. Joshua son of R. Alexander ha-Kohen who is called Falk.

R. Mordecai of Lwow.

Krakow

R. Pinhas Segal.

R. Feivush and his son R. Samuel.

The holy community of Drastra

The holy community of Lutsk

To the holy community of Lublin

The holy community of Podhajc and at their head R. Benjamin

The holy community of Hrodna

To the holy community of Ludmir

The holy community of Skole

[f. 142r]

Istanbul

R. Moses Meshulem Levi.

R. Yehiel Bassan.

R. Joseph of Trani.

R. Yom Tov ibn Yaish.

R. Joshua Soncino.

The lofty noble, the elder and favorable, the prince and gentleman, R. Israel Ashkenazi.

The lofty noble R. Joseph Ashkenazi.

The lofty noble, the prince and gentleman, R. Moses ibn Yaish, son-in-law of the noble R. Joseph Ashkenazi.

R. David de Botton.

R. Isaac son of R. Gershon Ashkenazi.

Another letter to the holy society which sends the clothes.

Another letter to my relative R. Israel and his son Hayyim.

To Salonika

To R. Aaron Hason and his son R. Solomon and the pious and humble R. Mordecai of the house of Klarens’ and my comrade and friend R. Eliezer son of R. Menahem Gabriel.

And R. Saul Ashkenazi and his father and his son R. Aaron and his brother R. Meir, my *gabbai*, and R. Shneur Yahya and a letter to the holy community of Ashkenazim which is in Saloniki.

To Gallipol

A letter to great Torah scholar R. Meir de Botton and a letter to his brother R. Jacob de Botton.

To Adrianople

A letter to the two communities.

A letter to the noble R. Isaac son of R. Abraham ha-Levi Mintz.

Another letter to R. Mordecai son of R. Eltsafan ha-Levi.

Sofia

A letter to the holy community.

A letter to R. Israel son of R. Jacob.

Another to R. Judah son of R. Naphtali and his brother-in-law Israel Isserle son of R. Manoah.

Another letter to R. Jacob son of R. Moshe from Adrianople ~~who is called by the name R. Yakl.~~

Another letter to the great rabbi, the complete sage in all perfections, R. Estrukh ibn Shangi.

Vedin

A letter to the nobles.

Another letter to my brother-in-law R. Mendele and to my brother-in-law R. Zalmone.

To Espalto [Split]

A letter to the community and a letter to R. Joseph son of R. Zvi.

Plevna

A letter to the community.

Another letter to R. Leib son of R. David ha-Kohen.

To Ofen [Buda]

A letter to the holy community.

A letter to my sister Muskat.

And a letter

A reminder that we have relatives in Ashkenaz in the holy community of Bretwald, R. Mordecai son of R. Abraham Philip of blessed memory, [and] also in the town of Hellerdorf, R. Aaron son of R. Isaac Philip of blessed eternal memory.

**Selection 3: A Scholarly Economy**

[f. 143v]

With a good omen, with the help of heaven, we began to study in the study hall [*hesger*] of the elder and distinguished R. Noah son of R. Solomon from the Torah portion of “How goodly are your tents, Jacob” [*Balak*]. We did not study for the entire month of Tishrei because the holidays occupied our time.

R. M. Castiles must repay from the Torah portion of *Tavo* when he fell sick in his legs until Rosh Hashanah 5378 [1618], and for all of Tishrei we did not study in the *hesger*. Also, he needs to repay from the Torah portion of *Lekh Lekha* until the Torah portion of *va-Yera*. From the month of Heshvan he did not study anymore, and [I] need to obtain 1 ½ gurush from him.

R. I. A. needs to repay from his account for the week before Rosh Hashanah when he went to study in Meron. He also needs to repay for when he went to Jerusalem from the Torah portion of *va-Yikra* until the eve of Passover. He also needs to repay the Torah portion of *Behukotai* and *Bamidbar* when he went to study in Meron. Also, for the Torah portion of *Naso* when he fell into his sickbed until the <end> of the Torah portion of *Korah*. Also, from the Torah portion of *Nitsavim va-Yelekh* he went to Meron until Rosh Hashanah. Also, he did not come [beginning] from the Torah portion of *Noah*, and afterwards he went to Jerusalem. [I] need to extract from his portion for an entire year, 6 ½ gurush.

R. Joseph Hayyim needs to repay a week from his account, combined with 3 days when he fell sick and 20 days in the building [!]. He also needs to repay from the Torah Portion of *va-Yetze* when he fell sick until the Torah portion of *Pequdei*. Also, he needs to repay the Torah portion of *Behuqotai* since he went to Meron. Also, for the Torah portion of *Bamidbar* since he went to the holy community of Tiberias until the end of the Torah portion of *Korah*. He also needs to repay from the Torah portion of *Ekev* due to his sickness when he took to bed, until the Torah portion of *Tavo* when he passed away to his eternal home and let go of life. I need to extract from his portion [the payment for] 23 weeks of an entire year, which is 11 ½ gurush. From the year 5377 [1617 CE], he is owed from the second year when the money came, for six weeks, that is 3 gurush.

For all of these we withdrew 19 ½. From this we must subtract 1 gurush which we gave to Simha the son of R. M. Castiles. Another 2 gurush are in the hands of my mother-in-law to distribute as she chooses. Another 2 gurush [are to be paid] to the writer as payment for his labor. Another 2 ½ gurush [to distribute] among the other scholars and here they are, mentioned by name:

R Meir – 3 fourths

R. Isaac – 3 fourths

R. Pinhas – 1 third

R. Perets – 1 fourth

R. Mordecai – 1 fourth

R. Menahem – 1 third

R. Isaac – ½ fourth

12 gurush remain, and these are: R. Leib 4 gurush minus ¼

R. David 4 gurush

R. Solomon 4 gurush

I must repay to R. Leib for half of all the days of the winter, also from the beginning of the month of Iyar until 24 Tammuz.

I must repay R. S. Galante from the Torah portion of *Behuqotai* when he went to Sidon.

Also, I must repay R. S. Harizi for 10 days before the New Year [*Rosh Hashanah*]. Also from this year, 10 days before the New Year, also 10 [days] before Shavuot.

1. The word is באלוש. Based on the context, I have translated “ballots,” i.e., the balls used for voting in communal elections. Alternatively, Ruth Lamdan suggested to me that the word may be the plural of באלה, hence “bags.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A silver coin; see ﻿Sevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 101-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)