

# NEW LIGHT ON THE CAREER OF ISAAC SAMUEL REGGIO

David Malkiel  
*Bar-Ilan University*

Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784–1855), an Italian Jewish intellectual, was the author of over a hundred works that spanned most of the fields currently labeled Judaic studies. He won considerable notoriety for his last publication, *Behinat ha-Kabbala*, published in 1852. The book opens with *Kol Sakhal*, a lengthy polemic against rabbinic tradition. Allegedly composed in 1500, *Kol Sakhal* is attributed to one Amitai Ibn Raz of Spain. The very brief rebuttal that follows, entitled *Shaagat Arye*, is attributed to R. Leone Modena, Venice's colorful seventeenth-century rabbi. The third section of *Behinat ha-Kabbala*, containing Reggio's own extensive comments, is equal to the other two sections in size. Reggio drew fire for claiming that Modena was the true author of *Kol Sakhal*, and that *Shaagat Arye* was no more than a blind, intended to camouflage Modena's true, antinomian views. The passionate debate that erupted has yet to be decided.<sup>1</sup>

Reggio's theory outraged scholars because it delegitimized Modena and seemed, therefore, to undermine rabbinic tradition. Solomon Judah Leib Rapoport (SHIR), leader of the Galician Haskalah, concluded that, after a lifetime of dissimulation, Reggio had finally shown his own heretical colors. In fact, in the following vituperative passage, Rapoport attributed all of *Behinat ha-Kabbala* to Reggio himself:

Towards the end of his life, [Reggio] was revealed to be a Sadducee. He wrote *Behinat ha-Kabbalah*, replete with arguments against those of the Talmud, revealing the villainy that had always been concealed

within him. There has never been a denier of the Oral Law like him .... He is a hater of Israel, and ought to be considered a delator.<sup>2</sup>

The debate over Jewish religious reform was not a merely academic issue in Reggio's time. It is therefore important to understand the real-life social context of that scholar's intellectual position vis-à-vis reform.<sup>3</sup> In the following pages I will sketch the salient features of Reggio's community, Gorizia, and then present new evidence about Reggio's position in the community and his involvement in its religious life.

Documents from the state archive of Gorizia reveal that, after serving as community rabbi for nine years, Reggio was ousted in 1850, during a struggle over religious reform. The present study recounts the story of his dismissal, analyzes the factors that shaped Reggio's relationship with his fellow Gorizians, and places the episode in the context of Reggio's ideological stance.

## I. GORIZIA

On the frontispieces of all of his major works Reggio refers to himself as "the Gorizian."<sup>4</sup> He spent almost all of his life in Gorizia, a small town in northeastern Italy, north of Trieste. An 1853 census counted 330 Jews out of a total population of 13,800 (2.39%).<sup>5</sup>

Until the unification of Italy in 1861, Gorizia was officially part of the Hapsburg Empire, and the legal status of the town's Jews was governed by traditional Catholic norms. The first Hapsburg charters allowing individual Jews to reside in Gorizia and its environs date from the sixteenth century. Terms included the standard medieval regulations designed to ensure the isolation of Jews from Christians and to give public affirmation to Jewish inferiority. The Jews were ghettoized in 1696.

The reign of Joseph II brought the general spirit of toleration to the Jews living in the counties of Gorizia and Gradisca as well. They were granted economic equality, freed of the obligation to wear a distinguishing sign, and declared eligible for military service. There was a slight reactionary swing after Joseph's death, but Napoleonic occupation (1809–13) brought complete if temporary equality. In general, the Austrian government restored the old disabilities, although it did recognize Jewish own-

ership of lands legally acquired under French rule.<sup>6</sup> It was during the French years that Isaac Reggio served as a professor at the local Imperiale Liceo e Ginnasio; when the Austrians returned he was dismissed.<sup>7</sup>

The institutional structure of the Jewish community, as specified by the community's 1850 regulations, followed a standard late-medieval pattern. Membership was restricted to heads of household capable of paying a minimal community tax, or those in possession of property in the Gorizia area. There were four main institutions of self-government:

- (1) All taxpayers belonged to the general council (*congregazione generale*), whose basic duty was to elect the officials who managed the community's day-to-day business.
- (2) Most of the authority was vested in the hands of two Heads (*Capi*), who were elected to three-year terms. They were the community's political representatives and supervised its administration and finances.
- (3) A seven-member 'restricted council' (*ristretta consulta*) worked together with the *Capi*. It held regular bi-monthly meetings and had broad authority.
- (4) Of the community's governing offices, the Chief Rabbi (*Rabbi no Maggiore*) had the greatest number of specific duties. In the synagogue, he delivered six annual sermons and taught a weekly Mishnah class. He participated in a religious confraternity and oversaw religious education and ritual slaughter. He was responsible for the legal religious practice of births, marriages, divorces and deaths. The Chief Rabbi even played a small role in the tax-assessment procedure.<sup>8</sup>

Gorizia's Jews were an important economic force in local industry. In the eighteenth century they introduced the silk industry into the region.<sup>9</sup> Their economic role is illustrated in the following table.<sup>10</sup>

	1853: Total Factories	1855: Jewish-Owned Factories
paper:	1	2
cream of tartar:	1	1
soap:	1	1
candles:	4	3
leather:	0	3
paste:	1	1
silk spinneries:	12	2

The town's Jews were known for their wealth. In 1810, the French occupation government fixed the tax assessment of the Jewish community of Gorizia at 40,000 francs, whereas the entire county of Gorizia-Gradisca was assessed at 184,000.<sup>11</sup> Jacob Sinigaglia was the wealthiest Jew in Gorizia. At the time of his death in 1819, his net assets were valued at 313,793 fiorini. His real estate holdings, including houses and landed estates all around the counties of Gorizia and Gradisca, were estimated to be worth 58,772 florins.<sup>12</sup> The Sinigaglias owned a house on Contrada Nobile, the city's main street. They also owned a house on via Studentitz, and their Villa Sinigaglia, built in 1852 at the foot of the city's castle, was among the city's best-known mansions.<sup>13</sup>

For a small town, Gorizia could boast a remarkable intellectual landscape. Reggio's father, Abram Vita, the community rabbi, was a well-known rabbinic scholar.<sup>14</sup> Among Isaac's contemporaries, Graziadio Isaia Ascoli was a philologist of national renown.<sup>15</sup> He and Isaac championed the cause of Italian nationalism in Gorizia's press during the war of 1848. Stefano Kociancic, a non-Jew, taught biblical exegesis and oriental languages, including Hebrew, at the local Catholic seminary. Kociancic corresponded in Hebrew with S.D. Luzzato, Joseph Almanzi, and Aron Luzzatto, and even tried his hand at Hebrew poetry, writing on Christian themes.<sup>16</sup> He also compiled a Hebrew dictionary and a reading guide.<sup>17</sup> We have no information about his personal relationship with Reggio, but he did express interest in Isaac's writings: he prepared a Latin translation of *Mazkeret Yashar*, Reggio's list of publications, and began his own reading guide with a quotation from that work.<sup>18</sup>

14. On Abram Vita, see my "The Reggios of Gorizia: Modernization in Micro," in E. Horowitz and M. Orfali, eds., *Society, Economy and Culture in the Mediterranean Lands, 1550–1850* (in press).
15. Guido Hugues, op. cit., pp. 36–43; Maria Elisabetta Loricchio, *L'opera di Graziadio Isaia Ascoli fra politica e cultura. Materiali per una biografia intellettuale* (tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Trieste, 1984–85). Ascoli also furthered the study of Italy's ancient Jewish catacombs.
16. Stephanus Kociancic, *Celeberrimi Samuelis Davidis Luzzatto paucae epistolae hebraica, quibus adjecta sunt alia quaedam hebraica scripta* (Gorizia: 1868). Kociancic's Hebrew poetry appears in the manuscript version, located in the Seminario of Gorizia.
17. *Limude ha-Qeriah, hoc est Specimina lectionis scripturae hebraicae* (Gorizia: 1853). His lexicon of Hebrew acronyms, which is quite large, remains in manuscript in the Gorizia Seminario. It is dated 1851 and entitled: *Roshe Tevot, hoc est Capita dictionum seu scripturae compendia, in libris et scriptis Judaeorum passim occurrentia in tyronum potissimum usum atque commodum collecta inque hoc opusculum congesta per Stefan Kociancic*. On Kociancic, see Hugues, op. cit., pp. 74–77; Giulio Tamani, "L'attività di semitista," in *Stefano Kociancic (1818–1883), un ecclesiastico al servizio della cultura fra Sloveni e Friulani* (Gorizia: 1984), pp. 31–41.
18. The translation of *Mazkeret Yashar* is MS. 30 in the Biblioteca Statale Isoncina of Gorizia.
19. *Mazkeret Yashar* (Vienna: 1849), pp. 8–9. By contrast, Reggio's father, Abram Vita, appreciated Gorizia's Jewish cultural life, since he compared it with the neighboring hamlets of Fogliano and Chiavris, where he had spent his early years. See Giuseppe Bolaffio, "Abram Vita Reggio," *RMI* 23 (1957) 204–17.
20. Reggio was also well acquainted with Samuel Vita Lolli, another well-educated Gorizian Jew. Giuseppe Domenico Della Bonna, Carlo Favetti, and Giovanni Rismondo are some of the other Christian Gorizian intellectuals with whom Reggio probably had some contact. See Carlo Luigi Bozzi, *Gorizia agli albori del Risorgimento 1815–1848* (Gorizia: 1948), pp. 146–52, 216–32.
21. Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP), IT-GO series, AV-26, 15.VIII.1802. Thus in 1843 the Reform community of Charleston, North Carolina ordered recital of a single kaddish in memory of the dead. See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity* (Oxford: 1988), p. 234.
22. CAHJP, IT-GO, AII-22, 1.IV.1825. The aphorism is from *Sifrei, Ki Tavoh*, 26, 3.

23. *Shulhan Arukh*, pt. 1, sec. 31.
24. On this controversy, see Jacob Katz, "Tefillin on Hol ha-Mo'ed: Differences of Opinion and Public Controversies of Kabbalistic Origin" [Hebrew], in *Halakha ve-Kabbala* (Jerusalem: 1984), pp. 102–24.
25. Isaac Lampronti, *Pahad Yitzhak*, 14 vols. (Venice: 1750–Berlin: 1887), vol. 14, s.v. "Tefillin," pp. 99ff.
26. Hefez Gentili's declaration must have preceded 1798, the year of that rabbi's death. See Mordecai Samuel Ghironi, "Toledot Avraham," *Yerushalayim ha-Benuyah* (1844), p. 78.
27. The date of the event can be deduced from the fact that an anonymous description of the events was appended to Reggio's petition to the *Capi*, itself dated in the spring of 1825.
28. See note 22. The question of entering the synagogue surfaced during the controversy with Ricchi. At that time a number of suggestions were made that would have defused the tension created by the proposed change, but Ricchi rejected them all. One of the compromises, also rejected, was that community members abstaining from phylacteries not enter the synagogue until the recitation of Hallel, when everyone removes their phylacteries in any case. This compromise may have been the measure that Abram Vita Morpurgo sought to implement in the latest Gorizian struggle. See Katz, "Tefillin," pp. 114–20, 123.
29. Isaac was a firm believer in the traditional observance of the phylacteries commandment. In *Behinat ha-Kabbala* (150–53) he has harsh words for Reformers (particularly Solomon Pappenheim) who allegorized the biblical precept. Cf. the views of Joshua Heschel Schorr in Meyer, *Response*, pp. 196–97. *Hol ha-moed* is, of course, a separate issue, and it appears that in 1825 Isaac adhered to his father's custom. On Isaac's attitude towards Kabbalah, see my article, cited in note 14.
30. The juxtaposition in the Gorizian community archive of Reggio's appeal and the narrative suggests that they were chronologically proximate, though April 1 and Hoshanah Rabbah are separated by half a year. However, this remains uncertain, as the narrative is undated.
31. Castiglione passed over the story of Reggio's dismissal in 1850, noting only that in 1851 Reggio "stripped off the rabbinic mantle," and adding that he "continued to pursue Torah with full vigor, for his 'his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated' (Dt. 34:7)." See his "Toledot," p. 89. Klausner wrote (loc. cit., p. 15) that Reggio held the post for approximately eight years, from 1842–49. Klausner based his version on Moisé Ehrenreich's necrology,

- which he accepted because Ehrenreich was Reggio's son-in-law. See Ehrenreich, loc. cit., p. 296. The *Capitanato* dossier vindicates Castiglioni, since it was indeed in 1851 that Reggio finally gave up his post.
32. On the political offices of Gorizia and the structure of their various archives, see Mario Stanisci, "Gorizia," *Guida generale degli archivi di stato italiani* (Rome: 1983), vol. 2, pp. 357-75. On the community's demographic history, see Orietta Altieri, *La comunità ebraica di Gorizia: caratteristiche demografiche, economiche e sociali (1778-1900)* (Udine: 1985). See also Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, *La comunità ebraica di Gradisca d'Isonzo* (Udine: 1983). On the community's spiritual life in the eighteenth century, see Chiara Lesizza, "Scuola e cultura ebraiche a Gorizia nel XVIII secolo: Istanze tradizionali e fermenti di rinnovamento," *Studi Goriziani* 68 (1988), pp. 51-73.
  33. ASG, Capitanato Circolare di Gorizia, b. 16, fasc. 173, IV/24, #16 (1850-57).
  34. *Per sistemare il culto e sue dipendenze, trovandosi in totale sfacelo*. Although *culto* generally refers to ritual, the committee produced a set of administrative regulations, indicating that in this case the term was used more broadly, to refer to communal affairs. This may have been a terminological ploy intended to emphasize the apolitical nature of the Jewish communal body. Such an emphasis would not be out of place in the period in question, when the Jews struggled for recognition as full citizens of the various European states. "Cult" also refers to a system of religious practices, but *culto* will be used below, because "cult" currently bears other, misleading, connotations.
  35. See n. 33.
  36. See n. 33. Probably, the registers were restored to the community because they were communal property. The registration of births and deaths was no more than a clerical task, bearing no sacral overtones, and could therefore be left to the community, particularly since a new rabbi would be appointed in due course. The *Capitanato* declined to rule on the matter of judicial oaths, preferring to refer Reggio to 'the competent judicial authority.' The administration of oaths was traditionally a sacred rite, among Christians as well as Jews. Therefore, having a lay official administer oaths may have seemed inappropriate to the *Capitanato*, and so it chose to evade the issue.
  37. "Qual disposizione fu trovata indispensabile per riattivare quel spirito di religione che trovasi in totale decadenza particolarmente presso la gioventù." "Revival" and "decay" connote apathy rather than reform, spiritual stagnation rather than revolutionary liberation from the shackles of the Oral Law.

- This interpretation of the *Capi*'s terminology accords with the broad role of reform in the nineteenth century; the early reformers strove to confront the "shoals of indifference and conversion." See Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew* (Detroit: 1979), p. 115. Moreover, Reggio's dismissal shortly followed the liberal revolutions of 1848, which touched Gorizia too. A backlash against emancipation followed suppression of these revolutions, resulting in greater apathy and alienation. See Meyer, *Response*, (n. 21), pp. 181-83. For a more political interpretation of the Reformers' program, see Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto* (New York: 1978), p. 208.
38. The sixth section of the proposed constitution (above, n. 8) detailed the responsibilities of the Chief Rabbi. The clauses most relevant to our discussion are as follows:
    - (34) On all matters of religion, the Chief Rabbi will decide solely in accordance with existing religious prescriptions. He shall exert all his influence to see that abuses on matters of religion are prevented and suppressed, along with any scandal or bad example, and he shall have recourse to the *Capi* for assistance, as needed.
    - (35) In the synagogue, where he shall occupy his customary place of honor and be accorded the customary honors, he shall oversee the precise observance of the cult [*culto*] and of the rites in accordance with the established customs. He shall reach agreement with the *Capi* and the restricted council concerning the possible reforms to be introduced.
  39. The events of September 13 can be reconstructed from the letter of June 1851 outlined in the next paragraph.
  40. Ibid. Reggio's motive is obscure. Klausner wrote (loc. cit., p. 15) that Reggio retired on account of his advanced age. This is not convincing, since Reggio's father held the Gorizian rabbinate until his death at age eighty-six, nineteen years older than Reggio was when he resigned. It seems more likely that Reggio's resignation was somehow connected to his struggle for the rabbinate in 1850.
  41. Morpurgo published an Ashkenazic edition of penitential prayers for recital during the daily afternoon service throughout the penitential season, from the first of Elul until Yom Kippur. Its content is completely traditional and its only modern aspect is the inclusion of an accompanying Italian translation. See *Orazioni per il mese penitenziale Elul ad uso di alcune comunità Israelitiche di rito Tedesco* (Gorizia: 1852). The Hebrew title page states that Morpurgo initiated the publication. This was the only liturgical work published in Gorizia during the period in question. To appreciate the signi-

- fiance of this publication, note that the rabbinical conferences of Wurtemberg (1838), Birkenfeld (1843), and Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1843) passed new rules (*Synagogenordnungen*) concerning penitential prayers (*Selichoth*). See Steven M. Lowenstein, "The 1840s and the Creation of the German-Jewish Religious Reform Movement," in Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker, and Reinhard Rurup, eds., *Revolution and Evolution 1848 in German-Jewish History* (Tubingen: 1981), p. 291.
42. This story is told in a letter by the *Capi* to the *Capitanato*, dated October 23, 1851. See n. 33. On September 1, 1851 some members of the community had petitioned the *Capitanato*, and the *Capi* were asked to supply certain information. Their answer expresses the indignation and amazement that the *Capi* felt upon reading the petition and the signatures below it, and offers their version of what had transpired.
43. The following account is reconstructed from a letter by the *Capi* to the *Capitanato*.
44. See n. 33.
45. ASG, Tribunale Civico Provinciale, b. 190, fasc. 273/A.
46. "Toledot," p. 83. Reggio's son-in-law, Moisé Ehrenreich, had also commented that Reggio was one of the only wealthy Jewish literati capable of acquiring rare books and manuscripts and publishing his own writings. See his "Isaaco S. Reggio," p. 295. Ehrenreich also noted that Reggio's wealth enabled him to be socially independent. This comment reflects Reggio's expressions of alienation, quoted above.
47. Altieri (n. 32), appendix, s.v. Isaac Samuel Reggio.
48. In 1823 Rachaelle purchased #139, and in 1835 Isaac purchased #147. See ASG, Tavolare Teresiano, libri fondiari (1761-1891), b. 168.
49. ASG, Tribunale Civico Provinciale di Gorizia (1783-1850), b. 41, 1828, fasc. 1, #382; b. 43, 1830, fasc. 1, #144; b. 60, 1846, fasc. 1, #74; b. 77, 1836, fasc. 160, #1; b. 91/bis, 1848, fasc. 3, #385; b. 98/bis, 1850, fasc. 3, #689; b. 442, 1810, fasc. 903; b. 467, 1829, Fasc. 933; b. 469, 1831, fasc. 937; b. 476, 1838, fasc. 951; b. 477, 1838, fasc. 951; *ibid.*, fasc. 953. More material on the wealth and property of Rachaelle Reggio is located in ASG, Archivio del Comune di Gorizia. Cf. Reggio's refusal to participate in a commercial venture with the claim that he had never engaged in such activities. See *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) 34.
50. *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) 16.
51. The 1828 list places Reggio slightly lower: Caravaglio was assessed at 8.53

- florins, Bolaffio at 7.37 and Reggio at 7.20. See CAHJP, IT-GO, A XIII.
52. CAHJP, IT-GO, A IX, fasc. 19, 25.
53. *Alla veneranda memoria di Isaaco Samuele Reggio* (Gorizia: 1855), p. 7. Reggio could have offered or agreed to serve without pay in order to secure the position, but Lolli would hardly make such a statement or implication in Reggio's eulogy.
54. Lit. the value of the smallest of coins. *shaveh perutah*. See Castiglioni, "Toledot," p. 89. The detail in his narrative shows that he was not merely expanding upon Lolli's remarks. Still, Castiglioni's was not an eyewitness account, and he, or his source, may have preferred this version of events, which granted greater honor to Reggio. Note that Castiglioni also cites Reggio's wealth as proof that Reggio held the position of professor of the humanities at the Gorizia *liceo* out of altruistic, rather than economic or egotistical, motives. See his "Toledot," p. 86.
55. Cervo Reggio, *Schizzo biografico dell' Eccellentissimo Rabbino Maggiore Abramo Vita Reggio* (1879), pp. 56-62. This manuscript is located in the CAHJP, IT-GO, B III-5. Cervo's biographical essay is chiefly based on Abram Vita's autobiographical preface to his own *Eshel Avraham*. For a more textured account, see Ghironi (n. 26), pp. 78-79; Samuel J. Fein, *Knesset Yisrael* (Warsaw: 1886), p. 64.
56. Isaac's epitaph, however, refers to him by the standard rabbinic title "כבוד ר'."
57. *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) 41.
58. CAHJP, IT-GO, A IV-16.
59. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Reggio stated in his petition to the *Capitanato* that he had held the post for nine years, rather than seven years, and the *Capi* did not contradict him on this point. See n. 33. Moreover, Reggio's biographical sketches agree on the fact that Reggio succeeded his father.
60. *Maamar ha-Tiglahat* (Vienna: 1835). Abram Vita's rebuttal, entitled *Tiglahat ha-Maamar*, was published after his death (Livorno: 1844). See also Jacob Ezekiel Halevi, *Tisporet Lulianit* (Berlin: 1839).
61. The proposal was published in Vienna in 1820, in Venice in 1822, and in *Corriere Israelitico* 21 (1882-83) 130-33, 151-53, 175-77, 189-202, 224-26.
62. *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) 48; *Behinat ha-Kabbala*, p. 86.; "Etrog," in *Yalkut Yoshor* (Gorizia: 1854), pp. 49-50; *Behinat ha-Dat* (Vienna: 1833), pp. 98-

- 103, 118–23. A thorough study of Reggio's attitude towards Reform, based on his entire literary legacy, remains a desideratum.
63. Long before he published *Behinat ha-Kabbala*, Reggio expressed frustration over his impression that Italian Jewish scholars were likely to mistake his scholarship for heresy. See *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) 14.
64. See Lois Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of Haskalah," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity* (New Brunswick: 1987), pp. 189–224. Cf. Michael Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry and Its Impact on the Haskalah and Reform in Hungary," *ibid.*, 113–14.
65. Menahem Emanuele Artom, "On the Reform Movement in Italy: The Controversy over the Abbreviation of the Period of Mourning in 1865" [Hebrew], in S.A. Nahon, ed., *Scritti in Memoria di Sally Mayer* (Jerusalem: 1956), pp. 110–15; Meir Benayahu, "The Views of Italian Scholars on the Use of the Organ in Prayer" [Hebrew], *Assufot* 1 (1987) 265–318; Roberto Bonfil, "Il Memoriale dell'Università Israelitica di Roma sopra il soggiorno romano di Rabbi Israel Mose Hazan," *Annuario di Studi Ebraici* 10 (1984) 29–64; *idem*, "Changes in the Religious Customs of Roman Jewry during the Rabbinate of R. Israel Moses Hazzan (1847–52)" [Hebrew], in A. Milano et al., eds., *Scritti in Memoria di Enzo Sereni* (Jerusalem: 1971), pp. 228–51; Daniel Goldschmidt, "Il rabbinato livornese e la riforma del 1818," in E. Toaff, ed., *Scritti in Memoria di Guido Bedarida* (Florence: 1966), pp. 77–86; David Malkiel, "Technology and Culture: Jewish Attitudes towards Cremation in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy" [Hebrew], *Italia* 10 (1993) 37–70; Shlomo Simonsohn, "Some Disputes on Music in the Synagogue in Pre-Reform Days," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966) 99–110.
66. It also suggests that Jewish culture in Renaissance Italy was not what historians (as well as Wesseley) thought it was, a line of thinking advanced in recent decades by Robert Bonfil's revisionist approach to Renaissance Italian Jewry. See his *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: 1994).
67. For the relationship between Isaac's attitude towards Reform and that of his father, see my article, in note 14. Shaving is a good example of Abram Vita Reggio's enigmatic attitude towards modernity. Two portraits of him survive; he is clean-shaven in one and bearded in the other. The first is of a man younger than the second. For the first, see Bolaffio, "Sfogliando," *RMI* 23 (1957), opposite p. 208. For the second, see Silvio Cusin, "Filiatozione patrilineare e matrilineare, legami di sangue, alleanze e affinità tra Illuminismo e tradizione nell'inedito Ilan ha-Jachash," in P.C. Ioly Zorattini, ed.,

- Gli ebrei a Gorizia e a Trieste tra 'ancien regime' ed emancipazione* (Udine: 1984), p. 81. The caption to the portrait of the clean-shaven Reggio reads "Abraham Reggio," without the middle name (Vita), so the picture could be of Isaac's son. Still, people thought it was a picture of Isaac's father, since the date of his death, 23.XII.1841, appears beneath the name.
68. Meyer, *Response*, (n. 21), pp. 143, 163–64. But cf. Marsha L. Rozenblit, "The Struggle over Religious Reform in Nineteenth-Century Vienna," *AJS Review* 14 (1989) 179–222. Rozenblit argues for the irrelevance of Vienna's Catholicism (p. 198) and adduces the immigration of orthodox Hungarian Jews to Vienna as a retardant (p. 181). See also Robert S. Wistrich, "The Modernization of Viennese Jewry: The Impact of German Culture in a Multi-Ethnic State," *Towards Modernity*, (n. 64), pp. 43–70.
69. Meyer, *Response*, p. 143. Conventional wisdom has it that there was an inverse relationship between a community's size and its initial receptivity to Reform. See Lowenstein, "The Pace of Modernisation of German Jewry in the Nineteenth Century," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 21 (1976) 47, 52. By the mid-1840s Reform and Orthodoxy were equally powerful in small German communities. See Lowenstein, "The 1840s," (n. 41), pp. 265–66.
70. Lowenstein, "The 1840s," (n. 41), pp. 257–58. But cf. Aaron Chorin and the community of Arad.
71. Gorizia's Reform stories also suggest re-examination of the assumed link between bourgeois life and the abandonment of tradition (e.g., Rozenblit, p. 192). The experience of the Jewish poor in England is another indication that this correlation may be unwarranted. See Todd M. Endelman, "The Englishness of Jewish Modernity in England," *Toward Modernity*, (n. 64), pp. 227–28. This is suggested also by Henrietta Herz's comment that Berlin Jewry was led by the richest and the most Orthodox community members. See Steven M. Lowenstein, "Jewish Upper Crust and Berlin Jewish Enlightenment: The Family of Daniel Itzig," in Francis Malino and David Sorkin, eds., *From East and West* (Oxford: 1990), p. 190.

Although some intellectual companionship appears to have been available, Reggio described Gorizia as provincial, and complained of intellectual isolation:

I live in a small town, far from the domiciles of the world-renowned greats (Ps. 16:3) and lacking those resources required by lovers of scholarship. Few in my area were involved in the subjects I desired to pursue. I, therefore, found it impossible to consult anyone first, or to hear his opinion of my ideas, or to present my work to him before publishing it. Instead, I remained totally alone in my room day after day, with no companionship but the books before me....<sup>19</sup>

Reggio's heart was in Vienna or Berlin, and Gorizia could not compare with these metropolises.<sup>20</sup>

## II. RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

Communal documents from the first half of the nineteenth century provide information on two public disputes related to religious observance. Although neither case stems directly from principles of religious Reform, these emotionally charged debates over ritual behavior supply important background for understanding the struggle that took place during Isaac's tenure as communal rabbi.

### 1. Kaddish

At a Sunday meeting in August of 1802, the community's appointed leaders, the *Capi*, asked Abram Vita Reggio, the Chief Rabbi, to draw up an ordered list of those reciting the kaddish, and to post it on the synagogue door. Isaac Bolaffio, a mourner and brother to Grassin (one of the *Capi*), told Leone Levi (another one of the *Capi*) that the proposed bulletin had better be removed from the door, or he himself would rip it to shreds. The *Capi* scolded Bolaffio for his impudence and threatened punishment. But Bolaffio was not chastened, and he responded by insisting that his name be removed from the list of mourners. He announced his renunciation of the recitation of kaddish. Shortly thereafter, Salamon Bolaffio complained to his brother Grassin that David (a fourth brother) also renounced the kaddish and demanded to be struck from the list of mourners. That Friday, Salamon complained to his brother Grassin that

the list of mourners on the door was unchanged. Grassin replied that it would be covered with a notice, suspending the bulletin until the coming Sunday's meeting of the *ristretta consulta*. The three Bolaffio brothers submitted a written renunciation of the kaddish, and their names were duly deleted from the list.

The purpose of the community's list of kaddish readers is unclear, so it is impossible to establish the significance of striking a name from it. For people with busy schedules, kaddish is a demanding obligation, and the Bolaffios may have felt overly inconvenienced.<sup>21</sup> It is also possible that the Bolaffios wanted the exclusive privilege of leading the service, and were incensed at having to share it with other mourners. Whether the Bolaffios were motivated by a dearth of piety or by social considerations, it is plain that initially they expected the community's leaders to exhibit some degree of halakhic or bureaucratic flexibility. The incident also shows that the coercive power of Gorizia's Jewish community was limited; decisions of the *Capi* could be challenged.

### 2. Phylacteries on *Hol ha-Moed*

In the spring of 1825, Isaac Reggio petitioned the *Capi* to allow into the synagogue those Jews choosing not to put on phylacteries during *hol ha-moed* (intermediate days of festivals). Reggio based his request on a certain rabbinic responsum. The *Capi* were not particularly impressed, but acceded to his request. Still, they took care to free themselves of responsibility for the decision. Citing the rule "You have none other than the High Priest of your own day," the *Capi* made their permission conditional upon the approval of Isaac's father, Abram Vita, the town's rabbinic authority.<sup>22</sup>

To wear or not to wear phylacteries during prayer services on *hol ha-moed* was not a new issue. Ashkenazic tradition required wearing them, but the Zohar forbade it, and this prohibition had dictated Sephardic practice. This was ultimately accepted by R. Joseph Karo in his legal code, the *Shulhan Arukh*.<sup>23</sup> In the late eighteenth century, Hasidic tradition lined up with that of the Kabbalists, and even the Gaon, R. Elijah of Vilna, agreed on legal-talmudic grounds. Around the turn of

the nineteenth century, R. Jacob b. Aaron of Karlin waged a last-ditch defense of the inviolability of the Ashkenazic tradition.<sup>24</sup>

The issue had been debated in the Gorizia community before. In 1716, for example, Raphael Hai Ricchi, a kabbalist who supported himself by teaching local Jewish children, urged abandoning the tradition of wearing phylacteries on *hol ha-moed*. The community was divided over the issue, but since Gorizia was too small to support two synagogues, the two camps continued to confront each other at prayers. A flurry of rabbinic responsa issued at the time upheld traditional practice and demanded that Ricchi's campaign for change be stopped.<sup>25</sup> Similarly sometime toward the end of the eighteenth century, the community's then-Chief Rabbi, Moses Hefez Gentili, was convinced by the community to issue a declaration against the newer kabbalistic practice (although he himself apparently did not object to it).<sup>26</sup>

Matters seem to have come to a head once again in the fall of 1824.<sup>27</sup> Apparently those who opted not to wear phylacteries were once again being allowed to join the public service. This group now included such distinguished members of the community as Rabbi Abram Vita Reggio, his son Isaac, and Ventura b. R. Menasheh Hefez Gentili, as well as the author of an anonymous note describing what happened on this particular Hoshanah Rabbah. For some reason, a certain Abram Vita Morpurgo had objected to the presence of two men (one of them, Isaac Reggio) who were praying without phylacteries. Morpurgo disrupted the service and peace was restored only when the two had agreed to leave.<sup>28</sup>

The story enriches our understanding of religious observance in Gorizia, of the community's social dynamics, and of Isaac's ideological and social position. Without delving into the question of Isaac's attitude towards kabbalah or the *Shulḥan Arukh*, it is clear from Isaac's involvement in the story that his 1825 appeal to the *Capi* to open up synagogue attendance to those not wearing phylacteries stemmed from religious conviction, rather than from a disinterested ideal of religious toleration.<sup>29</sup> The story also shows that the pressures of modernization had failed to dilute the passionate commitment of Gorizia's synagogue regulars to meticulous ritual observance.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the confrontation between

opposing factions in both episodes bore a small-town intensity. It was pugnacious, bordering on violent, and it was personal.

### III. ISAAC'S OUSTER

For most of his life, Isaac Reggio was just a tax-paying member of the Gorizia community. At age fifty-six, following his father's death, he assumed the function of acting rabbi, and held the post for nine years. A search of the Gorizia state archives unearthed the fact, hitherto unknown, that Isaac was dismissed from the Gorizian rabbinate in 1850.<sup>31</sup> This incident is of particular significance because Reggio's ouster appears to have been motivated by his obstruction of a program of synagogue reforms initiated by the *Capi*. Analysis of the events will show that this denouement was the product of the complex relationship Reggio had always had with his community.

Isaac's struggle over the rabbinate of Gorizia is documented in a dossier in the archive of the *Capitanato Circolare*, the local Gorizian authorities.<sup>32</sup> The dossier reveals the following sequence of events. Reggio was dismissed from the rabbinate of Gorizia in 1850, and appealed to the state for permission to retain his position. The appeal was rejected, but he was re-elected at a subsequent community meeting. A year later, Reggio stepped down, and his resignation triggered a struggle within the community over the hiring of a salaried replacement. The full story will now follow.

#### *Stage 1*

The circumstances leading up to Reggio's dismissal are related in a letter from the *Capi* to the state authorities, the *Capitanato*.<sup>33</sup> On June 4, 1850 the community voted unanimously to create a committee that would propose a program for the 'reorganization of the *culto*' and related matters, since everyone agreed that the *culto* had reached a disastrous state.<sup>34</sup> A 'culto committee' was elected on June 12 and assumed office on the following day. The committee detailed two of its members to draft a new constitution of communal regulations. On June 16 the committee invited every *paterfamilias* to a meeting one week hence,



on June 23, at which the new constitution would be presented for discussion. At the June 23 meeting, those assembled named a commission to review the proposed constitution. The commission did so and made certain corrections. A general meeting of the community was then called for July 7, at which the final draft of the new constitution was ratified.

Reggio did not attend the July 7 meeting, and he either claimed or was expected to claim that he had not been issued a copy of the proposed regulations. This is evident from two statements in the *Capi's* letter to the *Capitanato*. The *Capi* stress that Reggio was to be sent a copy of the new regulations. They also maintain that the announcement of the meeting stated that anyone failing to attend would be assumed to agree to any decision taken. The implication of both of these statements is that Reggio opposed changes stipulated in the new regulations, and boycotted the session.

On July 9, shortly after the ratification of the new constitution, Reggio was notified in writing of the contents of the constitution's sixth section, which dealt with the office of Chief Rabbi. Without formally resigning, Reggio replied to the *Capi* in a manner leaving no doubt that he would not continue to serve. Formally, then, Reggio had the option of continuing to serve as rabbi, even if it was plain to all that the terms of the new constitution made it impossible for him to do so.

On August 4, after consulting the *culto* committee, the *Capi* sent Reggio a reply. Without formally dismissing Reggio, their letter confirmed that he would not continue as community rabbi. Whether Reggio had resigned or been dismissed may have been uncertain even at the time.

On August 11 Reggio responded by petitioning the authorities.<sup>35</sup> Reggio recounted that the Gorizian Jewish community had written him a letter, summarily dismissing him from the post of acting rabbi (*facendo funzioni di Rabbino*), which he had held for the previous nine years. The community had demanded that Reggio produce the community registers of births, matrimones, and deaths, which he refused to do. As an *aside* aimed at eliciting sympathy, Reggio noted that the registers had been in his family's possession for over fifty years. As formal grounds for allowing

him to retain the registers, Reggio pointed out that births, weddings, and deaths would have to be registered during the period that the community officials sought a new rabbi. Since the necessary formalities could be lengthy, Reggio asked to retain temporary custody of the registers.

Reggio also asked the government for broad permission to continue as acting rabbi until his replacement was named. Again, his formal grounds were concern that the office not be left empty and the requisite duties neglected.

Reggio failed to achieve his objectives. The authorities replied to Reggio's petition on August 15. Heedless of his sentimental attachment to the registers, they ordered him immediately to transfer them to the community's possession.<sup>36</sup>

Shortly thereafter, on September 15, the *Capi* assured the *Capitanato* that they had arranged for a substitute rabbi for the upcoming High Holy Days, and had also corresponded with various important rabbis in a campaign to fill the vacant post as expeditiously as possible. The *Capi* ended this particular letter by indicating that only those who observed their own religion faithfully could be faithful subjects of the state. They therefore requested that the government order Reggio's replacement to be unswerving in his observance of the sixth section of the community's new constitution.

Why was Reggio dismissed? The closing statements of the *Capi's* letter are not entirely clear. On the one hand, they demand faithful observance of the religion, suggesting a conservative approach to religious practice. On the other hand, we remember that the committee that had drawn up the new constitution was open to those religious reforms that might reorganize the ritual (*culto*) in the face of its present disastrous condition. The new constitution (paragraph 35) had spoken of "possible reforms to be introduced." The letter to which we have referred made it clear that Reggio's ouster "was deemed indispensable for the revival of the religious spirit, which had fallen into total decay, especially among the young."<sup>37</sup> All of this suggests that the *Capi* were not hard-line traditionalists, but religious reformers.

The truth behind Reggio's ouster was no doubt more subtle than our simple reform-traditionalist paradigm allows. As we saw in the case of

the struggle over phylacteries on *hol ha-moed*, religious debates could lead to bitter, personal quarrels in this small community. The issue of modernizing reform had undoubtedly polarized Gorizia's Jews and the new constitution reflected the communal ambivalence. Hence the document tried both to preserve traditional practice and to allow room for change. The major issue was one of authority and control. Although the rabbi was, *ex officio*, in charge of the ritual, the *Capi* insisted that he follow "the established customs"; any possible reform required the agreement of the *Capi* and the restricted council.<sup>38</sup> This provision was undoubtedly inserted to restrain Reggio and his party.

The battle raged on. In July and August of 1850, as we have seen, a series of letters tried to formalize Reggio's dismissal while avoiding any open vote. Reggio had responded by seeking government support for at least the temporary right to continue performing his rabbinic duties. On September 13, moreover, it seems that Reggio's supporters had scored a major victory. At a meeting of the entire community, Reggio was re-elected as at least acting rabbi, thus effectively undoing the efforts of the anti-Reggio forces on the constitutional committee. Two days later, on September 15, the *Capi* petitioned the *Capitanato* for confirmation of their own power.<sup>39</sup>

At first the *Capi's* request was unsuccessful. In a letter dated June 9–10, 1851, the *Capitanato* recognized Reggio's election and argued that only a meeting of all taxpayers in the Jewish community was empowered to name or dismiss a Chief Rabbi.

But Reggio's victory was short lived; he remained in office only until June 23, 1851. On July 1, the *Capi* reported to the *Capitanato* that Reggio had resigned from office, "to their deep regret."<sup>40</sup> This time there is not even a hint as to the impetus for Reggio's resignation. Rid of Reggio at last, the *Capi* quickly convened the community's taxpayers and elected none other than Abram Vita Morpurgo—Reggio's opponent in the matter of phylacteries on *hol ha-moed* in 1825—as provisional acting rabbi.<sup>41</sup>

### Stage 2

The need to replace Reggio sparked a crisis.<sup>42</sup> During Reggio's term, the community's annual budget had not included a stipend for a rabbi. Therefore, at a meeting on June 29, 1851, the community voted to conduct a referendum among the taxpayers about amending the budget. However, when the referendum questionnaire was circulated on July 1, the result was a "chaos of opinions" that made action impossible. On August 24th the community's general assembly held a meeting on this matter, and voted a salary of six hundred florins for the new Chief Rabbi. The decision was passed on to the *ristretta consulta*. On October 12 the *ristretta consulta* decided to call a meeting of all taxpayers on October 25 to ratify the proposed arrangement.

At this point, twenty Gorizian Jews—a large number in Gorizian terms—tried to torpedo the proposal by petitioning the *Capitanato*. Their petition is not extant, but clearly argued that there was no need to hire a new, salaried Chief Rabbi.<sup>43</sup> The petition pointed out that the community had functioned without a rabbi for quite some time, implying that it could continue to do, and added that in any case an appropriate candidate had not been located.

The *Capi* replied that the post had never been left vacant. They also ridiculed the fact that the petitioners included several community members who had only recently approved the decision fixing the new rabbi's annual stipend. The *Capi* felt it was absurd for the petitioners to invoke the aid of the authorities in overturning communal decisions they themselves had supported, and believed this showed that the petitioners were hypocritical or fickle.

Discrediting the petitioners was the *Capi's* next tactic. They argued that the petition did not merit serious consideration, because it was not supported by the community's wealthier taxpayers. Sixteen of the twenty petitioners were in arrears in the payment of their communal taxes, and one was not a taxpayer at all. Even if all the petitioners paid their tax assessments, their portion would still account for only thirty-five of every hundred florins of communal expenses, and was therefore negligible.

The *Capi* related that the petition had accused the community's leaders of religious misconduct. This, the *Capi* claimed, was a side issue, since the petitioners' real motive was opposition to the hiring of a rabbi. Moreover, they considered the charges ridiculous; the only communal leader who kept his shop open on the Sabbath was himself one of the petitioners! After reviewing the turbulent background to the current controversy, the *Capi* explained to the *Capitanato* that, whatever the decision might be on a permanent rabbi, there were still contractual obligations to the provisional, acting rabbi that had to be honored by the community's principal taxpayers. The *Capi* asked the *Capitanato* formally to recognize the actions of the general council, and reject the petition. In addition, the taxpaying constituency was due to meet on October 25 to elect a permanent, salaried Chief Rabbi, and the *Capi* requested that the state send a delegate to the forthcoming session, as in fact the law required.

On October 24, 1851 the curtain dropped on the entire affair, when the *Capitanato* rejected the petition. Remarkably, it saw no need to send a delegate to the forthcoming meeting, trusting that the *Capi* would guarantee a legal and disciplined session.<sup>44</sup>

#### IV. FACTORS

We can identify several economic, ideological, and social factors lying behind the confusing events and reports of 1850-51. First there is the simple financial issue. Reggio's father, R. Abram Vita, was never especially prosperous. His death certificate states that he left no property at all, because he had lived off of contributions from the community and from Isaac, in whose house he resided.<sup>45</sup> Isaac, on the other hand, was well-to-do. Vittorio Castiglioni, one of Reggio's biographers, alluded to the extreme difference in the material circumstances of father and son, which may have produced certain tensions. He commented on the fact that Reggio's fortunate circumstances enabled him to excel as a scholar, and pondered wistfully what Abram Vita might have achieved had he not been forced to toil to support his family.<sup>46</sup>

Isaac's wealth came from his wife, Rachaelle, whom he married in 1808.<sup>47</sup> Like the wealthy Sinigaglia, Isaac and Rachaelle owned property on Contrada Nobile.<sup>48</sup> The abundance of their land holdings and financial dealings is documented in numerous court records.<sup>49</sup> A sense of Isaac's economic responsibilities also comes across in the following excerpt from a letter he wrote to Ignaz Blumenfeld in 1832: "I am greatly harassed of late, while the grape juice is being collected from the wine-presses, and at the grain's time I shall be forced to set out for the land that God has given me, for this is my portion of all my labor (Ecc 2:10)."<sup>50</sup>

Reggio's wealth granted him some prominence among the Jews of Gorizia. In 1829 Reggio's tax assessment was the second highest among those of the community's 23 taxpayers. Jacob Senigaglia was far and away the leading contributor, with a staggering assessment of 28.50 of every one hundred florins of communal expenditure. Reggio was far behind, with 8.26, Moise Caravaglio at about the same level as Reggio with 8.16, and David Bolaffio was fourth at 7.26.<sup>51</sup>

Isaac's wealth gave him a position of prominence and responsibility in the Gorizia community. In 1827-28 he was instrumental in resolving a fiscal crisis, when the community was owed money from some and owed money to others. Its affluent members refused to continue paying their communal taxes until all debts were collected. A three-man commission was formed, headed by Isaac, to study the problem and propose a solution. The commission submitted its report in June of 1828, recommending strategies for the collection and payment of various debts.<sup>52</sup>

From the beginning, money had been a factor in Reggio's career as Chief Rabbi of Gorizia, since he had served without monetary compensation. Whether the initiative for this arrangement came from Reggio or from the community is a matter of some importance. Was the community's action one of ambivalence towards Reggio? Of parsimony? Or should Reggio be credited with generosity for accepting the post?

In his eulogy for Reggio, Eude Lolli noted that Reggio served without pay, and called this a mark of his good will towards the Jewish nation. He is unclear, however, on who decided upon this course.<sup>53</sup> According to a lengthy, somewhat hagiographic, account of Reggio's hiring written

by Castiglioni, the community's leaders offered Reggio the post, and he accepted on condition that he not receive the slightest remuneration.<sup>54</sup>

Reggio's financial circumstances could certainly explain such a unanimous gesture, but the fact that Isaac's father had also been hired without pay suggests that another consideration was at work. In 1798, following the death of R. Moise Gentili, the *ristretta consulta* offered Abram Vita the position of acting rabbi. The appointment carried with it no salary because the appointment was a provisional one, and it was provisional because Abram Vita had never been formally ordained. Abram Vita was formally elected rabbi of the Gorizian community only in 1803, after travelling to Ferrara to receive the rabbinical title *Hakham*.<sup>55</sup> Castiglioni's narrative suggests that, like his father, Isaac Reggio was offered the post of acting rabbi, with no salary, because he too had never been formally ordained.<sup>56</sup> This explanation is supported by the fact that following Abram Vita's death in 1841, the Jews of Gorizia also hired his grandson (and Isaac's own son), Abramo, who had completed the program of study at the Paduan rabbinical seminary.<sup>57</sup> The community asked him to assume responsibility for issuing decisions on matters of Jewish law and doctrine. He accepted, and held the position for twenty months, until September 4, 1843.<sup>58</sup> For those months Isaac and Abramo served together, with Isaac serving as acting rabbi (*facendo funzioni di rabbino*) for all but halakhic matters.<sup>59</sup>

As for Reggio's ouster, money appears as a factor at all stages: dismissal, rehiring and replacement. At least some of those community members who supported Reggio were presumably motivated by the desire to save the six hundred florins of the Chief Rabbi's annual salary, aside from their regard for Reggio's abilities or their attitudes towards Reform. This is suggested by the final struggle over Reggio's permanent successor. The petition to prevent the hiring of a replacement, signed (as the *Capi* report) by some of the community's principal taxpayers, lends weight to the mercenary factor.

There is also the possibility that money took second place to ideology in the struggle over Reggio's position. The annulment of Reggio's dismissal in 1850 on technical grounds and the later petition against hiring a replacement can be interpreted as tactical ploys in the struggle

against Reform. If so, Reggio's supporters were using a tight-fisted posture to pressure the *Capi* into rehiring Reggio. In the controversy over Reggio's permanent replacement they employed slander in pursuit of the same goal: by accusing the *Capi* of religious abuses, the petitioners stigmatized them as impious.

An ideological reading is even more plausible as far as the *Capi* are concerned. The fact that dismissing Reggio would cost the community considerable effort and expense indicates the strength of the anti-Reggio camp's ideological motivation.

Authority is yet another in the web of tightly interwoven forces behind the struggle over Reggio's ouster. The hiring of Isaac's son Abramo as legal expert, however reasonable and appropriate, curbed Reggio's authority as Chief Rabbi. The fact that he had to cede halakhic authority to his son teaches that Isaac's authority never approached that enjoyed by his father, Abram Vita. In the struggle over Reform, or any communal controversy, Isaac's spiritual leadership was weakened by his inadequate halakhic credentials.

Authority also needs to be factored into our understanding of Isaac's point of view. The last stipulation in clause 35 of the communal regulations required the Chief Rabbi to reach agreement with the *Capi* and *ristretta consulta* on reforms to be introduced. These communal leaders were not, after all, scholars in Jewish law, and Reggio may have considered them incompetent to define the nature and scope of the community's halakhic life.

## V. CONTEXT

On August 29, 1855, soon after his ouster, Reggio died. But, having been outmaneuvered on the field of communal politics, he nevertheless managed to have the last word on Reform, with the 1852 publication of his masterpiece, *Behinat ha-Kabbala*. Was Reggio the heresiarch this book led Rapoport and others to believe? What does the new material on Reggio's career presented in this study teach us about his attitude towards Reform?

Certainly Isaac supported Reform. He entered the fray in 1835, with a short work favoring abrogation of the taboo on shaving during *hol ha-moed*. This treatise drew a volley of critical responses, including a rebuttal by his own father, R. Abram Vita.<sup>60</sup> Yet Reggio's attitude to Reform during the controversy leading to his ouster, coupled with his role in the phylacteries incident of 1835, portrays him in a more conservative and traditional guise, rather than as a radical Reformer.

The more moderate view of Reggio is thoroughly grounded in his writings, including *Behinat ha-Kabbala*. Reggio opposed radical reform as vehemently as he opposed rigid orthodoxy. Among the advantages of the rabbinical college he proposed in 1820 was the rabbi's ability to combat unrestrained attacks on tradition.<sup>61</sup> Reggio excoriated those who rejected the concept of mandatory precepts in favor of a purely spiritual approach to Judaism, as did Aaron Chorin of Hungary.<sup>62</sup> Although he did not consider rabbinic law inviolable, Reggio advocated changing only rabbinic prescriptions that he felt contravened the biblical commandments upon which they were based. Reggio was a Reformer in the sense that he sanctioned deviation from the *Shulhan Arukh*, but he decried the threat to Judaism posed by the extremist camps of both orthodoxy and Reform.<sup>63</sup>

Reggio's conservatism was typical of the lackluster Italian reaction to the liturgical and curricular initiatives from across the Alps. Naftali Herz Wesseley saw Italian Jewry as a natural ally in the Haskalah campaign. This view was born of the assumption that the Italians were already 'enlightened'; they knew Italian and heard synagogue sermons in the vernacular. In addition, compared with the Jews of Eastern Europe, their intellectual focus was less single-mindedly talmudic, and more inclined towards Bible, grammar, and the sciences. But the Italians disappointed Wesseley. Endorsing his initiative only halfheartedly, they emphasized the primacy of the established curriculum and the importance of safeguarding tradition. Ironically, it was precisely because Wesseley's recommendations were already in place that Italian Jewry proved a lethargic ally.<sup>64</sup>

The Jews of Italy evinced even less enthusiasm for Reform than they had for Haskalah. The aesthetic quality of their synagogue service, exem-

plified by their tolerance for synagogal music and use of the organ, showed them to be among the most acculturated of European Jews, yet they proved almost completely unresponsive. Once again, a Jewish society with a seemingly perfect profile for modernization clearly preferred conservatism over change.<sup>65</sup>

This surprising traditionalism is of considerable significance for Jewish history. Since the inception of modern Jewish historiography, in nineteenth-century Germany, the search for the modern period's cultural roots has pointed towards Renaissance Italy. The fact that the heirs to that particular heritage appeared to miss their cue suggests that Wesseley and others confused Italian Jewry's receptivity to non-Jewish culture with an assimilationist tendency and a correspondingly weak commitment to Jewish tradition.<sup>66</sup> The Reggio family exemplifies the complex relationship between Italian Jewish culture and modernization. Isaac was committed to Haskalah and Reform, and devoted his writings to these concerns. But he lived most of his life in the shadow of his father, Abram Vita, a bearer of the halakhic tradition of Isaac Lampronti and of the kabbalistic tradition of Moses Hayim Luzzatto. Nonetheless, Abram Vita registered little Isaac in the local Piarist school. Moreover, in the time-honored Italian tradition, Abram composed poems and a collection of fables, in addition to his works on kabbalah and halakha. He expressed no complaint about Isaac's intellectual path, except for his *Tiglahat ha-Maamar*, which was never published. The absence of polarization between Abram and Isaac, added to Isaac's conservative behavior in the scenes described in this study, invite re-examination of the lines demarcating tradition and modernity.<sup>67</sup>

The weak showing of Reform in Gorizia also mirrors dynamics found in the international arena. Radical Reform did not take off in the Hapsburg realm as it had in Germany. This was partly due to the region's Catholic identity. Germany's Protestant environment appears to have had cultural influence on German Reform Judaism, because the latter echoed Protestantism's emphasis on liturgy and oratory, rather than ritual. Conversely, scholars have attributed the flaccid response to Reform—in Italy as in Vienna—to the stolid conservatism of the surround-

ing Catholic environment, and specifically to the absence of any general concept of theological, institutional, and liturgical Reform.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to these forces, in Gorizia the size of the community was also a factor. It seems plain that size affects a community's social behavior, and hence its response to change.<sup>69</sup> In small intimate communities, anonymity is impossible and social pressures are intensified.<sup>70</sup> These communal quarrels highlight the textured nature of social change. The ideological issues were no different in Gorizia than in the capitals of Europe, but because of its size, money, authority and interpersonal relationships had a magnified impact on the community's religious life.<sup>71</sup> As much or more than ideological factors, temporal forces were what buffeted and ultimately upended Isaac Reggio.

### Notes

1. *Behinat ha-Kabbala*, pp. 73–86. On the scholarly debate, see most recently Talya Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Faith* (Stanford: 1997), and my review in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49 (1998) 383–85.
2. *Ha-Shahar* 1/2 (1869) 12–14. In a footnote to Rapoport's letter, Peretz Smolenskin, the editor of *Ha-Shahar*, alludes to Rapoport's personal resentment of Reggio. For Reggio's reactions, see *Algemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 18 (1854) pp. 120–21; *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) p. 127. Reggio had clearly gotten under Rapoport's skin, but SHIR was not the first to accuse Reggio of inventing a medieval attack on traditional Judaism. Moritz Steinschneider attributed the heterodoxical *Alilot Devarim* to Reggio. See *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana* 3 vols. (Berlin: 1931) vol. 2, cols. 2135–36.
3. Though there have been several sketches of Reggio's career, his full biography has yet to be written, and his views and social environment have never been systematically analyzed. See Moisé Ehrenreich, "Isaaco S. Reggio," *L'Educatore Israelita* 3 (1855) 293–97; Vittorio Castiglioni, "Toledot KMHRR Isaac Samuel Reggio," *Ozar ha-Sifrut* 4 (1892) 82–90; Joseph Klausner, *Historiah shel ha-Sifrut ha-Ivrit ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem: 1963), vol. 4, pp. 10–37, and especially pp. 17–19; Guido Hugues, "Di alcuni illustri semitisti e orientalisti della Venezia Giulia," *Studi Goriziani* 24 (1958) 43–51; Giuliano Tamani, "I. S. Reggio e l'illuminismo ebraico," in *Gli Ebrei a Gorizia e a Trieste tra Ancien Regime ed emancipazione* (Udine: 1984), ed.
4. P.C. Iolly Zorattini, pp. 29–40; Marco Grusovin, "La risposta del giudaismo italiano all'haskalah berlinese: alcune considerazioni su Isaaco Samuel Reggio e Samuel David Luzzatto," *Studi Goriziani* 78 (1993) 22–23; idem, "Isaaco Samuel Reggio, rabbino e filosofo," *Quaderni Giuliani di Storia* 17 (1996) 7–29. For Reggio's bibliography, see his own *Mazkeret Yashar*, and Julius Fuerst, *Bibliotheca Judaica* (Leipzig: 1863), vol. 3, pp. 139–42.
5. *Ha-Tora veba-Philosophia* (Vienna: 1827); *Torat ha-Elohim* (Vienna: 1818–21); *Behinat ha-Dat* (Vienna: 1833); *Behinat ha-Kabbala* (Gorizia: 1852).
6. Giuseppe Formentini, *Memorie Goriziane fino all'anno 1853* (reprint ed.; San Floriano del Collio: 1985), p. 91.
7. Giuseppe Bolaffio, "Sfogliando l'archivio della comunità di Gorizia," *Rassegna Mensile d'Israel* 24 (RM) (1958) 36–38; Ugo Cova, "Un privilegio degli Ebrei delle contee di Gorizia e Gradisca: Il godimento di diritti reali su beni immobili," *Mitteilungen des Oesterreichischen staatsarchivs* 37 (1984) 120–48.
8. W.J. Menzel, "Geschichte des k.k. Gymnasiums zu Goerz seit seiner Entstehung bis zu seiner Vereinigung mit der philosophischen Lehranstalt," *Jahrbericht des K.K. Ober-Gymnasiums in Goerz am Schlusse des Schuljahres 1856* (Gorizia: 1856).
9. *Regolamento interno della comunità israelitica di Gorizia*, Archivio di Stato di Gorizia (ASG), Capitanato Circolare di Gorizia, busta (b.) 16, fascicolo (fasc.) 172, IV/24, #12 (1850–54). An identical edition was printed in Gorizia, in 1853.
10. Bolaffio, "Sfogliando," p. 71.
11. Formentini, *Memorie*, 63–64; Isaac Reggio, "Cenni Statistici," *Strenna Israelitica* 3 (1854–55) 109. Formentini lists thirteen leather dealers, but no manufacturers.
12. Bolaffio, "Sfogliando," p. 134.
13. Cova, "Un privilegio," p. 139.
14. Formentini, *Memorie*, pp. 36, 96, 100. Jacob Sinigaglia's communal tax assessment was four times what other members paid. See below. Of course, not everyone was well off. In 1835 Reggio refused a request that the Gorizia community send funds to aid the community of Brody. He explained that Gorizia had many poor people, who lacked food and other necessities, and that the community lacked the means to supply their needs. See *Ozar Nehmad* 1 (1856) 74.