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Joshua Holo

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## CHAPTER I

*Byzantine-Jewish economic history*

When Samuel Krauss first took up the subject of Byzantine-Jewish history, he claimed to do so “as one would an orphan”; and though it has grown somewhat since the publication of his seminal *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdische Geschichte* in 1914, the field still remains at the margins of both Byzantine and Jewish history. The Jews did not play what one could fairly call a pivotal role in the fate of the Byzantine Empire, and what is more, time has left us with a relative dearth of primary sources as compared to other major Jewish communities of the Mediterranean and Europe. Furthermore, the Jews of Byzantium never figured, quantitatively, as a major part in the overall economy of the empire. Agriculture, the government and the army dominated the resources that determined wealth and its distribution, while the Jews were overwhelmingly urban and rigidly excluded from both military and civil service. But within the smaller economic sector of trade, the Jews did indeed loom disproportionately large, and through their prodigious activity in a few but significant industries, they demonstrably helped to shape Byzantine economic history. In addition, the study of Byzantine Jewry offers a unique vantage point from which to consider larger trends in economic history. The view of the medieval Mediterranean from the perspective of Byzantine-Jewish sources reveals otherwise ignored patterns of Jewish trade and communication, and it calls into question our standard ways of viewing Jewish interaction with society at large.

The chronological scope of the present study conforms to that which is conventionally called the Middle Byzantine period, from Heraclius (r. 610–41) to the end of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. In an effort to avoid relying reflexively on this standard periodization, a number of concrete metrics may be invoked to justify it. Concurrent with the rise of Islam, the beginning of the period under review represents a logical watershed in the history of the Mediterranean. Most notably for the Jews, the demographics of the Mediterranean shifted forever thereafter, with results not only in the

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economic and political realms, but also in the internal development of Jewish law, languages, ritual and philosophy. Even within the relatively circumscribed experience of the Jews in the Byzantine state, the reign of Heraclius heralded a period of change at least as abrupt as that which accompanied the reign of Constantine I (sole r. 324–37). At the end-point of this period, the Fourth Crusade marks a shift of somewhat lesser moment than does the rise of Islam. It too, however, serves as a viable turning point, particularly in the Jews' role as subjects of the Byzantine state, which never truly recovered from the occupation of Constantinople by the Latins. Coincidentally, the richly informative documents of the Cairo Genizah span the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries, and are thus roughly coterminous with the end of the Middle Byzantine period. In deference to these considerations, the present study hews closely to the chronological limits of the Middle Byzantine period, only occasionally venturing to refer to events immediately beyond them.

## THE JEWS OF BYZANTIUM

Since the chronological considerations follow almost universal convention, the more pressing questions pertain to the assumptions governing the study of specifically Byzantine-Jewish economic history. To begin with, the composite term “Byzantine-Jewish” suggests an experience that unfolded in relation to two very different points of reference.<sup>1</sup> In the Middle Ages, the Jewish religion was associated with the Jewish people and all its functions, and to separate them out is to distinguish where, frequently, there was no difference.<sup>2</sup> So, at the very outset, the term “Jewish economy” poses distinct problems of definition. The term assumes that a discrete group of people, typically defined by religious and ethnic criteria, also engaged in economic activity that lends itself to commensurately consistent and particular characterization. The concept of a “Jewish economy”

<sup>1</sup> See J. Haldon, “Everyday Life in Byzantium: Some Problems of Approach,” *BMGS* 10 (1986): 54.

<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, C. Renfrew, “Trade as Action at a Distance: Questions of Integration and Communication,” in *Ancient Civilization and Trade*, ed. J. A. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Albuquerque, 1975), 3, argues for an appreciation of the organic whole in this regard (though applied to ancient civilizations, not medieval ones). On the other hand, however, Renfrew also distinguishes, on p. 6, between the objects of trade, i.e., information and goods, and particularly associates the former with religious life. In the case of medieval Judaism, this distinction does not apply, most notably in relation to Hebrew books; see A. Grossman, “Communication among Jewish Centers during the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries,” in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora*, ed. S. Menache (Leiden, 1996), 115.

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is meaningless, then, unless that assumption is in fact warranted. Is there a “body Jewish,” and can we discern reliable patterns of economic activities within that body?<sup>3</sup>

It turns out that the distinct and corporate nature of the Jews readily comes through in the primary sources. To be sure, ethnic, linguistic and ideological subdivisions abounded among the Jews, but that fact does not belie their ultimate cohesion under the umbrella term “Jewish.” In fact, the minority Jews, in all their complexity, are easily identified in distinction from the majority Byzantines, even taking into account all the ethnic, religious and linguistic heterogeneity of Byzantine society at large. Jewish and Christian sources throughout Byzantine history uniformly recognize the Jews as a distinct group, mentioned explicitly as such – not only in religious polemics, but also in political conflicts and legal classifications. Even Christian Judaizing, which ostensibly threatened to blur the distinctions between the two religions, could not materially bridge the gap between the dominant Byzantine Orthodox society and the Jews, a distinct people with its own religion, calendar and institutions.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the Jewish sense of corporate identity did not exist merely in contrast to the Christian one. The Jews, Byzantine and otherwise, shared internal defining qualities that mutually strengthened one another and that collectively bound the Jews as a coherent unit. Their common religion, Judaism, reinforced their common language, Hebrew, which provided a vehicle for their common social compact, Jewish law, which in turn governed those who were born into it in almost every aspect of their lives, from conjugal relations to any number of economic pursuits. For the Jews of the Middle Ages, this ethnic-religious self-understanding constantly reaffirmed itself and is ultimately axiomatic, be it in Byzantium or anywhere else.

To be a Jew was, therefore, to belong to an ethnic group in every possible sense, and the resultant cohesion expressed itself in economic terms

<sup>3</sup> B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental* (Paris, 1960), 12–13, comes to a similar conclusion; on the unity of the Jewish experience as a combination of national and religious historical destiny, for lack of a better word, see Z. Ankori, *Encounter in History: Jews and Christian Greeks in Their Relation through the Ages* (Heb.) (Tel-Aviv, 1984), 20–1.

<sup>4</sup> Various Judaizing heresies and even Iconoclasm all owed something to Judaism; at the same time, volumes were dedicated to the excoriation of the Jews and their religion. For example, the Quinisext Council tried to separate the Jewish Passover from the Christian Easter, precisely due to the commonality between the two. Later, Michael II, the iconoclastic emperor, was accused of being influenced by Jews. For sources, see J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire: 641–1204*, *Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie* 30 (Athens, 1939), 29–30, 89 no. 8, 98–99 no. 20.

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throughout the Jewish world. Not surprisingly, then, one can indeed isolate a distinct set of financial relationships and economic activities concentrated in certain industries and serving particular needs. That this discrete set of relationships and activities might legitimately be called “Jewish” emerges from the fact that they either served uniquely Jewish functions, such as the redemption of Jewish captives, or that they discernibly occupied a disproportionate number of Jews who grouped themselves consciously within a given trade, such as the textile industry.

It should not surprise, therefore, that one can justifiably restrict the notion of a Jewish economy even further, by adding another qualifier, i.e., “Roman” or, reflecting our modern historiographical conventions, “Byzantine.” Here again, the primary evidence provides firm grounding. Even in a world of shifting borders and heterogeneous populations, the quality of being Byzantine had concrete consequences. Juridically speaking, all the residents of the empire were subject to the tax structure and legislation of the polity, and this imperial governance guaranteed that the border was never merely imaginary. One of the most important Byzantine economic sources, the *Book of the Eparch*, is entirely devoted to the fiscal regulation of Constantinopolitan guilds. It mentions the Jews in a key section on the silk trade, putting strictures on their commerce that did not apply to Jews in Fatimid Egypt, for example. Culturally speaking, the Jews’ affinity for the Greek language and the availability of longstanding relationships – both personal and business, since the two often overlapped – persisted even outside the boundaries of the state, so that one may speak of a Byzantine orientation in the direction and content of trade, evident in correspondence from the Cairo Genizah.<sup>5</sup> In capturing this web of relationships, the sources thereby point overwhelmingly to a demonstrably Byzantine-Jewish economy, with its own conditions, strengths, weaknesses, propensities and influences.

In addition to the social, political and economic situation that distinguished Byzantine Jewry from coreligionists throughout the Mediterranean, its linguistic and cultural engagement with Byzantine Christian society betrays a surprisingly thoroughgoing identification of the Jewish and the Hellenic or Roman. Nicholas de Lange, in a number of articles, has described these inclinations of Byzantine Jewry, painting a nuanced picture of deep

<sup>5</sup> Here, one might consider the appellation “Romanipote” to refer to the Jews of Byzantine culture. Though this term is accurate, insofar as it highlights the contemporary notion of *romanitas*, I have relied on the notion of “Byzantine” Jewry, not only for its ease of reference, but also because it recalls the relationship to the state, such as it was.

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acculturation.<sup>6</sup> De Lange points to both ambiguity and ambivalence of identity, perhaps most eloquently expressed by sectarian Jewish leader Judah Hadassi, who charges that his mainstream Jewish adversaries, “the Rabbanites, in expressing themselves partly in the vernacular language [i.e., Greek] in their documents, behave like gentiles.”<sup>7</sup> In chastising his opponents, Hadassi reveals the underlying Hellenism in Jewish society: Greek, in addition to being the quotidian language of Byzantine Jewry, also spilled over into the presumably Hebraic spheres of legal writing.<sup>8</sup> Hadassi therefore presents us with a startling reality (corroborated in other sources as well), namely, Hebrew distinguished the Jews from the Christians, but Greek simultaneously served as a Jewish language.<sup>9</sup> If anything, Byzantine Jewry actually favored Greek until the revival of Hebrew, which dates perhaps to the ninth century but which took hold during the period of the Genizah documents.<sup>10</sup> Even then, however, Greek remained alive in Jewish life, and its persistence fostered a cultural bilingualism, or diglossia, that differed from the well-known bilingualism of other Jewish populations in Christendom, such as those in Spanish-, Italian- and German-speaking Europe. The difference, de Lange points out, lies in the function of Byzantine Greek. It, alone among the Christian vernaculars, was “not only the spoken language of their Christian neighbors but also the language of their church and their written literature.”<sup>11</sup> Much more ancient than the roughly analogous Judaization of Arabic, this religious diglossia resulted in a remarkable marriage. Greek Judaism and Greek Christianity, despite the gulf between them,

<sup>6</sup> N. R. M. de Lange, “Hebraism and Hellenism: the Case of Byzantine Jewry,” *Poetics Today* 19/1 (1998): 129–45; de Lange, “Hebrews, Greeks or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium,” in *Strangers to Themselves: the Byzantine Outsider*, ed. D. Smythe (Aldershot and Burlington, 2000); de Lange, “Hebrew-Greek Genizah Fragments and their Bearing on the Culture of Byzantine Jewry,” *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9, B1 (1986), 39–46. See also, D. Jacoby, “What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor from the Documents of the Cairo Genizah?” in *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th–12th cent.)* [Ἡ βυζαντινὴ Μικρὰ Ἀσία], ed. Sp. Vryonis, Jr. and N. Oikonomides (Athens, 1998), 85–7.

<sup>7</sup> J. Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-kofer*, fol. 13a, as translated by de Lange, “Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium,” 113.

<sup>8</sup> De Lange, “The Case of Byzantine Jewry,” 138.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 136–8. For confirmation of the use of Greek, see the responsum of Hai Gaon in E. Harkavy, *Responsen der Geonim (Zikbron kamah ge'onim)*, Studien und Mitteilungen (Zikaron la-rishonim) 4 (Berlin, 1887), 130. Hai b. Sherira (d. 1038), the preeminent Baghdad legal authority, accepted the use of Greek in bills of divorce, which require consummate technical precision, because the Greek-speaking Jews (as well as the Roman and Persian Jews) could be trusted to maintain the necessary punctiliousness despite the language barrier.

<sup>10</sup> S. Simonsohn, “The Hebrew Revival among Early Medieval European Jews,” in *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume*, 3 vols., ed. S. W. Baron, S. Lieberman and A. Hyman (New York and London, 1974), vol. II, 857–8.

<sup>11</sup> De Lange, “Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium,” 115–16.

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shared a religious language that doubled as the medium of day-to-day expression.<sup>12</sup>

Even the ambivalence, or downright inner conflict, of Jews towards their own Hellenism points to the intensity and authenticity of the connection between the two languages and the cultures. Well-worn expressions of resentment against Rome, the enforcer of Exile, routinely characterized Jewish vituperations against Greek language and culture. Esau, the eponymous ancestor of Rome according to Jewish lore, pitted himself against Israel in an apocalyptic struggle.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, “both nations relied on religion as a guardian of their national identity,” resulting in parallel, mutually exclusive perspectives, which expanded the gap between them and which set the terms for much of their conflict.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, however, Byzantine Jewry does not so much negotiate with Roman culture as it does intimately comprise that culture as part and parcel of its Jewishness.<sup>15</sup> Roberto Bonfil perhaps puts it best when he describes the anonymous Byzantine author of a tenth-century, Hebrew apocalypse as one “who saw the two cultures as though organically integrated into one another.”<sup>16</sup> In both its negative and positive aspects, therefore, the internalization of *graecitas* or *romanitas* as an expression of Byzantine Judaism illustrates how culture serves as a bridge of similarity and exchange, while it may just as easily and at the same time function as a barrier.

Unsurprisingly, a simultaneous push-and-pull characterized not only the Jewish side of the relationship, but also that of Byzantine society. To be sure, the Byzantine authorities acted on the assumption of an existential difference separating Judaism from Orthodox Christianity, and the state consistently attempted to regulate the degree of Jewish participation in society at large. It sought, in sum, to reduce the points of contact.<sup>17</sup> For

<sup>12</sup> One wonders how much of this is specific to the Byzantine Empire, often seen, from the point of view of toleration of the Jews, as a half-way point between Islam and Western Europe, as posited in all its nuance by M. R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross* (Princeton, 1994). On this topic, D. Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews* (New York, 2002), xxi: “On the one hand, the tendency to acculturate into the non-Jewish culture typically produced a distinctive Jewish subculture. On the other hand, the effort to maintain a separate identity was often achieved by borrowing and even subverting motifs from the surrounding culture. Language was one arena in which this complex process took place ... Language was at once a sign of acculturation and cultural segregation.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Ankori, *Encounter*, 144–5. <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 25, 36, 107.

<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, their Jewishness was an expression of the Hellenism, de Lange, “The Case of Byzantine Jewry,” 130. Cf. I. G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood* (New Haven, 1996), 11.

<sup>16</sup> R. Bonfil, “The ‘Vision of Daniel’ as a Historical and Literary Document” (Heb.), *Yitzhak F. Baer Memorial Volume*, *Zion* 44 (1979), 147. S. Bowman, “From Hellenization to Graecization: the Byzantine-Jewish Synthesis,” in *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation*, ed. M. Mor (Lanham, Md.; Omaha, Nebr., 1992): 45–9.

<sup>17</sup> A. Kazhdan and A. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1985), 185–7.

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that reason, the Jews were not, in any modern sense, integrated; in Constantinople they lived in a separate quarter, they suffered legal limitations, and they underwent episodes of physical violence and forced baptism.<sup>18</sup> Religiously, the Jews furthermore functioned as a religious foil that helped formulate the Byzantine sense of self, especially insofar as that sense of self was, as Michael Angold avers, “most compellingly defined by negative means, by singling out enemies for vilification.”<sup>19</sup> In the same vein, David Jacoby has compellingly outlined Orthodoxy’s entrenched, well-articulated ecclesiastical-doctrinal hostility towards Judaism, which remains at the disposal of those inclined to invoke it, even to this day.<sup>20</sup>

Significantly, however, the efforts to separate the Jews from the life of the empire, at times half-hearted and at times sincere, do not seem to have borne much fruit. Jacoby can only consider it “contradictory ... that there exists a local and quotidian dimension of coexistence, of socialization and economic cooperation among Jews and Christians,” even if he hastens to point out its limits.<sup>21</sup> For one thing, despite their embodying religious distinctiveness, the Jews defied easy dismissal as aliens or foreigners, insofar as they met a very high standard of cultural integration in signal matters of language and autochthony.<sup>22</sup> In other words, in the day-to-day of urban life, points of segregation were too deeply interwoven with those of integration, and they could not be disentangled to reflect the comfortable distinctions that the Byzantine powers might have preferred. The position of the Jews in

<sup>18</sup> Attested into the late period, A. Berger, “Sightseeing in Constantinople: Arab Travellers, c. 900–1300,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 189.

<sup>19</sup> M. Angold, *Byzantium: the Bridge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (New York, 2001), 131; cf. Angold, “Byzantine ‘Nationalism’ and the Nicæan Empire,” *BMGS* 1 (1975): 66.

<sup>20</sup> D. Jacoby, “Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée,” in *Oi perithoriakoi sto Byzantio, 9 May 1992*, ed. Ch. Maltezou (Athens, 1993), 103–15; Jacoby, “Les Juifs: protections, divisions, ségrégation,” in *Constantinople, 1054–1261: tête de la chrétienté, proie des Latins, capitale grecque*, ed. A. Ducellier and M. Balard (Paris, 1966), 174. Due to the historical connection between Christianity and Judaism, the Church particularly feared Judaism as a source for Christian heresy, above and beyond any properly interreligious disputes between Synagogue and Church. This sense of Judaism as one of the fonts of heresy therefore exacerbated the sense of opposition. So, too, the particular fear of Jewish reprisals against converts to Christianity and an awareness that converts might be susceptible to guilt: P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, *Eretici, dissidenti, musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio* (Venice, 1993), 38, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Jacoby, “Les Juifs de Byzance,” 146. As with many things, it is not merely a question of the fact that Jacoby points out the limitations of détente, but more pointedly that he perceives them as more prominent and more likely to govern the real-life relations of Jews in the empire, than am I.

<sup>22</sup> H. Ahrweiler, “Byzantine Conception of the Foreigner: the Case of the Nomads,” in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler and A. E. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 1998), 1–16, discusses some of these qualities in addition to the applicability of *romaios* as a defining cultural sensibility.



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comparison to that of other ethnicities in the Byzantine Empire further strengthens this impression. Even though a majority language and religion did dominate Byzantine culture and politics, they naturally evolved in relation to an array of minorities, including Turks, Slavs, Armenians and Arabs (all of whom, notably, belonged to larger communities outside the borders of the Byzantine polity).<sup>23</sup> In this mosaic the Jews, perhaps “more than any other ethnic group in the empire ... embraced Hellenic culture and the Greek language,” at least at the level of the common people.<sup>24</sup> Though it pushed the Jews to the margins, Byzantine society nevertheless allowed the possibility for the Jews also to cling, to a unique degree, to the dominant culture as an expression of their own minority identity.

Nothing more pithily captures the reciprocity of this ambivalence than does the *Life of Saint Nikon*, set roughly in the mid-to-late tenth century.<sup>25</sup> After Nikon's ideologically charged expulsion of the Jews from Sparta, John Aratos “asserted that the removal of the Jews outside the city was not just or reasonable.”<sup>26</sup> Though Nikon won the day and expelled the Jews once and for all, Aratos' attitude and its economic motivation (“some task, by which garments are accustomed to be finished”) provided a plausible defense against the all-too-full armory of anti-Jewish rantings.<sup>27</sup> We might, in view of this less-easily characterized reality, shift the emphasis of Angold's analysis, by making the oppositional figure of Byzantine religious identity the idea of the Jew, or perhaps that of Judaism, rather than a living Jewish neighbor or client.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, even this more abstract understanding of Judaism could result in horrible real-life consequences, but the reality that governed the lives of the Jews and their interactions with neighbors clearly

<sup>23</sup> D. Jacoby, “Les Juifs: protections, divisions, segregation,” 171; D. Abulafia, “The Italian Other: Greeks, Muslims and Jews,” in *Italy in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. D. Abulafia (Oxford, 2004), 215–16. Consider M. McCormick, “Byzantium on the Move,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 3–7.

<sup>24</sup> S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium: 1204–1453* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1985), 9; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 177–80. In contrast, H. Ahrweiler, “Citoyens et étrangers dans l'empire romain d'orient,” in *La nozione di «romano» tra cittadinanza e l'universalità* (Naples, 1984), 346–8, who is inclined to see the Jews as “sous-byzantins” or internal foreigners. Ahrweiler nevertheless acknowledges a spectrum of membership in Byzantine society.

<sup>25</sup> Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 9–10; Ankori, *Encounter*, 120; D. Sullivan, ed. and trans., *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, Mass., 1987), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon*, 118–19; excerpted in Starr, *JBE*, 167.

<sup>27</sup> S. Bowman, “The Jewish Settlement in Sparta and Mistra,” *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 22 (1977–84): 132; A. Harvey, *Economic Expansion in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1989), 218.

<sup>28</sup> Jacoby, “Les Juifs de Byzance,” 115; M. Garidis, “La représentation des ‘nations’ dans la peinture post-byzantine,” *Byzantion* 39 (1969): 90–1, who describes the artistic representation of Jews as the “twelve tribes of Israel and, by extension, all of sinful humanity or the unbelieving peoples.”



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conformed to the more nuanced intermingling of difference and identification.<sup>29</sup> Angeliki Laiou has characterized the simultaneity of the push and pull, in terms of the Jews' legal standing, as a tension "between an integrating state on the one hand, and on the other particular groups that ... belong to a different type-set of jurisdiction."<sup>30</sup> Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis most recently summed up his conclusions from the cultural point of view, conceding that "if marginalization did occur – and fundamentally there is no reason to doubt it – it was nevertheless incomplete."<sup>31</sup>

In brief, even granting the centrality of religion in Byzantine identity, the relatively facile image of medieval Jewish–Christian religious rivalry simply does not account for the more complicated interplay between integration and segregation that the Jews experienced in the Byzantine Empire.<sup>32</sup> The operative consideration, then, is not whether a given factor united or divided the Jews and Christians of Byzantium, but rather how frequently the parties met at, and how intensively they dealt across, the given points that at once united and divided them. When conceptualizing the Byzantine-Jewish quality of the economy, this complicated and rich relationship distinguishes it from other Jewish communities in the Christian world, and it colors their experience as merchants and producers of goods.

ECONOMIC HISTORY AS APPLIED  
TO BYZANTINE JEWRY

Historians have intuited and documented the intensity of this Byzantine–Jewish relationship, including a concept of cultural and economic engagement – or entanglement – that approximates the concept of integration.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Echoing this reality is the official position of Demetrios Chomatenos of Ochrida, as per Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 221–2 and notes. Demetrios argues, in this responsum (not part of his *Ponemata Diaphora*, ed. G. Prinzing [Berlin and New York, 2002], 46–9) that the segregation of the Jews (as well that of Armenians and Muslims) rendered possible their presence in society, so that both personal and economic truck might result in conversion.

<sup>30</sup> A. E. Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms of Integration," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler and A. E. Laiou (Washington, D. C., 1998), 178.

<sup>31</sup> J. Niehoff-Panagiotidis, "Byzantinische Lebenswelt und rabbinische Hermeneutik: die griechischen Juden in der Kairoer Genizah," *Byzantion* 74/1 (2004): 129.

<sup>32</sup> Bonfil, "Una storiografia ebraica medievale?" in Bonfil, *Tra due mondi* (Naples, 1996), 214.

<sup>33</sup> De Lange, "Hebrew-Greek Genizah Fragments," 39–46; Z. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium: the Formative Years, 970–1100* (New York, 1959), 193–200; Ankori, *Encounter*, 29–33, for the vigorous argument for Jewish integration in the urban economy of Byzantium; Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 9–10, 164–8. For a similar, if cursory, analysis, see G. Walter, *La vie quotidienne à Byzance* (Monaco, 1966), 154, who organizes the Jews with foreigners, but considers them "profondément imprégnés ... de la culture grecque."

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Roberto Bonfil, echoing Nicholas de Lange, aptly captures the Byzantine experience in his discussion of the Jews of Byzantine southern Italy. Bonfil perceives “a sort of synthesis between different aspirations and orientations, [which] include all the elements in which presence and absence, acceptance and rejection, intermingled in multifaceted fashion, as a function of the various degrees of attraction or repulsion” to the majority culture.<sup>34</sup> This opinion, moreover, represents something of a consensus among scholars of Byzantine Jewry. However, though they do not fail to cite important examples from the realm of economic history, none has proposed an economic model to articulate (or, for that matter, to challenge) this consensus, such as Jacob Katz proposed in *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* and such as S. D. Goitein detailed in *A Mediterranean Society*.<sup>35</sup> Economic history can therefore speak to the nature of Byzantine Judaism in way not yet fully plumbed. Indeed, economic history of Byzantine Jewry complements with particular clarity the acculturation and ambivalence described by de Lange and Bonfil.<sup>36</sup> It also points to a continuity and success in Jewish economic interests, which force us to reconsider prevailing assumptions of decline beginning in the tenth century.

A remarkable picture of Byzantine-Jewish economic organization comes naturally out of the sources, according to which the system might be likened to a cell within a larger organism. An internal economy fueled Jewish communal life, while that community, in its turn, played a well-documented and significant role in the wider commercial economies of Byzantium and the eastern Mediterranean region.<sup>37</sup> The distinction between the inwardly and outwardly oriented economic spheres jumps out from the assembled evidence and seems to represent underlying contemporary assumptions, but at the same time the external economy of the Byzantine Jews thoroughly depended on the apparently isolated one

<sup>34</sup> R. Bonfil, “Cultura ebraica e cultura cristiana in Italia meridionale,” in *Tra due mondi*, 7. See also Bonfil, “Tra due mondi: prospettive di ricerca sulla storia culturale degli Ebrei dell’Italia meridionale nell’alto medioevo,” in *Italia Judaica I: Atti del I Convegno Internazionale, Bari, 18–22 maggio 1981* (Rome, 1983), 135–58, both echoed in Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, xix: “The Jews were not so much ‘influenced’ by the Italians as they were one organ in a larger cultural organism, a subculture that established its identity in a complex process of adaptation and resistance.” See also, F. Luzzati Laganà, “La figura di Donnolo nello specchio della Vita di S. Nilo di Rossano,” in G. Lacerenza (ed.), *Sabbatay Donnolo* (Naples, 2004), 72–88.

<sup>35</sup> J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (London, 1961), 24–36; S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 7 vols. (Berkeley, 1967–93), vol. I, 70–4.

<sup>36</sup> Laiou, “Institutional Mechanisms,” 161, invokes this principle in relation to both finances and justice.

<sup>37</sup> For an analogous treatment of the Venetian Jews in the eastern Mediterranean, see D. Jacoby, “Venice and the Venetian Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean,” in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia: secoli XIV–XVII*, ed. G. Cozzi (Milan, 1987), 46–7. R. S. Lopez, “Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire,” *Speculum* 20 (1945): 25, calls the Jewish infrastructure “a state within a state.”