NEW LIGHT ON THE CAREER OF ISAAC SAMUEL REGGIO

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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 Ar ye was no more than a blind, intended to camouflage Modena’s true, antinomian views. The passionate debate that erupted has yet to be decided.

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-Kabbala, 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.

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. 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.” 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%).

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. 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.

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.

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

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<th>Product</th>
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<th>1855: Jewish-Owned Factories</th>
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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. Jacob Sinigaglia was the wealthiest Jew in Gorizia. At the time of his death in 1819, his net assets were valued at 313,793 florins. 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. The Sinigaglias owned a house on Contrada Nobile, the city's main street. They also owned a house on via Studenitz, and their Villa Sinigaglia, built in 1852 at the foot of the city's castle, was among the city's best-known mansions.

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. Among Isaac's contemporaries, Graziadio Isaia Ascoli was a philologist of national renown. 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. He also compiled a Hebrew dictionary and a reading guide. 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.

15. Guido Hugues, op. cit., pp. 36-43; Maria Elisabetta Loricchio, L'opera di Grazziadio Isaila Ascoli fra politica e cultura. Materiali per una biografia intellettuale (tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Trieste, 1981-85). Ascoli also furthered the study of Italy's ancient Jewish catacombs.

16. Stephanus Kociancic, Celeberrimi Samuelli Dauidis Luzzatto paurae 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 hebraicarum (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 commercio collecta inque hoc opusculum congesta per Stephanus 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 Ison-tina of Gorizia.


20. Reggio was also well acquainted with Samuel Vita Lollo, another well-educated Gorizian Jew. Giuseppe Domenica 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.


22. CAHJP, IT-GO, All 22, 1.IV.1825. The aphorism is from Sifrei, Ki Tavoeh, 26, 3.
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.


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 giovinezza." "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 Orazione per il mese penitenziale Elul ad uso di alcune comunità ebraiche 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-
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The significance of this publication, note that the rabbinical conferences of Wurttemberg (1838), Birkenfeld (1843), and Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1843) passed new rules (Synagogenordnungen) concerning penitential prayers (Selichoth).


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, Moise 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. 3, #74; b. 77, 1856, fasc. 160, #11; b. 91, 1848, fasc. 3, #838; b. 98, 1850, fasc. 3, #689; b. 142, 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 Loli 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 Loli'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. 59-62. This manuscript is located in the CAHJP, IT-GO, B 3 III 5. Cervo's biographical essay is chiefly based on Abram Vita's autobiographical preface to his own Essel Arithram. 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 "Rabban."

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. Maa'mar ha Tigla'ah (Vienna: 1835). Abram Vita's rebuttal, entitled Tigla'ah ha Maa'mar, was published after his death (Livorno: 1844). See also Jacob Ezekiel Halevi, Tisporet Lulianit (Berlin: 1839).


62. Ozar Nehmad 1 (1856) 41; Behinat ha-Kabbala, p. 86; "Etrog," in Yalkut Yoshor (Gorizia: 1854), pp. 49-50; Behinat ha-Dat (Vienna: 1853), pp. 98-
Reggio expressed frustration over his impression that Italian Jewish scholars were likely to mistake his scholarship for heresy. See Oscar Neumann 1 (1856) 14.

Long before he published Behinat ha-Kabbalah, Reggio expressed frustration over his impression that Italian Jewish scholars were likely to mistake his scholarship for heresy. See Oscar Neumann 1 (1856) 14.


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).

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, "Stigliando," RMI 25 (1957) opposite p. 2/88. For the second, see Silvio Costin, "Filiazione matrilineare e matrilineare, legami di sangue, alleanze e affinità tra Illuminismo e tradizione nell'inedito Ilan ha-Jachash," in P.C. Ioly Zorattini, ed.,"
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.\textsuperscript{19}

Reggio’s heart was in Vienna or Berlin, and Gorizia could not compare with these metropolises\textsuperscript{20}

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 \textit{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 \textit{Capi}), told Leone Levi (another one of the \textit{Capi}) that the proposed bulletin had better be removed from the door, or he himself would rip it to shreds. The \textit{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 \textit{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\textsuperscript{21} 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 \textit{Capi} could be challenged.

2. Phylacteries on Hol ha-Moed

In the spring of 1825, Isaac Reggio petitioned the \textit{Capi} to allow into the synagogue those Jews choosing not to put on phylacteries during \textit{hol ha-moed} (intermediate days of festivals). Reggio based his request on a certain rabbinic responsum. The \textit{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 \textit{Capi} made their permission conditional upon the approval of Isaac’s father, Abram Vita, the town’s rabbinic authority.\textsuperscript{22}

To wear or not to wear phylacteries during prayer services on \textit{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 \textit{Shulhan Arukh}.\textsuperscript{23} 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.  

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.  

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).  

Matters seem to have come to a head once again in the fall of 1824. 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.  

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 *Shulhan 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. 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. 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.  

Isaac’s struggle over the rabbinate of Gorizia is documented in a dossier in the archive of the *Capitanato Circolare*, the local Gorizian authorities. 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*. 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. 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. Reggio recounted that the Gorizian Jewish community had written him a letter, summarily dismissing him from the post of acting rabbi (facendo funzione di Rabbino), which he had held for the previous nine years. The community had demanded that Reggio produce the community registers of births, matrimony, 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. Needless of his sentimental attachment to the registers, they ordered him immediately to transfer them to the community’s possession.

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.” 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 Capì insisted that he follow “the established customs”; any possible reform required the agreement of the Capì and the restricted council. 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 Capì petitioned the Capitanato for confirmation of their own power.

At first the Capì’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 Capì reported to the Capitanato that Reggio had resigned from office, “to their deep regret.” Time there was not even a hint as to the impetus for Reggio’s resignation. Rid of Reggio at last, the Capì 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.

Stage 2

The need to replace Reggio sparked a crisis. 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. 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 Capì 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 Capì 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 Capì’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 Capit related that the petition had accused the community's leaders of religious misconduct. This, the Capit 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 Capit 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 Capit 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 Capit 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 Capit would guarantee a legal and disciplined session.44

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.45 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.46

Isaac's wealth came from his wife, Rachaelle, whom he married in 1808.47 Like the wealthy Sinigaglia, Isaac and Rachaelle owned property on Contrada Nobile.48 The abundance of their land holdings and financial dealings is documented in numerous court records.49 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 winepresses, 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)."50

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 7.26.51

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.52

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.53 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.\textsuperscript{54}

Reggio's financial circumstances could certainly explain such a magnanimous 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 \textit{Hakham}.\textsuperscript{55} 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. 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.\textsuperscript{57} 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.\textsuperscript{58} For those months Isaac and Abramo served together, with Isaac serving as acting rabbi \textit{(facendo funzioni di rabbino)} for all but halakhic matters.\textsuperscript{59}

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 \textit{Capi} report) by some of the community's principal taxpayers, lends weight to the mercenary factor.\textsuperscript{290}

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 \textit{Capi} into rehiring Reggio. In the controversy over Reggio's permanent replacement they employed slander in pursuit of the same goal: by accusing the \textit{Capi} of religious abuses, the petitioners stigmatized them as impious.

An ideological reading is even more plausible as far as the \textit{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 \textit{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.

\section*{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, \textit{Be'ihinat 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. 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. 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. 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.

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.

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. 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. In small intimate communities, anonymity is impossible and social pressures are intensified. 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. As much or more than ideological factors, temporal forces were what buffeted and ultimately upended Isaac Reggio.

Notes
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 reaction, see Algemeine Zeitung des Juden­thums 18 (1854) pp. 73–86. Reggio had clearly gotten under Rapoport’s skin.
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 Moise Ehrenreich, “Isaac S. Reggio,” L’Educatore Israelita 1 (1856) 74.
8. 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.
13. 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.