**Portrayals of Women with Books:**

**Female (Il)literacy in Medieval Jewish Culture**[1]

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The thirteenth century saw a new type of Hebrew book, the Passover haggadah (pl. haggadot). Bound together with the general prayer book in the earlier Middle Ages, the haggadah emerged as a separate, independent volume around that time.[2] Once the haggadah was born as an individual book, a considerable number of illustrated specimens were created, of which several have come down to us. Dated to the period from approximately 1280 to 1500, these books were produced in various regions of the Iberian peninsula and southern France (*Sepharad*), the German lands (*Ashkenaz*), France, and northern Italy. Almost none of these manuscripts contain a colophon, and in most cases it is not known who commissioned them. No illustrated haggadah from the Islamic realm exists, since there the decoration of books normally followed the norms of Islamic culture, where sacred books received only ornamental embellishments.

The haggadah is usually a small, thin, handy volume and contains the liturgical text to be recited during the *seder*, the privately held family ceremony taking place at the eve of Passover. The central theme of the holiday is the retelling of the story of Israel's departure from Egypt; the precept is to teach it to one's offspring.[3] The haggadah contains the text to fulfill this precept. Hence this is not simply a collection of prayers to accompany a ritual meal; rather, using the

book and reading its entire text is the essence of the Passover holiday. The haggadah, thus, is really about studying, teaching, retelling, and, eventually, reading.

As part of the illustration program, numerous depictions of individuals involved in various stages of preparations towards the holiday, during the ceremony, and at the *seder* table appear in several of the haggadot. They are found in all realms of European Jewry. These images offer a lively insight into medieval life; they portray preparation rituals, customs, and social norms.[4] Usually reflecting matters of the religious and ritual law ("*halakhah*") with great accuracy, these images can be approached as relatively realistic portrayals of real life.[5] The *seder* table representations (figs. 1–9) show the entire family, adult men, women, youths, and young children. Clearly visible on these tables are open books displayed in front of some of the participants, among them several women. My following remarks focus on these women with books and raise questions about a possible interpretation of these images in relation to female literacy. Books in the hands of their depicted protagonists can have either symbolic meanings, or they can communicate issues of specific socio-cultural relevance. I shall first argue that the people represented in these *seder* table images are meant to "portray" the owners of the haggadot, establishing thus a claim to a certain degree of realism (although not in stylistic terms). I shall also argue that late medieval images of figures with a book, in particular with open books constitute an iconographic convention, one that reflects a socio-cultural phenomenon. This new iconographic convention of female reader will then be looked at in its broader context: our current knowledge about female literacy in the various Jewish realms.

Let us first take a look at the images in question. Some interesting patterns can be observed. In the earliest copies of the illustrated haggadah from the late thirteenth century images of the *seder* table figure only very rarely. In the Birds Head Haggadah there are two such

depictions, one showing a table without any books, the other presenting a couple, while only the man has a book in front of him (fig. 1).[6] The same applies to a northern French miscellany from 1282, now in London (fig. 2).[7] These early manuscripts are followed in the first half of the fourteenth century by a group of richly illuminated Sephardi haggadot from Castile and the Crown of Aragon. They do contain several representations of the family at the table. As their thirteenth-century counterparts from France and the German lands, none of these depict women with open books in front of them. An example is a Catalan haggadah from the mid-fourteenth century, now in London (fig. 3).[8] The image shows three open haggadot, one in front of the older man who most likely conducts the ceremony; the others are read by two young beardless youths. None of the women to the right has a haggadah. The same applies to an image of the *seder* table in another, slightly earlier Catalan haggadah, also in the British Library (fig. 4), showing men reading from books, while the two women in the center seem to listen attentively, but have no codices.[9] Both men touch their books adding further stress on the apparent actual use of the books. For example, the youth to the left is participating in the reading, pointing at some text portion with his hand. No Sephardi image of the *seder* hints in any way at women using a book, holding one, pointing at it, or anything of the like.[10] The tradition of haggadah illustration ceased in Iberia around the middle of the fourteenth century and no evidence from the fifteenth century, with regard to women holding books can be gathered.

As concerns the Ashkenazi realm, including the Ashkenazi community in Italy, the situation changes quite strikingly after the fourteenth century. The representation of reading women in the so-called First Darmstadt Haggadah (fig. 5) from the early fifteenth century presents a particularly striking case.[11] Two elaborate full-page miniatures show several women within an architectural framework.[12] Most of them hold open books in their hands. The

compartments formed by the architectural frame appear like rooms in a school, and some of the women seem to be instructed by male scholars. It is quite clear from the overall setting that these women are not just holding books, but reading and studying them. Several of the people shown on these pages with an open book, the women included, touch the book with one of their hands. As in the above mentioned Catalan example, the touching of the book, as if to point at the text, seems to indicate the active use of the book, which is thus not approached as a mere attribute. Several more such reading women appear on other pages of the First Darmstadt Haggadah. Determining an overall meaning through which to interpret these images, however, remains a challenge. August Mayer assumed that the images in general emphasize the act of reading;[13] Bezalel Narkiss suggested that the manuscript was either illustrated by a Christian artist who did not know the traditional decoration program, or that it may have been given as a gift to a young woman;[14] Rachel Wischnitzer concluded that by the fifteenth century women used their own haggadot and assumed that they were written in the vernacular.[15] The issue of reading women, or rather women studying from books, clearly seems to matter in these images and this evidence appears in striking contrast to the lack of books near the Sephardi women in their images of the *seder* several decades later.

More examples from the Ashkenazi realm and Italy can be found. Around 1425 a Miscellany was written in the Rhineland, perhaps in Mainz. It includes also a haggadah, whose first page is illustrated by a *seder* table (fig. 6). In the center there is a couple sharing a book, while the woman is pointing at the text.[16] During the 1450s Joel ben Simeon, a well-known scribe and artist originating from the Rhineland immigrated to northern Italy,[17] where he participated in the production of a haggadah, now in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem.[18] At the beginning of the haggadah text the *seder* table is shown with a large family

(fig. 7). In the center of the composition we see a woman with a large book in front of her, which she holds or touches with her hand.[19] Another example from c. 1465 appears in the Yahuda Haggadah, now in the Israel Museum; the woman, again, touches the book in front of her (fig. 8). The same applies to the Second Nuremberg Haggadah, which was produced in the same workshop and is now kept in the private collection of David Sofer in London.[20]

A book in the hands of a protagonist can mean different things. In the hands of an Evangelist in Christian art, for example, it is an attribute that designates authorship. In the hands of a lay figure it can mean piety, or the patronage of literature.[21] Whereas some modern scholars focus on a symbolic meaning of the iconography of the book,[22] others prefer to emphasize its socio-cultural implications with regard to reading practices, literacy, and education.[23] Whereas representations of the Virgin's encounter with Gabriel from early medieval art show Mary with empty hands, in the thirteenth century she began to appear with a closed book. From the fourteenth she is depicted while reading an open book. Around the same time female owners of Books of Hours also began to be represented while reading an open book, and recent research has shifted our attention from the possible symbolic meanings of these books to an interpretation that links them with literacy, knowledge, and reading habits.[24] Denis Green interpreted images of the reading Virgin not only as indicative of female literacy, but as a model for secular women to engage in the reading of prayers.[25]

The overall character of the *seder* table representations taken from real life imply that their meaning should, indeed, be sought in the socio-cultural sphere rather than in the symbolic one. Moreover, the images of figures involved in various Passover related actions, I suggest, are meant to represent the owners of the haggadot. One of the multiple examples showing a man with a cup of wine is found in another of Joel ben Simeon's haggadot (fig. 9).[26] Very lavishly

dressed this wealthy man is not a personal portrait, but, rather, defines the patron of the book in terms of his social class. The same would therefore apply to the *seder* table representations showing the family of the owner. Support for this suggestion comes from yet another one of Joel's books. In 1469 he wrote and decorated a small holiday prayer-book of the Roman rite[27] by the request of "Rav Menahem the son of Samuel of blessed memory, for his daughter, the honorable and intelligent, pleasant virgin Lady Maraviglia, that she should live to pray with it, she and her offspring, and her offsprings' offspring, until the end [of time]."[28] The manuscript also contains a haggadah with illustrations. Among these we find the image of a young lady, presumably Lady Maraviglia, holding a *matsah* (fig. 10).

This image, which replaces the conventional man with that of a young woman while the colophon explicitly states that the book was intended for a young lady, indeed indicates that this and other representations of the kind were meant to represent the books' owners. These are not portraits in the modern sense of the term. In Maraviglia's case it does not display any individual characteristics; rather her face somewhat uniformly reflect Joel's typical style of finely drawn delicate features. Even though these are not individualized portraits, but rather define the patrons as a social group, it is apparent that Joel meant to offer an homage to his patrons, and to Maraviglia specifically, the female owner of the book he prepared, in expectation perhaps of a proximate marriage that would provide the offspring and the offspring's offspring mentioned in the colophon. It is likely that Joel, in presenting such a visual reference to the owners of his work, may have followed a common norm for such books.

The representations of the family at the *seder* table demonstrate that even though these books were commissioned by the male head of the household who paid for the manuscript, the use and function of the haggadah concerned the entire family, and thus they address the women

as well. The wives of these wealthy husbands were often the co-owners or inheritors of the family property, and books counted among these objects.[29] Following the visual evidence, however, not everywhere or not at all times did they use the books they would have owned together with their husbands. These observations, and the striking distinction between women using a haggadah and those who do not, seem to be indicative of different attitudes and practices with regard to female literacy regardless of documented ownership.

Other images in the haggadot of individuals with open books in front of them or in their hands portray the rabbinic scholars mentioned in the text and illustrate citations of their sayings (fig. 11). They offer a further aid towards coming to terms with the meaning of the books in the hands of protagonists and determine to what degree we can approach these images as representatives of an iconographic convention. The open books in the hands of these scholars, or on a lectern in front of them, is an attribute of their scholarly status. They do not necessarily portray them as the authors of specific texts, but, rather, imply that these men had undergone the full curriculum of rabbinic education.[30] In these images the book thus is an object of iconographic significance indicating knowledge obtained through education. The motif of the reading scholar developed into one of the most common iconographic topoi in haggadah illustration, and it appears across all the cultural realms in which Jews lived.

Even though the figures assembled at the *seder* table are not (all) scholars this meaning of the open book as an attribute of knowledge and education may, to some degree, reflect also on them. It certainly indicates literacy and the ability to use this skill in the performance of rituals. The person who is referred to in Hebrew sources and in many haggadot as *ba'al bayit*, "head of the household" (literally: the owner of the house),[31] is usually shown with a book. He is the person who conducts the *seder* and in principle it would have been sufficient that he recites the

text, while the rest of the participants listen. This would certainly have been good enough to fulfill the precept of teaching one's sons. But this was not always the case in the wealthy medieval household: the images clearly imply that several other family members –among them women– were equipped with books.

It appears thus that illustrated haggadot developed the image of reading figures as a sort of iconographic formula of literacy and knowledge obtained through education, a convention well established by 1300. About one hundred years later the image of the female user of the haggadah emerged in Ashkenaz and Italy. Such representations appear frequently enough for us to approach it as yet another iconographic convention. This convention is strikingly lacking in the Sephardi group of haggadot of the first half of the fourteenth century, our sole evidence for that tradition in Iberia. Likewise is it absent in the thirteenth-century German and northern French examples. The consistent recurrence of these images in the later haggadot seems to reflect a norm that existed in certain strata of Jewish society of Ashkenaz and Italy in the fifteenth century to an extent that an iconographic formula could develop. How can we then explain the lack of this convention in the Sephardi manuscripts of the haggadah?

Having established these images of women with books at the *seder* table as "portraits" of literate women who co-owned the books together with their husbands, it is now time to sketch the broader context of this suggestion, the current stage of knowledge about female literacy in Jewish society.[32] My following remarks will focus on these observations and examine them against the background of what is known about how the education of women was approached in the different realms of Jewish culture. Several scholars, whose work will be discussed below, have addressed female education and literacy in recent decades, and their conclusions basically draw from two different kinds of sources: rabbinic stances, which can differ widely and which

underwent several developments over the centuries from the talmudic era to early modern Italy; and accounts concerning individual cases of educated women, some dated, some of unknown timeframe. Scholars have examined evidence from the Islamic countries, the Christian realm of Central Europe, the Sephardi world (part of the Islamic realm in the early Middle Ages, but belonging to the Christian domain since the middle of the thirteenth century), and Italy, home to one of the oldest Jewish communities on the one hand, but since the fourteenth century opening up to numerous immigrants from both Ashkenaz and Sepharad. Within this geo-cultural framework the evidence drawn from the source material needs to be looked at chronologically as well, a task that for some realms can be extremely difficult as the evidence often comes undated.

Modern scholars agree on one basic axiom: whereas education among women beyond basic matters of how to keep a Jewish household and how to observe laws of purity was not the norm, several exceptional cases of knowledgeable women can be observed in all realms. Differences exist first with respect of the nature of this "basic education." For example, did the education of women imply only oral teaching of basic Hebrew and prayers and rules of purity, or did it include also read material?[33] The images in the First Darmstadt of women studying from books attended to by male scholars, seem to indicate the latter. This however, does not necessarily apply to all sources referring to female education in some way or the other. Second, in the interpretation of these exceptional cases in their broader context and in evaluating the role they can play in reconstructing an overall image about female education. Nothing specific is known about if or when this situation changed at some point during the late Middle Ages. Jewish female literacy is usually taken for granted for the sixteenth century and beyond, when printed books in Yiddish and Ladino began to appear on the market.[34] Evaluated as an early modern cultural phenomenon this does not reflect on our understanding of any developments with regard

to female literacy in what is usually referred to as the Middle Ages. In the following I will revisit this material along three different axes: the nature of the source material; the cultural realms; and the chronological framework.

Rabbinic texts provide what is considered the "normative" attitudes of the authorities to questions of female education and literacy. Most of the evidence available was collected and analyzed in 2004 by Avraham Grossman.[35] Specific cases describing knowledgeable women are known from documents that had been found in the Cairo Genizah. Ever since this treasure of disposed Hebrew documents from different areas of the Islamic realm was discovered in the nineteenth-century in a synagogue in Cairo[36] it had been searched for evidence of medieval Jewish life in the Near East and northern Africa. What concerns the status of women and their education in this cultural realm, this material was first discussed by Shlomo D. Goitein during the 1970s,[37] and later re-examined first by Colette Sirat in 1990,[38] by Judith Baskin in 1998 and 2000,[39] and most recently by Grossman. Information about specific women in the Christian countries who are known to have received a higher education appears for the most part in *responsa* collections and other rabbinic material.[40] This bulk of material was studied by Renée Lévine Melammed for Iberia,[41] in the above-mentioned works by Sirat, Baskin,[42] and Grossman for the entire Christian realm, and by Howard E. Adelman for Italy.[43] Particularly revealing also are some colophons by female scribes published first by Sirat, and recently re-considered in a collaborative study by Baskin and Michael Riegler.[44] The latter study further discusses colophons that refer explicitly to the use of books by women.

These studies collect and interpret a great deal of material; however, they also suffer from some large lacunae. Information about rabbinic attitudes to female education ("the norm") is limited to some mishnaic statements, a dictum by Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, d. 1204),

the most outstanding authority of the Sephardic realm, a few remarks by several Ashkenazi scholars of Pietist background, two references to scholars of the French school ("Tosafists"), and some late medieval statements made by authorities from the German lands.[45] Very little is known about the attitudes of early medieval authorities of the ritual law from Babylonia or their Sephardi colleagues of the high and late Middle Ages. Likewise almost no information is made accessible on Italian rabbinic authorities. A great deal of our knowledge about female education is, however, based on accounts about unusually knowledgeable women ("the exceptions to the norm"). Islamic and Christian attitudes to female education have been discussed in medievalist research, and, grounded in the expectation that the patterns of social life in the gentile environment reflect those of the Jews as well,[46] they have to some extent been worked into considerations of Jewish education (especially in Grossman's study) but no cohesive image is yet available on how gentile practices, both normative and exceptional, would have affected Jewish attitudes toward female education and literacy.

In consequence our view of possible cultural differences among the various realms of Jewish life is wanting, and occasionally results in somewhat dichotomizing distinctions. Baskin approaches female education comparatively presenting material from the Islamic realm vis-à-vis evidence from Christian Europe, an approach that had been avoided in Sirat's and Grossman's treatment of the material. In Islamic countries, Baskin explains, the women were secluded and polygamy was a norm whereas in Central Europe they could move in public, as Christian women did, and they lived in monogamous families, a situation that would reflect also on their education.[47] Hence, in the Islamic realm the chances for female education among Jews would have been yet smaller than in Central Europe. Iberia has received significantly less attention in matters of the status of women in general and their education in particular. As in all other aspects

of Jewish life the practices prevailing in the Islamic realm applied also to al-Andalus and largely remained that way in Iberia even after the most of it came under Christian rule by the middle of the thirteenth century. Levine Melammed argues that the situation of female education in Iberia would thus have been particularly dire,[48] a conclusion that was seemingly confirmed in a recent paper by Asunción Blasco Martínez on the exclusion of Jewish women from public life in Aragon.[49] A somewhat different voice was recently heard by Sílvia Planas Marcé, who studied archival evidence mainly from Girona coming to the conclusion that upper-class women in that city were fairly educated and literate.[50]

At first sight the evidence from medieval haggadah illustration seems, indeed, to suggest a dichotomy in geo-cultural terms and to indicate that Jewish women in Christian-ruled Iberia did not, or could not read the haggadah, whereas those in Central Europe were sufficiently literate to follow the text. A closer look, however, brings in the chronological parameter: the Sephardi haggadot are all from the early fourteenth century, whereas the visual evidence of reading women from Ashkenaz and Italy proceeds from the fifteenth. Current research leaves open the question of whether female education at least for the upper classes may have become something of a respectable "norm," rather than remaining an "exception" at some point during the later Middle Ages. The fact that the pictorial representations of women using books on the *seder* table create a recurring iconographic formula seem to indicate exactly such a process. That is, exceptions to social norms do not necessarily create iconographic formulae, whereas normative social patterns can potentially do just that. The textual sources are in no way conclusive in this matter, and it is beyond my task here to decide whether they are simply too scarce or lack interpretation and in-depth research. It seems, however, that the visual material is able to shed some light.

Let me first summarize the "norms," the rabbinic stances concerning female education. Talmudic law implies that only men are obliged to study the Torah. Likewise men are obliged to pass their knowledge along to their sons but as the sources explicitly state, not to their daughters.[51] Whereas Eleazar ben Azariah suggested that women may, to some degree, learn the Torah,[52] Eliezer ben Hyrcanus went as far as to define female knowledge of Torah in declared negative terms. In his opinion this would lead to lewdness and lack of modesty.[53] Abahu went yet further and claimed that knowledge would make women devious.[54]

Official expressions on female education from the Middle Ages tend to follow the lead of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. However, as Grossman points out, the practice often diverged from that principle, and even official statements occasionally tended to soften the original stance. Maimonides expressed a clear reluctance towards the education of women. First of all, he reminds us, the ritual law, the *halakhah*, does not prescribe to educate women. He also argues that most women would not address their attention properly to the issues studied. Eliezer's argument that study leads to lewdness, however, is put solely into the context of the oral law; it does not apply to the Bible.[55] Later, in the thirteenth century Moses of Coucy followed Maimonides' lead and expressed similar concerns about women obtaining religious knowledge.[56] Other authorities, however, seem to have favored some basic religious education for women. In the middle of the twelfth century an anonymous student of Peter Abélard in France lamented the poor level of education among Christians, contrasting it to the Jewish practice (normative or exceptional?), where "not only [the] sons, but [the] daughters" are "put to letters ….. for the understanding of God's law."[57] At the turn of the thirteenth century the German Pietists across the Rhine argued in favor of a basic female knowledge of the Torah. Women should know what is prohibited and allowed. However, the meaning of the laws should not be taught to them.[58]

Likewise, hidden secrets of the Torah, by which they meant mystic and esoteric teachings, should be restricted.[59] Another example was Isaac of Corbeil, also in the thirteenth century who claimed that women would certainly benefit from studying the commandments.[60] In the middle of the fourteenth century, Eliezer ben Samuel Halevi of Mainz expressed his hope that both his sons and his daughters might acquire a religious education.[61] It is not entirely clear if this sort of religious education of girls alluded to by both Isaac of Corbeil and Eleazar of Mainz, was based on reading texts or implied an oral transmission of information. Likewise the approach of Jacob Molin, also known as *Maharil*, in the early fifteenth century is not unambiguous. On the one hand he followed the argument of Eliezer of Hyrcanus, Maimonides, and Moses of Coucy. He objected to the publication of halakhic guidebooks for women in the vernacular, but Grossman points out that the context for this attitude is Jacob Molin's general fear that halakhic knowledge would be popularized among ignorants. His stance would thus not be in particular discriminative of women. In the same context, he, indeed, spoke about halakhically knowledgeable women in a neutral, even positive manner.[62]

Information about medieval rabbinic attitudes to female education from Italy is regrettably sparse. Isaiah of Trani suggests in the thirteenth century that fathers may teach the scriptures to their daughters.[63] Most of the Italian evidence, however, comes from the early modern period. Under the assumption that changes occurred gradually and not suddenly, scholars project on the later Middle Ages as the period that made such changes possible. For example, Adelman discusses records from Jewish letters from the early modern period suggesting that in Italian Jewish culture female literacy was considered normative; there were women teachers who were entrusted with the education of young girls.[64] In the work of the sixteenth-century scholar Samuel Archivolti, female scholarship was defined as a virtue. If a woman is intellectually able,

she is obliged to study Torah and philosophy. Archivolti noted that most women do not pursue advanced study, but what is important is that he saw female study *per se* in a much more positive light than his medieval colleagues from other areas of Christian Europe.[65] It is likely, scholars maintain, that Archivolti developed these ideas not out of the blue, but in a broader context of earlier Italian Jewish attitudes to female education. Other sources, however, indicate that the attitudes to female education could also be quite ambivalent. In 1646 Judah del Bene still judged female education as dangerous and destructive.[66]

Having come to terms with the somewhat sparse information about the "norms," let us now take a look at the "exceptions." Even though there is no visual evidence from Islamic countries my remarks here will address this realm as well, since its culture is thought to have had a determining influence on Jewish society in post-reconquest Iberia. Several Genizah documents mention female professionals of different kinds. Some of these, especially in the field of medicine, may have required the use of written knowledge. One document indicates a woman specialist for eye-diseases.[67] One would assume that this profession required some degree of literate education beyond the traditional issues of midwifing, a traditional female profession, but both Goitein and Baskin argued that the medical profession would not necessarily have been practiced by these women in a scientific manner, and that these women's medical skills were acquired orally.[68] Some women are known to have run businesses,[69] but the sources make it not clear to what extent they were assisted by male relatives, or had the skills, literacy being one of them, to deal with professional issues on their own.

Other sources provide firmer ground with regard to literacy among certain women. Perhaps the earliest evidence is that of Dunash ben Labrat's wife in the late tenth century in Al-Andalus, who wrote a poem.[70] Qasmunah, the daughter of Samuel Hanaggid, in the early

eleventh is another case; she is known to have been widely appreciated for her poetic skills.[71] As appealing as this evidence about two poetesses seems to be, it offers no tool towards clear-cut conclusions concerning their ability to read and write, since these poems could theoretically be composed orally and put into writing by men. Striking, however, –and more conclusive– are numerous references to women who were active as teachers. Most of these can be dated (perhaps by coincidence?) to the twelfth century. An exchange of letters between a family in Cairo and Maimonides tells the story of a woman, who had been deserted by her husband. In order to maintain herself she ran a school together with her brother. Maimonides explicitly described her as a teacher and supported her way of life, given the husband fails to provide for her.[72] Interesting is also the case of the daughter of the head of the rabbinic academy of Bagdad in the late twelfth century, Samuel ben Ali (c. 1194). The Jewish traveler Petahia of Regensburg referred to her as an expert on the Bible and rabbinic scholarship, who taught male students through a small latticed window, so that she would be secluded from their sight.[73] Samuel ben Judah Hamaghrebi, a twelfth-century convert to Islam, wrote an autobiography, in which he mentioned his mother and her two sisters as being literate in both Hebrew and Arabic and well versed in Torah studies.[74] These women and others were apparently taught by their male relatives. From the end of the fifteenth century, finally, comes the striking evidence of Miriam, daughter to a well-known family of scribes in Yemen, Benaya, who copied a Pentateuch.[75]

Undated evidence is also abundant. We learn about fathers who taught their daughters some rabbinic knowledge, and women who studied together with their husbands or other male relatives.[76] Another Geniza document mentions one Abu al-Manzur whose mother was a teacher.[77] There is evidence that women occupied various functions in schools, often institutions that were run by their male relatives.[78] In Cairo there was also a "Syngogue of women teachers,"

where male children were taught.[79] We also learn about a woman at her deathbed who made great efforts to guarantee a proper education for her daughter.[80] There are letters addressed to women, some being of a particular private nature and were thus most likely intended to be read by these women themselves.[81]

The stories of these women who must have been literate, made a living from teaching, wrote poetry, or copied manuscripts, thus indicate the rather high degree to which divergence from the rabbinic "norms" was allowed. In fact, Maimonides' statement seems to be the sole evidence for this "norm," as nothing is known about early medieval attitudes from the middle East and Iberia to female education. We have seen that even Maimonides himself makes such allowances, if the social circumstances demand it.

Grossman argues that, in fact, in Islam, "there is no opposition …. to the acquiring of education by women, such as that found among several of the Jewish sages in the Mishnah, in the Talmud, and even in the Middle Ages."[82] As the fifteenth-century Mamluk historian al-Maqrizi in Egypt reports, there were women who functioned as transmitters of the *hadith*, Muhammad's oral traditions.[83] Others composed poetry,[84] and numerous specific women were declaredly appreciated in society for their knowledge. Even though some girls would study in public institutions, especially in Fatimid Egypt, most of the learned women in Islamic society acquired their education within the private sphere of their homes, and no law limited their access to knowledge, even though some sources speak about the dangers of knowledgeable women.[85] Knowledge in Islamic society did not always depend on literacy though, and it was often acquired by both men and women through memorization. We do know, however, of female scribes in Fatimid society.[86] Most learned women came from scholarly families. Seclusion of

Islamic women, it appears, did not necessarily have an effect on the levels of female education common in the upper classes.[87]

As in the Islamic realm Jewish women in the Christian countries occasionally learned crafts and trades, and some acquired professional knowledge that would require literacy. A fourteenth-century Hebrew treatise on Obstetrics from Iberia requires explicitly that midwives be literate.[88] Also in Christian Iberia we hear of women who practiced medicine.[89] A small number of Jewish women in Aragon engaged in private Torah study.[90] As elsewhere, upper-class women in Catalunya, in Girona in particular, were most likely literate in the vernacular, as they were involved occasionally in family business. As Planas Marcé points out, however, "some Jewish women in Girona owned Hebrew books for their own personal use."[91] All in all, the evidence from Christian Iberia about both the rabbinic "norms" and possible "exceptions" is regrettably sparse, and conclusions can be drawn either in analogy to other realms, or based rather speculatively on arguments from silence.

In Central Europe some women of the upper classes, especially from rabbinic elite families enjoyed the privilege of higher education. As in other realms we know of women who were active in business.[92] Rashi, Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (d. 1105) had no sons but several daughters, and at least one of them is known to have been able to take dictation from her father to write down legal matters.[93] Around the same time Bellette, the sister of Isaac of Le Mans, was described as a woman of knowledge.[94] A century later we learn about the wife and daughter of Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (d. 1230), whom he described as learned women in his eulogy after they had been killed in an attack on their home.[95] An halakhic text from approximately the same time discusses whether one is allowed to read on the Sabbath to the light of a candle. This becomes particularly acute when the eve of Passover falls on a Sabbath eve. One is not suppose

to read on one's own, but only together with other people. In this context literate women are mentioned indicating that by the time this text was composed a woman who could read did not necessarily constitute a highly unusual phenomenon.[96] Christian documents from Augsburg from the fourteenth century mention female Jewish teachers as part of a general educational system. For example "frow Spientzen die schuolmaisterin" is mentioned in such contexts several times.[97] Abraham bar Ephraim in France explains that even though a woman is not obliged to study, in case she has sufficient knowledge and is able to teach her sons, she should receive payment.[98] In 1386 Hannah, the daughter of Menachem Hatsioni, wrote a copy of Isaac Corbeil's halakhic compilation *Sefer mitsvot qatan*;[99] and in 1454 we learn of Fromet, who copied an abridged version of the *Sefer Mordekhai*.[100]

Around the same time, an exchange of letters between Israel Isserlein (d. 1460) and a learned woman indicates that halakhic knowledge expressed by women could result in quite vexed reaction from some Rabbis.[101] In some contradiction Isserlein's own daughter-in-law is known to have learned Torah,[102] and his wife is known to have written a *responsum* in her husband's name.[103] This indicates that it was not female literacy as such that concerned Isserlein. At his time female literacy may, in fact, have been quite common and was not necessarily an issue. What Isserlein apparently meant is that women should not partake in rabbinic discourse nor argue with male scholars. It is also noteworthy, that even though Jewish women in Central Europe were not secluded in the way they were in the Islamic realms, Ashkenazi scholars did express concerns with the threats of intense contact between men and women and the dangers mutual attraction bore on the scholarship among men, if the two sexes were to meet during study.[104] Miriam Spira in the late fourteenth century, a sixteenth-century source tells us,

commonly taught her students from behind curtains, a practice that certainly reminds us of the daughter of Samuel ben Ali in Bagdad.[105]

It appears thus that some degree of education among Jewish women became more common towards the later Middle Ages. The evidence increases in the fifteenth century. Limited, however, was the scope of possibilities to apply that knowledge. Evidence about knowledgeable women, the apparent "exceptions to the norms," seems to reveal a similar image in all realms. Most scholars argue that a well-founded education would have been the privilege of some daughters from elite families, especially if they did not bear sons.[106] We have seen that their stories have been discussed as exceptions to the norms. We should bear in mind though that these norms had been laid out by the rabbinic fathers of these elite daughters themselves. How exceptional were the stories of Dulce and Bellette in the household of Eleazar of Worms really, if we know that the German Pietists of whom Eleazar counted himself one, recommended female education? At least in the context of Ashkenazi society, as much as it may have been influenced by pietistic stances, female literacy may at some point have passed that thin line from the "exception" to the "norm," not of the masses, but a norm for the upper classes and intellectual circles. Crossing the line from the "exceptional" to the "normative" creates the circumstances in which an iconographic convention can develop. We do not know when exactly this process occurred, but by the first half of the fifteenth century female literacy seems to have been a respectable norm and must have been quite common among the upper classes.[107]

We have seen that our knowledge about the norms regarding female education in Italy is particularly scarce. The available evidence indicates vaguely that here the "norms" may have been somewhat different from other realms, and already in the thirteenth century female education was approached positively. As elsewhere there were outstanding cases of female

scholarship, women who knew the scriptures and had a deeper insight into matters of rabbinic tradition and ritual law.[108] Interesting is the evidence about Pola, a female scribe in Verona and Rome, the daughter of Abraham Sofer, who copied two manuscripts in the late thirteenth century, and another in 1306.[109] Pola thus predated her Yemenite and Ashkenazi colleagues by almost one hundred years. Baskin's and Riegler's study lists also a whole group of manuscripts from Italy for which it is explicitly mentioned, that they were intended for use by women.[110] Eight of them were in Hebrew, others were translated into Judeo-Italian. There may have been several more of them: Maraviglia's prayerbook of 1469, for example, is not included in Baskin's and Riegler's survey. These books certainly indicate that women owned books, could read them, and used them for ritual purposes. From the records listed by Baskin and Riegler, they did so evidently from at least the late fourteenth century. The fact that these colophons speak about women owning books intended explicitly for their own use is important. Everywhere in the Jewish world books were owned by women from wealthy families. They are included in lists of dowries and inheritances. Dowries, however, played primarily an economic role, determining the status of married women and guaranteeing therefore their financial wellbeing during their marriage. Female patronage in such economic terms does not imply that the listed books were necessarily read and used by their owners; rather, that they formed part of their property.[111] The above-mentioned Italian colophons either signed by female copyists or marking books written for female patrons, tell a different story.[112] Adelman and Tali Berner, finally, discuss evidence about female Torah teachers for boys in early modern Italy,[113] and Grossman, assuming that they continued some sort of tradition, suggests that female teachers may have been fairly common in Italy also during the later Middle Ages.[114] It seems thus apparent that in Italy female education

and literacy crossed the line from the "exceptional" to the "normative" around the end of the fourteenth century.[115]

The literacy question touches upon another issue: to what extent were women involved in the performance of rituals,[116] especially those that required reading? Jewish women received religious training to keep a kosher household, but most scholars assume that in all realms this kind of knowledge was transmitted to them by oral teaching from mother to daughter. In a recent study Elisheva Baumgarten points out, however, that there is firm evidence that even in this field male members of the household may have been more dominant than female.[117] But how about participation in other ritual aspects beyond these practical issues of how to keep a kosher house?

There is some evidence that Jewish women in the Islamic realm frequently attended synagogue.[118] Elka Klein, however, observed that –at least in the Crown of Aragon– Jewish authorities did not encourage synagogue attendance by women. This corresponds, she argued, with the law prohibiting women to act as prayer-leaders or to read from the Torah.[119] These evidences sketch an image of rather limited female participation in the Sephardi realms. On the other hand in 1325 we learn about a female synagogue leader in Saragossa, a certain Rabissa Çeti.[120] It is possible that the Muslim norms with regard to separation[121] influenced the Jewish practice insofar as it led ultimately to the separation of women from men, and the evolution of women sections in synagogues first in Iberia and only later in Ashkenaz. The architectural evidence is not entirely clear in this matter. The sudden appearance of women's sections in the fourteenth century can either indicate that prior to that period women did not attend synagogue at all, or, on the other hand, that they did indeed attend services, but were not restricted to separate sections. It has also been proposed that women had their own, separate synagogues with Torah shrines indicating that they might have conducted services independently.[122]

A somewhat different situation can be observed for Ashkenaz. Baumgarten discusses a tendency among Ashkenazi women observable during the eleventh and the twelfth century to perform certain religious practices and to fulfill certain obligations that are supposed to be restricted to men. Whereas at the time this tendency met with approval on the side of some Rabbis, limits were put in place towards the end of the thirteenth century, especially by Meir ben Barukh of Rothenburg (d. 1293). Before the late thirteenth century, until Meir forbade it, for example, women functioned occasionally as godmothers at circumcisions.[123]

Female attendance in the synagogue is widely documented for Ashkenaz from at least the late twelfth century. Isaac of Vienna encourages the Jews in his vicinity to take to the synagogue not only boys, but also girls.[124] Women were allowed and encouraged to recite certain blessings in Hebrew, even though they were not required to do so by the ritual law.[125] They could be counted in the quorum of three or ten necessary to recite the blessing over meals (not the statutory prayer, though). Grossman discusses a reference to Meir of Rothenburg allowing women in priestly communities to accept a call to the Torah reading under special circumstances. This certainly falls under the rubric of exception, but the conjunction to the actual act of reading the Torah is remarkable. Even though this does not imply that every woman actually read by herself from the Torah, there is something quite meaningful in allowing a woman to partake in this ritual act of public study.[126]

Several women prayer-leaders are known from the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries who guided other women during synagogue services: among them was Dulce, the afore-mentioned wife of Eleazar of Worms. Bellette, her thirteen-year old daughter, was praised by her father for having learned all the prayers from her mother.[127] Several decades later, in 1275, Urania of Worms is mentioned on her tombstone as reciting "*piyyutim* for the women."[128]

Richenza, another female cantor died during the persecutions of 1298 in Nuremberg.[129] The involvement of women in prayer and synagogue services did not necessarily depend on their knowledge of Hebrew. For both men and women a proper understanding of the prayers uttered during the services is crucial. Therefore rabbinic sources of all times permit the use of the vernacular during prayer.[130] This applies, as Grossman points out, also to the recitation of the haggadah on the eve of Passover.[131] Observations made about the participation of women in prayer rituals imply that women did not necessarily always follow the services through the use of a written text. It is possible that they had learned to memorize the texts by heart through oral communication. The mention of female prayer-leaders in the women's sections, who repeated the recitation as they were uttered in the men section by the male *hazan*, seems to indicate, however, that at least these women used books, as did the male prayer-leaders in the men's sections. Moreover, an evaluation of this evidence together with the information on literacy demonstrates that the possibility that reading was involved during female participation in rituals was very likely. Our images of women reading the haggadah back up that assumption.

Similar evidence exists for Italy. Jewish women in Italy could read Hebrew, prayed commonly, and some even wore phylacteries.[132] A so-called "time-bound" commandment the wearing of phylacteries principally applies only to men, and the question is if women are forbidden to perform such time-bound commandments (observed only at certain times), or simply are not obliged to do so.[133] As we have seen, Lady Maraviglia owned her own prayer-book. And just as in the north of the Alps there were female prayer guides in the women's sections of the synagogues.[134]

Conclusions from the forgoing discussions are, in fact, twofold. They can be drawn on the general methodological level and concern the question how written sources can interact with visual evidence in research into cultural history. On a more specific level they offer insight into the lives of Jewish upper-class women and their levels of education. The references discussed here –textual evidence in conjunction with the visual material– indicate first that since the thirteenth century rabbinic authorities in Central Europe began to be increasingly positive towards female education and the involvement of women in public rituals. It appears that the participation of women in public rituals would have been considered a virtue by most Ashkenazi scholars, and scholars discuss in detail the thrust of female piety from the late eleventh century on. Unfortunately, evidence from middle-Eastern and Sephardi sources beyond Maimonides is largely lacking, and Tosafist evidence is somewhat selective and scarce. It would be tempting to consult the visual evidence in an attempt to make up for the meager textual reference. This is, however, not as simple as it looks. Visual evidence does not simply supplement evidence from written records.

Klein showed eloquently how difficult it is to evaluate fully the medieval source material, and how easy it is to slip into dichotomizing views. The scarcity of evidence can indeed lead to polarizing conclusions about men vs. women, exceptions vs. norms, the Islamic realm vs. Christian countries in Central Europe. Even our brief glimpse here shows that norms changed, and that exceptions to the norms occurred everywhere. In the context of Catalan women in the public sphere Klein observed methodological issues that apply to other questions as well: "True, Catalan Jewish women faced certain constraints which men did not. While women had a place in the synagogue, they might frequent it less often…Travel would have been more difficult for women, and they may have been more hesitant to undertake it… None of these constraints,

however, stopped women from playing an active role, from engaging in business, or from protecting their interests. The limitations on women were relative rather than absolute."[135] This not only shows that no clear-cut or dichotomizing conclusions can be drawn with respect to the situation of women, but that these constraints met the women's own expectations and norms.

The question is not how many women could read, whether there were differences in this respect among the different Jewish societies, or whether we can draw clear divisions in geo-cultural terms. As problematic and scarce as the source material –both textual and visual– is, it shows nevertheless that at some point female education began to turn into a more broadly accepted norm. The images both reflect that norm as it apparently existed, and also present a model for it. They seem to indicate that literacy for ritual purposes was expected from a woman who would become the wife of a respectable husband and could actively participate in home (and synagogue) rituals.

A simple thought experiment will enable us to see how image and written record work together to receive a more complete picture. If we take the evidence drawn from written sources alone our conclusion about female literacy would be somewhat different. We would be able to define very clearly the "norms," concerning women and knowledge throughout the halakhic literature at all times and in all realms. The stories about exceptionally knowledgeable women would remain outstanding stories about a few privileged daughters from rabbinic families. It would be very difficult to evaluate their weight in relation to the halakhic norms. Had we, on the other hand, relied on the visual evidence alone, the result would likewise have been a somewhat distorted image of the past. Ideally we would expect the visual material to confirm the written evidence. However, this is not exactly the case. The visual evidence seems to indicate that in fourteenth century Sepharad women were illiterate and did not commonly practice reading. In

contrast Jewish women in Central Europe in the fifteenth century were using books for ritual purposes on a regular basis. We would have received a partial image of wide spread literacy among women. Due to the lack of full chronological coverage, our image based on visual evidence could turn into a trap of generalization and dichotomy. However, unlike the textual evidence, which seems to keep norm and exception apart, the recurrent image of women using the Passover haggadah so frequently employed in illustrations of the fifteenth century enables us to reach more subtle conclusions about theory and practice. Approaching the illustrations not as mere genre representations of medieval life, but more subtly bearing in mind issues of iconographic conventions and how they emerge, allow us to create a bridge between the textual and the pictorial. The latter is, in fact, able to cast light on the somewhat shady borderline between the exception and the norm.

As to when that thin border between the exceptional and the normative was crossed in the different Jewish realms, the sources are neither decisive nor conclusive. However, the visual evidence pointing at the emergence of an iconographic convention of women reading from books by the early fifteenth century adds a great deal of weight to these questions. Did Abélard's student imply some sort of normative female education for France already in the twelfth century, or was he talking about an exceptional situation? Did the German Pietists at the turn of the thirteenth create a norm or were their wives and daughters exceptions? It seems that the fact that by 1400 we can think of the depiction of reading women as an iconographic convention enables us to approach theses cases as normative, rather than exceptional. Isaac of Corbeil slightly later and Eleazer of Mainz towards the end of the fourteenth century think of female education as normative, and for Isserlein in the fifteenth a learned women was perhaps a common fact, even though he struggled with how to handle female intellect and halakhic reasoning. The evidence

from Italy from this period is also telling. Here we meet a female scribe already in the late thirteenth century and by the end of the fourteenth several women owned books for their own use. It is this process that our images document.

Modern scholarship tends to speak about male and female education in terms of a clear divide between the genders. Education at large, in fact, was instrumental in making this divide work as it provided both boys and girls with essential elements to define their roles in society.[136] In the Middle Ages the transgression of this divide was considered exceptional. The images I have discussed here from the realm of Christian Europe, however, seem to shed some additional light on the question of just how exceptional female education, literacy, and involvement in ritual practice really were.

The evidence from Iberia, finally, remains somewhat vague. The images under discussion date from the early decades of the fourteenth century, and later evidence from haggadah illustration is not extant. These images, with their striking lack of reading women, first of all confirm the formulaic nature of the later iconography found only in Central Europe. Moreover it tells us that in early fourteenth-century Iberia female education and literacy among Jewish women may not yet have crossed that border from the exceptional to the normative. Since both textual and visual sources from the fifteenth century are silent in this respect, the situation in fifteenth-century *Sepharad* may have just been similar to other regions.

[1] I am grateful to my former doctoral student Margo Stroumsa-Uzan, whose work on a group of early Books of Hours in their social context, and in particular a chapter on female literacy stimulated my interest to look at similar issues in Hebrew books. My thanks also go to Therese Martin, who organized the meeting on the role of women in medieval art, encouraging me to turn this interest into something more concrete. This paper is part of a larger project on 15th-century Jewish book culture conducted at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, 2010–11. Elisheva Baumgarten is to be thanked for reading an earlier version of this paper helping me to sort out my thoughts.

[2] This process is part of the gradual transition of medieval societies, both Jewish and Christian, from orality to textuality and literacy, see, for example, Talya Fishman. "Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer and the Textualization of Rabbinic Culture in Medieval Northern Europe." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004), pp. 313–331; and now *eadem*. *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures (Jewish Culture and Contexts)*, Philadelphia 2011.

[3] Ex 13:8.

[4] They are discussed in detail in Mendel Metzger. *La Haggada enluminée. Etude iconographique et stylistique des manuscrits enluminés et decoré de la Haggada du XIIIe au XVIe siècle*, Leiden, 1973, chap. A. For an example of images that I suggest to reflect social norms, see Katrin Kogman-Appel. "Another Look at the Illustrated Sephardic Haggadot: Communal and Social Aspects of the Passover Holiday." In *Temps i espais de la Girona Jueva*, ed. Silvia Planas Marcé, Gerona, forthcoming 2011.

[5] Methodological precautions, however, should be taken in evaluating such images as sole sources for customs etc.; see, for example, Elliott S. Horowitz. "The Way We Were: 'Jewish Life in the Middle Ages." *Jewish History* 1/1 (1986), pp. 75–90 criticizing the somewhat simplistic approach applied by Mendel and Thérèse Metzger. *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages. Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts of the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries,* Fribourg 1982.

[6] For a facsimile edition, see *The Birds Head Haggadah*, ed. Moshe Spitzer, Jerusalem 1967.

[7] George Margoliouth. *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London, 1899-1935, 4 vols, no. 1056; for a facsimile edition, see *The North French Hebrew Miscellany (British Library Add. MS 11639)*, ed. Jeremy Schonfield, London, 2003.

[8] Margoliouth. *Catalogue*, no. 605; for a detailed description of the manuscript with reproduction of almost all the decorated pages, see Bezalel Narkiss, et al. *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles*, pt. 1: *Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts*, London and Jerusalem. 1982, no. 13; for a facsimile edition, see *The Barcelona Haggadah. An Illuminated Passover Compendium from Fourteenth-Century Catalonia in Facsimile (MS British Library Additional 14761)*, ed. Jeremy Schonfield, London, 1992.

[9] Margoliouth. *Catalogue*, no. 608; Narkiss. *British Isles*, no. 12.

[10] This is the case in Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm 2411, fol. 39v, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*, ed. Benjamin Richler, Jerusalem, 2001, no. 00; Metzger. *La Haggada enluminée*, fig. 295; London, British Library, MS Or. 2737, fol. 91r, Margoliouth. *Catalogue*, no. 609; Narkiss. *British Isles*, no. 9; Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fol. 31v, *The Sarajevo Haggadah,* ed. Eugen Werber, Belgrade 1989;

Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS heb. 6, fol. 19v, Narkiss. *British Isles*, no. 15; for a facsimile edition, see *The Rylands Haggadah*. *A Medieval Sephardi Masterpiece in Facsimile. An Illuminated Passover Compendium from Mid-Fourteenth-Century from Catalonia in the Collections of the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, with a Commentary and a Cycle of Poems,* ed. Raphael Loewe, London, 1988; London, British Library, MS Or. 1404, fol. 7v, Narkiss. *British Isles*, no. 16; Budapest, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann collection, MS 422, p. 2; for a facsimile edition, see *Kaufmann Haggáda*, ed. Gabrielle Sed Rajna, Budapest 1990.

[11] For a facsimile edition, see *Die Darmstädter Pessach-Haggadah*, ed. Bruno Italiener. Leizpig, 1927.

[12] The second miniature appears on fol. 48v.

[13] "Die kunsthistorische Würdigung der Handschrift." In *Darmstädter Pessach-Haggadah*, p. 59.

[14] Bezalel Narkiss. *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Hebrew revised version of English edition Jerusalem 1969), Jerusalem, 1984, p. 153; Joseph Gutmann. *Hebrew Manuscript Painting.* New York, 1978, p. 96 also suggested that the miniatures were executed by Christian artistis.

[15] Rachel Wischintzer. "Passover in Art." In *The Passover Anthology*, ed. Philip Goodman, Philadelphia, 1961, p. 309.

[16] The evidence is not clear-cut, as it is possible that the figure in the green garment is a youth with short hair. The image is not preserved very well and it is difficult to make out the details. The design of the garment shares much with those of other women, especially around the

neck and the waist, and there are some traces of black lines in the hair indicating that what might be seen as the short hair of a youth might be understood as a woman's hairdo. There are several other women in the manuscript with their hair bound by black string, see for ex. fol. 31 v. The figure in the *seder* table image has her hair stuck close to the head, whereas the short hair of the youths depicted in the manuscript at several occasions tends to be more fluffy and curly (fol. 24r).

[17] On Joel ben Simeon's career, see recently, Katrin Kogman-Appel. "The Illustrations of the Washington Haggadah." In *The Washington Haggadah. A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript in the Library of Congress*, Cambridge MA, 2011, pp. 52–120 listing the earlier literature.

[18] For a digital reproduction of the entire manuscript, see http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/heb6130/.

[19] This picture too is not preserved very well and the figure on the right with the blue gown is not easy to identify as it lacks the head. The fact that the garment is long, however, indicates that she is a woman. The men in this manuscript are shown mostly with knee-length mantles.

[20] For a digital reproduction of the entire manuscript, see http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss-pr/mss_d_0076/. Both the Yahuda and the Second Nuremberg Haggadot were discussed in detail in Katrin Kogman-Appel. *Die Zweite Nürnberger und die Jehuda Haggada. Jüdische Illuminatoren zwischen Tradition und Fortschritt*, Frankfurt/Main, 1999.

[21] Denis Green. *Women Readers in the Medieval Ages*. Cambridge, 2007, pp. 117–120.

[22] Michael Clanchy. "Images of Ladies with Prayer Books: What Do They signify?" In *The Church and the Book* (*Studies in Church History* 38), ed. Robert Norman Swanson. Suffolk, 2004, pp. 113–115, argues, for example, that images of women with books have less to do with

literacy, than with active participation in prayer and ritual. The images, Clanchy suggests are meant to "move the mind."

[23] Pamela Sheingorn. "'The Wise Mother:" The Image of St. Anne Teaching the Virgin Mary." *Gesta* 32 (1993), pp. 69–80.

[24] Paul Saenger. "Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages." In *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe,* eds. by Alain Boureau and Roger Chartier, (Princeton, 1989), pp. 141–173.

[25] Green. *Women Readers*, p. 87; see also Margo Stroumsa-Uzan. "Women's Prayer: Devotion and Gender in Books of Hours in Northern France, c. 1300 (in Hebrew)." PhD thesis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, 2010, chap. 5.

[26] For facsimile editions, see *The Washington Haggadah. A Facsimile Edition of an Illuminated Fifteenth-Century Hebrew Manuscript at the Library of Congress Signed by Joel ben Simeon*, ed. Myron Weinstein, Washington, 1991; and recently *The Washington Haggadah. A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript from the Library of Congress*, with contributions by David Stern and Katrin Kogman-Appel, Cambridge (MA), 2011.

[27] The Jewish liturgies follow different local rites. The Roman rite was the liturgy used by Italian Jews in Rome and other areas in Italy. The Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities in Italy, however, remained faithful to the original rites they had brought from their former countries of residence. For example, Joel ben Simeon wrote several Ashkenazi haggadot while residing in Italy. They were intended for Ashkenazi clients who had immigrated to Italy.

[28] Fol. 112r; Margoliouth. *Catalogue*, no. 615.

[29] See below, p. 00, n108.

[30] This has been discussed in detail by Metzger. *Haggada enluminée*, pp. 171–177.

[31] See, for example, the caption above fig. 2.

[32] It is difficult to determine to what extent the depicted women were "phonetically" or "comprehensively" literate, a distinction made by Saenger. "Reading Habits," p. 142. Phonetic literacy implies the skill to read and recite prayers without necessarily being able to comprehend the full meaning of the read text, whereas comprehensive literacy, usually associated with scholars, would imply a full understanding of the text and its meanings. In can be assumed that Hebrew literacy among Jewish women was primarily of the "phonetic" type, even though they would not read the text out aloud, and rather follow a text recited by a man. However, the Passover ritual certainly implies basic comprehension of the recited text among all the participants.

[33] Avraham Grossman, for example, implies that girls did receive basic knowledge in Hebrew and were able to pray. *Pious and Rebellious. Jewish Women in Medieval Europe* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 2001; an abridged version was published also in English under the same title, Waltham, 2004, p. 166; this version will be quoted here whenever possible; unfortunately it skips several of the references to source material, in which case the Hebrew version will be referred to here. Different from Grossman Baskin and Levine Melammed argue that most women were illiterate in Hebrew, Judith Baskin. "The Education of Jewish Women in the Middle Ages in Islamic and Christian Countries (in Hebrew)." *Peamim* 82 (2000), p. 31; Renée Levine Melammed, "Sephardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods." In *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith Baskin. Detroit, 1998, pp. 133.

[34] On the impact of Yiddish and Ladino prints in Jewish culture in general, see David Ruderman. *Early Modern Jewry. A New Cultural History*, Princeton, 2010, pp. 99–111.

[35] Avraham Grossman. *The Woman in the Teachings of the Medieval Sages* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 2011; see also earlier idem, *Pious and Rebellious*.

[36] According to the ritual law it is forbidden to trash sacred texts. They are to be disposed in a *genizah* and to be buried later. Since this applied for any text in the Hebrew ("sacred") language the Cairo Genizah contains also a great wealth of secular documents.

[37] Shlomo D. Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*. *The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967–93, 6 vols., esp. vol. 3: *The Family*, pp. 312–359.

[38] Colette Sirat. "Les femmes juives et l'écriture au Moyen Age." *Les nouveaux cahiers* 101 (1990), pp. 14–23.

[39] Judith Baskin. "Jewish Women in the Middle Ages." In *Jewish Women*, pp. 101–127; *eadem*., "Education of Jewish Women."

[40] Rabbinic authorities constantly updated the ritual law to contemporary circumstances and issued numerous codified legal collections. They also commonly replied to queries in legal and ritual matters coming from all over the Jewish world, their letters being collected as so-called *responsa*.

[41] Lévine Melammed. "Sephardi Women." In general on the role women played in Iberian culture, see also María Jesús Fuente. "Christian, Muslim and Jewish Women in Late Medieval Iberia," *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009), pp. 319–333.

[42] See also Judith Baskin. "Some Parallels in the Education of Medieval Jewish and Christian Women." *Jewish History* 5/1 (1991), pp. 41–51.

[43] Howard E. Adelman. "The Educational and Literary Activities of Jewish Women in Italy during the Renaissance and the Counter Reformation." In *Shlomo Simonsohn Jubilee Volume. Studies on the History of the Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Period,* ed. Daniel Carpi, Tel Aviv, 1993, 9–24; *idem*. "Italian Jewish Women." In *Jewish Women*, pp. 150–168.

[44] Judith Baskin and Michael Riegler. "'May the Writer Be Strong:' Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts Copied by and for Women." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*, 16 (2008), pp. 9–28.

[45] Among the medieval scholarly trends in Central Europe two stood out in particular. Since the 10th c. the Babylonian Talmud began to circulate in the German lands and in France and several generations of scholars were occupied with its commentation. The first to develop firm methods of talmudic scholarships was Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, known as Rashi (d. 1105), who wrote a commentary on most of the talmudic tractates. His followers usually referred to as "Tosafists" (those who "added upon" this commentary) developed the method further and continued to interpret the Talmud. Apart from this school, several circles of pietist scholars were active in the Rhineland during the later part of the 12th and the early 13th c. Theirs were clearly defined ethical views, a rigorously ascetic lifestyle, and a great interest in mystic teachings.

[46] Moisés Orfali-Levi. "Influencia de las sociedades cristiana y musulmana en la condición de la mujer judía." In *Arabes, judías y cristianas; mujeres en la Europa medieval*, ed. Celia del Moral. Granada, 1993, pp. 77–89; in more general terms, see the work of Ivan Marcus. *Rituals of Childhood. Jewish Culture and Acculturation in the Middle Ages*. New Haven, 1996,

introduction; Mark Cohen. *Under Crescent and Cross. The Jews of the Middle Ages.* Princeton, 1994; recently with regard to the status of women, "Jewish Women in Ashkenaz: Renegotiating Jewish gender Roles in Northern Europe." In *Late Medieval Jewish Identities. Iberia and Beyond*, ed. Carmen Caballero-Navas and Esperanza Alfonso. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2010, 82.

[47] Baskin. "Education of Jewish Women;" see also recently *eadem*. "Jewish Women in Ashkenaz," pp. 79–80.

[48] Levine Melammed. "Sephardi Women," p. 133.

[49] "Queen for a Day: The Exclusion of Jewish Women from Public Life in the Middle Ages." In *Late Medieval Jewish Identities*, pp. 91–106.

[50] "'Only that which I Have Lost is Now Mine Forever': The Memory of Names and the History of Jewish and *Converso* Women in Medieval Girona." in *Late Medieval Jewish Identities*, pp. 107–122.

[51] *Sifre Devarim*, par. 46; having sketched the modern scholarly approaches above, I shall refer in the following only to the primary sources, and not repeat the references to the mentioned secondary literature (listed in n33–46), unless controversial matters are discussed or further argumentation is offered there. If not indicated otherwise, references to rabbinic sources are based on *The Global Jewish Database*, version 18 (Bar Ilan University Responsa Project).

[52] *Babylonian Talmud. Hagigah* 3a.

[53] *Mishnah, Sotah* 3:4; Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 155.

[54] *Babylonian Talmud*. *Sotah* 21b.

[55] *Mishne Torah*. *Hilkhot Talmud Torah*, 1:13.

[56] *Sefer Mitsvot Gaddol*. *Asse*, par. 12.

[57] *Commentaris Catabrigiensis in Epistolas Pauli et Schola Petri Abaelardi*. ed. Artur Landgraf. Notre Dame, 1937, vol. 2, p. 434; the translations follows Beryl Smalley. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. Notre Dame, 1964, p. 78. In the context of Jewish education of girls this dictum was discussed by Baskin. "Education," p. 42 suggesting that it indicates that occasionally female education went beyond the household basics; Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 168; Elisheva Baumgarten. "Religious Education of Children in Medieval Jewish Society." In *Essays on Medieval Childhood. Responses to Recent Debates,* ed. Joel T. Rosenthal. Donington, 2007, p. 55 suggesting that it was a rhetorical ploy in the author's effort to criticize the state of Christian education, rather than a statement that should be judged as reflecting a reality.

[58] *Sefer Hassidim,* ed. Wistinetzki, par. 1502; see also *ibid.* par. 835.

[59] *Sefer Hassidim*. ed. Wistinetzki, par. 796. For further background on women in Pietist contexts, see Susanne Borchers. *Jüdisches Frauenleben im Mittelalter. Die Texte des Sefer Chassidim*, Franfurt/Main, 1998.

[60] *Sefer Mitsvot Qatan*. Introduction.

[61] For a quotation in English, see Baskin. "Some Parallels," p. 43.

[62] *She'elot Uteshuvot Maharil*, no. 199.

[63] *Pisqe Hariaz*, quoted in the anthology *Me'at Dvash,* ed. David Sassoon, Oxford 1928, p. 22.

[64] Adelman, "Educational and Literary Activities." p. 14 with references to specific letters; *idem*., "Italian Jewish Women." p. 156.

[65] *Sefer Ma'ayan Ganim*. Venice, 1553, par, 10, quoted in Adelman, "Educational and Literary Activities." p. 11.

[66] *Kisa'ot lebeit David*. Verona 1646, fol. 26v; quoted in Adelman. "Educational and Literary Activities." p. 10.

[67] The documents are listed in Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society,* vol. 1, 128, n8.

[68] Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society,* vol. 1, p. 127–128; Baskin. "Education," 37.

[69] Geniza sources are listed in Goitain. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, p. 129, n14–16; see also the story of al-Wuhsha discussed in detailed in *ibid*., vol. 3, pp. 346–353; Baskin. "Jewish Women," p. 106.

[70] Her poem, found in the Geniza, was published by Ezra Fleischer. "On Dunash ben Labrat, His Wife, and His Son (in Hebrew)." *Mekhkare yerushalayim be sifrut ha'ivrit* 5 (1984), pp. 189–202; for an English translation, see Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 468 with reference to the Geniza document in n247.

[71] Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, pp. 469–470; James A. Bellamy. "Qasmuna the Poetess: Who Was She?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983), pp. 423–424 argued that she was the daughter of Samuel Hanaggid; for a more recent study, see María Ángeles Gallego García. "Approaches to the Study of Muslim and Jewish Women in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula: The Poetess Qasmuna bat Isma'il." In *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 48 (1999), pp. 63–75.

[72] Goitain. *Society*, vol. 2, 184; vol. 3, 34, 355–56; Renée Levine Melammed. "He Said, She Said: A Woman Teacher in Twelfth-Century Cairo." *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 22/1

(1997), pp. 19–35, where Maimonides' *responsa* are cited in full in English; Baskin. "Jewish Women," p. 107.

[73] *The Travels of Rabbi Petahia of Regensburg,* ed. A. Benisch. London 1859, pp. 9–11.

[74] Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 2, p. 184; vol. 3, pp. 355–356.

[75] Her manuscript is not extant, but it was shown to the nineteenth-century Jewish traveler Jacob Safir who quotes her colophon, Baskin and Riegler. "Hebrew Manuscripts," p. 15.

[76] Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 2, p. 184; Baskin. "Education," p. 34.

[77] Goitain. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 3, pp. 355–356.

[78] *Ibid.*; Baskin. "Education," pp. 36–37.

[79] Jacques Hassoun. "En Egypte, du Xe au XVe siècle. Un Judaïsme au feminine." *Les nouveaux cahiers* 86 (1986), p. 6–14, esp. 7.

[80] Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 3, pp. 353–354.

[81] Baskin. "Education," p. 34.

[82] Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 157.

[83] Delia Cortese and Simonette Calderini. *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam*, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 205–206 relying on *Kitab al-Muqaffa al-kabir*, ed. Al-Ya'lawi. Beirut, 1991, vol. 1, p. 300.

[84] Several female poets were active in al-Andalus. Earlier scholarship implied that under Christian influence Andalusi women were less secluded than in the rest of the Islamic world; for a critical re-appraisal, see María J. Viguera. "*Asluhu lj 'l-ma'ali* – On the Social Status of Andalusi Women." In *The Legacy of Muslim Spain,* ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi. Leiden, 1992, pp. 709–25; this paper also discusses the mentioned poets, pp. 709–711.

[85] Cortese and Calderini. *Women*, pp. 206–207.

[86] *Ibid*.

[87] On the social status of women of all classes in Islamic society, see Wiebke Walther. *Women in Islam*. Princeton, 1992, pp. 73–102.

[88] Ron Barkai. "A Medieval Hebrew Treatise on Obstetrics." *Medical History* 33 (1989), p. 107. In Ashkenaz we also learn of midwives, for whom no firm evidence about their degree of literacy exists; however, we do know that their professional level and their skills could be highly appreciated, see Elisheva Baumgarten. "'This is Told by the Wise Midwives:' Midwives and Midwifing in Thirteenth-Century Ashkenaz (in Hebrew)." *Zion* 65/1 (2000), pp. 45–74.

[89] Levine Melammed, "Sephardi Women," p. 133.

[90] Elka Klein. "Public Activities of Catalan Jewish Women." *Medieval Encounters* 12/1 (2006), p. 50.

[91] "The Memory of Names," p. 108. The fact that these books were mentioned in the context of inquisitorial records implies that they were indeed used by the interrogated women and did not merely form part of their property which they had inherited by their male relatives; on this see also below, n00.

[92] See, for example, the evidence discussed by Martha Keil. "Maistrin (Mastress) and Business Woman: Jewish Upper-Class Women in Late Medieval Austria." In *Jewish Studies at the Central European University: Public Lectures 1996–1999*, ed. Anràs Kovacs and Eszter Andar, Budapest, 2000, pp. 93–108; *eadem* "Business and Tex Debts: Jewish Women in Late Medieval Austrian Towns." In *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, ed. Andràs

Kovacs and Eszter Andor, vol. 2: *1999–2001*, Budapest, 2002, 103–123; see also recently Baskin, “Jewish Women in Ashkenaz.”

[93] This is reported by Zidqiyahu ben Avraham, *Shibbole Haleqet*, par. 00.

[94] *Mahzor Vitry*, par. 610, 625.

[95] *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz Vetsarfat*, ed. Abraham M. Habermann. Jerusalem, 1945, pp. 161–167; for a discussion and a translation of the eulogy into English, see Judith Baskin. “Dolce of Worms: The Lives and Deaths of an Exemplary Medieval Jewish Woman and Her Daughters.” In *Judaism in Practice*. *From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period*, ed. Lawrence Fine. Princeton and Oxford, 2001, pp. 429–437.

[96] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, cod. Hébr. 326, fol. 18v–19r quoted and discussed in *La conception du Livre chez les piétistes ashkenazes au Moyen Age*, eds. Colette Sirat et al. Génève, 1996, introduction, p. 916, esp. 12.

[97] The documents are kept in the city archives of Augsburg and are discussed by Martin Kintzinger. “*ich was auch ain schueler* – Die Schulen im spätmittelalterlichen Augsburg,” in *Literarisches Leben in Augsburg während des 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Johannes Janota and Werner Williams-Krapp, Tübingen, 1995, pp. 58–81, esp. 76–77.

[98] *Sefer Mitsvot*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, cod hébr. 392, par. 12, fol. 5. I am grateful to Elisheva Baumgarten for providing me with this reference.

[99] Amsterdam, University Library, MS Rosenthal 558; Sirat. “Femmes,” p. 19; Baskin and Riegler. “Hebrew Manuscripts,” n18 with erroneous shelf number.

[100] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, cod. Hébr. 408.

[101] *Trumat Hadeshen*, *Psaqim Ukhtavim,* par. 160–161.

[102] Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 164.

[103] *Leqet Yosher*, pt. 2, p. 19b. The *responsum* is in Yiddish, written in Hebrew letters.

[104] Baskin. "Education," p. 39.

[105] Baskin. "Some Parallels," pp. 45, 51 n56, on Samuel ben Ali's daughter, see above, p. 00.

[106] Baskin. "Education," pp. 33, 46.

[107] This is somewhat different from the situation in the Islamic realms during the earlier Middle Ages, where we have seen that women occasionally turned to the teaching profession when in need of income, indicating that female literacy was not limited to the well-to-do, *ibid.*, p. 166.

[108] Adelman. "Italian Jewish Women," p. 156.

[109] Wroclav, University Library, MS II, 104; Verona, Comunita Israelitica MS 1.

[110] Baskin and Riegler. "Hebrew Manuscripts," pp. 18–23; see also Howard E. Adelman, "Italian Jewish Women at Prayer." In *Judaism in Practice*, p. 54.

[111] Baskin. "Jewish Women," p. 104. An example from the Christian realm is a Jewish woman in southern France, Venguessona, who is known to have owned books in both Latin and Hebrew, Louis Stouff. "Isaac Nathan et les siens: Une famille juive d'Arles des XIVe et Xve siècles." *Provence historique* 150 (1987), pp. 499–512; in a paper about the economic implications of patronage in Iberia Eleazar Gutwirth shows that women could be listed as patrons, owners, heirs of art objects, including also ritual objects as Torah scrolls and prayer-books, "Qilusin: El Mecenazgo feminine medieval." In *La mujer judía*, ed. Yolanda Moreno Koch, Cordoba, 2007, pp. 107–127. Similarly Green argues for the Christian realm that female

ownership of books did not necessarily imply that these women actually read their books, *Women Readers*, p. 115.

[112] Two of the mentioned female scribes, Pola in Rome and Fromet in Ashkenaz express their hope that the book they wrote may be studied by many people including themselves, Baskin and Riegler. "Hebrew Manuscripts," pp. 12–14.

[113] Howard E. Adelman. "Rabbis and Reality: Public Activities of Jewish Women in Italy during the Renaissance and Catholic Restoration." *Jewish History* 5 (1991), pp. 27–40; Tali Berner. "Teaching the *Aleph-Beth*. Women as Torah Teachers in Italy (in Hebrew)." *Masekhet* 4 (2005), pp. 11–34.

[114] Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious,* p. 164.

[115] See also the remarks by Diane Wolfthal. *Picturing Yiddish. Gender, Identity and Memory in Illustrated Yiddish Books of Renaissance Italy*, Leiden, 2004, chap. 4 on a *minhagim* book in Yiddish, which she believed to have belonged to a woman who must have been literate. The evidence for Italy in matters of female education and literacy does not apply to Sicily, where the situation seems to have been worse than anywhere else in the Jewish world, Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 172–173; the discussion, however, argues primarily from silence. It would be worth to examine these patterns in comparison to what is known currently about female literacy in Christian societies; for a clear, concise summary of what is known about literate Christian women and different kinds of literacy, see Clanchy. "Images of Ladies," pp. 106–111. During this period we hear about female patronage of books in lay circles, see Susan G. Bell. "Women Medieval Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture." In *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. M. Erler, Athens and London 1988, pp. 149–161; see also Green.

*Women Readers*, pp. 115–129. There was, however, no linear movement that would eventually lead to general female literacy across all social strata. The fact that most schools established in Protestant Germany during the 16th c. were for boys, did, in fact, widen again the gap between male and female literacy in the 17th, see the discussion by Merry E. Wiesner. “Gender and the Worlds of Work.” In *Germany. A New Social and Economic History.* Vol. 1: *1450–1630*, ed. Bob Scribner, London 1996, pp. 209–232, esp. 212.

116 For a general discussion on female performance of ritual laws, see Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, pp. 174–197.

117 Baumgarten. “Education.”

118 Goitein. *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 3, p. 343.

119 Klein. “Public Activities,” p. 50.

120 David Nirenberg. “A Female Rabbi in Fourteenth-Century Zaragoza?” *Sefarad* 51 (1991), pp. 179–182; recently Blasco Martínez argued that Çeti’s function was less learned than the document under question might suggest and that neither her education nor her teaching did imply reading skills.

121 Female attendance in mosques is in general believed to be restricted. This goes back to a statement attributed to Mohammed’s father in law Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644). Recently, however, Manuela Marín demonstrated that in the religious discourse of medieval al-Andalus female presence in mosques was by some considered legitimate, “Mujeres en las mezquitas.” In *Mezquitas en Toledo, a la luz de los nuevos decubrimientos (Los monográficos des Consorcio V)*, Toledo 2010, pp. 297–307.

[122] On this, see the controversy between José Hinojosa Montalvo, "El reino de Valencia: juderías y sinagogas." In *Juderías y sinagogas de la Sefarad medieval*, ed. A. M. López and R. Izquierdo, Cuenca 2003, pp. 124–125, and Jaume Riera i Sans. *Els poder públics i les sinagogues. Segles XIII-XV.* Girona 2006, pp. 414–416; and Blasco Martínez. "The Exclusion of Jewish Women," pp. 94–95.

[123] Elisheva Baumgarten. *Mothers and Children. Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe*. Princeton 2004, pp. 55–89; see also Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, pp. 185–186.

[124] *Or Zarua*, vol. 2, *Hilkhot Shabat,* par. 68.

[125] Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious* pp. 178–180.

[126] *Ibid.,* pp. 186–187.

[127] See above n56. On mothers teaching their young sons basic prayers before schooling, see Baumgarten. "Education, p. 67.

[128] The inscription is quoted in the Hebrew version of Grossman's book, *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 298.

[129] *Das Martyrologium des Nürnberger Memorbuches*, ed. Siegmund Salfeld. Berlin 1898, p. 36.

[130] *Mishnah*, *Sotah* 7:1; for medieval attitudes, see Ruth Langer. *To Worship God Properly: Tensions between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism*. Cincinnati, 1998, pp. 22–23.

[131] Grossman. *Pious and Rebellious*, p. 167.

[132] Adelman. "Women at Prayer," 52–54.

[133] Alexander Marx. "R. Yoseph of Arles as Teacher and Head of the Yeshivah in Siena (in Hebrew)." In *Jubilee Volume for Levi Ginzberg on his Seventieth Birthday*. New York, 1945, p.

294; see also Adelman. "Italian Jewish Women at Prayer," p. 52–53 with some halakhic background on this issue. On the exemption of women from time-bound precepts, see also Marjorie Lehman. "Women and Passover Observance: Reconsidering Gender in the Study of Rabbinic texts." *Studies in Jewish Civilization* 14 (2003), pp. 45–66.

[134] Kenneth B. Stow and Sandra Debenedetti Stow. "Donne ebree a Roma nell'eta' del ghetto: Affetto, dependenza, autonomia." *La Rassegna mensile di Israel* 52 (1986), p. 81; Adelman. "Jewish Women at Prayer," p. 54–55.

[135] Klein. "Public Activities," p. 60.

[136] Wiesner. "Worlds of Work," pp. 209–211. Wiesner also argues, that at no time female literacy or education in general served the purpose of making women productive economically. The evidence about Jewish female teachers, businesswomen, and women in the medical professions, however, seems to contradict this assumption, at least for the Jewish realm.