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Esther Benbassa, *Hayahadut ha'otomanit bein hitma'aravut leẓiyonut 1908–1920* (*Ottoman Jewry Between Westernisation and Zionism*). Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1996. 287 pp.

In recent years, several useful books have been published on Ottoman Jews, indicating that research has progressed beyond discussions of reputed personalities, notable events, literary works or specific issues. In 1991, Stanford J. Shaw's *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* came out. A year later, Walter F. Weiker's *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity: Jews of Turkey* was published. And in 1994, Avigdor Levy edited *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* with numerous scholars contributing.

Esther Benbassa, a professor of history at the University of Paris, has now provided us with an in-depth study of a more limited topic, on which she is well qualified indeed to write. Herself a member of the Turkish Jewish community, she is fluent in Turkish, Hebrew, Judeo-Spanish, French and English and has successfully uncovered—and used well—numerous primary and secondary sources in these languages. Among the most important sources are the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris and those of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem—representing the two poles of conflict in the Istanbul community in the period under research. Those were tumultuous years not only for the Jews, but for the population of the entire empire—a time of the Young Turk rule, the First World War and the immediate follow-up of the empire's defeat and partition.

Benbassa has previously published a book entitled *Un grand rabbin sépharade en politique, 1892–1923* (1990) focused on Haim Nahoum, the grand rabbi of the Ottoman empire from 1908–1920. It is no surprise to find Nahoum starring here too. But there is much more, as indicated in the study's chapter titles: "From the Era of Reforms to the Young Turk Revolution"; "The Beginning of a New Period"; "Reorganisation of the Community"; "The Press in the Service of Political Elements"; "Pressure Groups"; "An Impossible Coexistence"; "Active Politics"; "Community Consensus"; "A Trial of Strength"; "New Circumstances and New Strategies."

The reader gets a detailed account of everyday internal politics in the community, which covers many aspects of Jewish life. An ongoing struggle revolved around two main foci. First was traditionalism versus modernization. Local rabbis and their supporters tried their utmost to maintain and encourage religious observance in daily practice and at school, whereas those bent on reforms—although not necessarily opposed to religion—sought to open the door to westernization (mirroring a parallel

struggle in the non-Jewish communities of the Ottoman empire that is rather neglected in Benbassa's study). The second was assimilation versus Zionism. Individuals campaigning for the Zionist cause, who became increasingly active during the First World War, had to contend both with the supporters of rival ideologies, and with local Jews who were apprehensive lest their situation be adversely affected by particularistic nationalism competing with that of the ruling Young Turks. Despite this, the Zionist movement made progress and recruited adherents. Presiding over these struggles, in a manner of speaking, was the figure of Grand Rabbi Nahoum, a traditionalist who was not unsympathetic to reform, and who favored Zionism in his early career but later turned against it both as a result of the anti-Zionist attitude of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (with which he was closely associated), and because of the Young Turk leadership's suspicions regarding Zionist objectives.

Technically, the book is well-produced, although three points may be raised. First, the illustrations could—and should—be reproduced better. Second, in the translation from the French original, some transliterations of Ottoman terms (like *Tanzimat*, reforms) have not been accurately rendered into Hebrew. Finally, while the indexes of people and places are helpful, the absence of a subject index is regrettable. Such deficiencies, however, do not really detract from what is a definitive study on an important topic.

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Samuel C. Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995. xvi + 190 pp.

Alan Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840–1930*. Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1994. x + 275 pp.

Reading these works back to back is an experience in double vision. It is reassuring as well as exasperating to know that, when it comes to scholarly assessments of Jewish life in America, the academy is as divided as anyone else on the most fundamental issues.

The differences between the two works are inherent in the nature of the type of writing, the respective scholarly agendas, and the personal commentary that each author supplies to his reading of the issues. Samuel Heilman's book is the published version of a series of lectures given in 1993 at the University of Washington (the prestigious annual Stroum Lectures) and, as a stock-taking exercise, sets out an overview of trends in American Jewry from 1950 to the end of the century. It is intended as a summary of sociological work to date on Jewish identity and group life, and it affords an important practitioner of that art the opportunity to step back and evaluate the extensive data and impressions that have been accumulating on his desk and in the field for years. Silverstein's book is the published version of a doctoral dissertation recently completed at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Where Heilman's lectures aim at co-