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## THE YESHIVA MEDICAL SCHOOL: THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS COMBINING JEWISH STUDIES AND MEDICAL TRAINING

In the Fall of 2018, a medical school in Israel launched a new program combining a yeshiva and medical school curriculum. For the pre-clinical years, the students spend the mornings learning medicine and the afternoons learning Torah, with a focus on topics related to medicine. At the end of five years, the students will receive a medical degree as well as a certificate in Jewish law. How novel an idea is this? Has such a combined curriculum ever been offered before in history? What has been the nature of the Jewish education, if any, for a student attending medical school?

The longstanding attraction of Jews to the medical profession has been well documented.<sup>1</sup> Countless physicians of Jewish descent have practiced and contributed significantly to the field of medicine throughout history. However, few were motivated or able to continue their Jewish education during medical training or practice. There is evidence of Jewish physicians of previous generations pursuing Jewish learning and scholarship.<sup>2</sup> A few notable examples include Rambam, Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo, Abraham

<sup>1</sup> See Harry Friedenwald, *The Jews and Medicine*, 2 vols. (Johns Hopkins Press, 1944); Natalia Berger, *Jews and Medicine: Religion, Culture and Science* (Beit Hatfutsot, 1995), published on the occasion of the exhibition *Therefore Choose Life – Jews and Medicine: Religion Culture Science*, organized by Beth Hatefusoht, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv, June 1995-December 1995; Frank Heynick, *Jews and Medicine: An Epic Saga* (Ktav Publishers, 2002); Ronald Eisenberg, *Jews in Medicine: Contributions to Health and Healing Through the Ages* (Urim Publications, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> A number of authors have documented personalities throughout history who have combined both medical and Torah knowledge. See David Holub, *Parades David*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1880 and 1882); Menachem Mendel Leib Sergei, *Meshiv Nefesh* (Vilna, 1906); David Margalit, *Hakhmei Yisrael ke-Rofe'im* (Mossad HaRav Kook, 1962); Asher Salah, *Le Republique des Lettres: Rabbins, Ecrivains et Medecins Juifs en Italie au 18<sup>th</sup> Siecle* (Brill, 2007).

Portaleone, Yaakov Zahalon, Tuvia Cohen, and Isaac Lampronti.<sup>3</sup> Few historians however have addressed Jewish learning during the years of medical training.<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, this is for good reason. The priority of medical training is to become the best physician possible. In fact, there is a halakhic requirement to attain expertise and mastery in the field of medicine if it is the profession of one's choosing, lest one commit accidental malpractice.<sup>5</sup> As such, attention and devotion should be focused on one's medical studies. But should this be to the exclusion of all else? Should the pursuit of Jewish studies be entirely abandoned during one's years of medical training?

To be sure, countless individual Jewish medical students throughout history have sought to maintain ongoing Torah study in a private and individually tailored manner. Indeed, the Jewish education of the medical student has primarily been a self-directed and elective endeavor. This continues until today. This fact alone, given the demands of medical training and practice, is extraordinary. Yet, there have been attempts throughout

<sup>3</sup> In addition, responsa literature records the questions of many unnamed doctors over the centuries; see Hirsch Jakob Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians and Doctors: Studies in Folk Medicine and Folklore as Reflected in Rabbinical Responsa* (Goldston and Sons, 1952). Doctors are often mentioned by name in the responsa of twentieth century *posekim* such as R. Moshe Feinstein, R. Eliezer Waldenberg, and R. Yitzchak Zilberstein.

<sup>4</sup> Though our focus here is on Jewish education during medical training, historians have written about the unique challenges faced by Jewish medical students throughout the centuries. See Cecil Roth, "The Qualifications of Jewish Physicians in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 28 (1953), 834-843; Joseph Shatzmiller, "On Becoming a Jewish Doctor in the High Middle Ages," *Sefarad* 43 (1983), 239-250; idem, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society* (University of California Press, 1994); John Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews* (Yale University Press, 2001); Friedenwald, *The Jews*; David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (Yale University Press, 1995); and Edward Reichman, "From Maimonides the Physician to the Physician at Maimonides Medical Center: The Training of the Jewish Medical Student throughout the Ages," *Verapo Yerape* 3 (2011), 1-25.

Furthermore, while the present essay focuses on combining Torah study with medical training, there are admittedly many points of intersection with the larger issue of maintaining religious observance during that professional training. The history of this interaction would require a separate, albeit related, study. While we do not possess any statistical data, it is well known that there were many Jewish physicians throughout history who not only diminished or abandoned their religious observance, but actually converted to other religions, largely due to academic pressure and the inability to advance professionally as a professed Jew.

<sup>5</sup> Menachem Mendel Sergei highlights this fact in the introduction to his *Meshiv Nefesh* (Vilna, 1908). On Sergei, see Edward Reichman, "Dr. Menachem Mendel Aryeh Leib Sergei: A Torah u-Madda Titan of the Early Twentieth Century," *Hakirah* (in press).

history to translate this desire to unite Torah and medical education into formal, structured combined programs. While some historians would be skeptical or even astonished at the existence of such programs,<sup>6</sup> I believe this to be nothing more than the continual manifestation of the desire of the Jew to view the attainment of all knowledge through the prism of Torah.

There is, however, something unique about the relationship of the Jewish people to medicine which sets it apart from other secular pursuits. Aside from the fact that medicine was one of the only professions available to Jews for a good part of their history, there is a special connection between Judaism and the practice of medicine. This is beautifully articulated by Aaron Solomon Gumpertz (1723-1769),<sup>7</sup> a Jewish-German scholar and physician, in the introduction to his work *Megalle Sod* (a supercommentary to Ibn Ezra on the Five Megillot) regarding his decision to choose medicine as a profession:

I searched here and there, exploring the different professions, which is easy, which is hard, which is just and clear to one who performs His glory, wrapped in kindness and righteousness, and I did not find but the profession of medicine, that we have learned through tradition was practiced by great Torah scholars like Ramban, Rambam, Ralbag, Ri miCandia [Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo], and many, many others in addition, from early and later generations. They were glorified and honored through its pursuit, for its practice is valuable and honored, service akin to the service of God... unlike the professions of carpentry and building. With one unified voice they say, blessed is he who chooses it [medicine] and inclines his heart to the Heavens... and his reward will be great.

It is to this special bond that we turn in discussing the educational proposals and programs throughout history that have combined both Torah study and medical education.<sup>8</sup> What may appear to be a miscellany of disparate entries below are actually manifold manifestations of one remarkable central theme—the desire of young Jewish medical students throughout the centuries to both maintain their Torah study and to synthesize

<sup>6</sup> Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society*, 21, and Roth, “Qualifications.”

<sup>7</sup> On Gumpertz, see Gad Freudenthal, “New Light on the Physician Aaron Salomon Gumpertz: Medicine, Science and Early Haskalah in Berlin,” *Zutot* (2003), 66-77.

<sup>8</sup> For previous treatment of this topic, see, for example, David Ruderman and Giuseppe Miletto, “The Teaching Program of David ben Abraham and His Son Abraham Provenzali in Its Historical-Cultural Context,” in David Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri, eds., *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 127-148.

their medical training with their religious beliefs, despite the extreme demands of a medical education.

### Combined Yeshiva-Medical Education Programs

Below we discuss a number of educational proposals and programs from the fifteenth century to the modern era that synthesize Torah and medical education. The documentary evidence for these historical chapters is scant and chronologically staggered, and they vary in success both educationally and in duration.

#### *Fifteenth Century France*

Our first reference to a combined Torah-medical education, albeit on a small scale, comes from France. Dr. Barthélemy, in an essay on the history of medicine in Marseille, mentions the existence of a school for medicine and Jewish law headed by Salomon of Gerona. In the appendix he records the preserved text of an agreement made in Marseilles September 19, 1443, for Master Solomon Gerondin, son of the physician Reuben Gerondin, to teach both Hebrew law and medicine to five students.<sup>9</sup> All the names of the participants of the agreement are listed, including Vitalis (Chaim) Cohen, City Physician of Toulon, France, whose two sons Samuel and Leon were part of the program. Each parent was to provide a fee of ten florins per child for one year, with one given a discounted rate of eight florins. The contract stipulates that, in addition to medicine, Solomon should teach the children Hebrew, the necessary knowledge of Jewish law, and morals. While a year would surely not have sufficed for either discipline alone, let alone the integrated curriculum, this is most likely a renewed or renewable contract. To my knowledge, we do not know if they completed the program.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Louis Barthélemy, *Les Médecins à Marseille avant et Pendant le Moyen Age, Discours de Réception à l'Académie de Marseille, Prononcé en Séance Publique, le 15 Avril 1883* (Barlatier-Feissat père et fils, 1883), esp. 32.

<sup>10</sup> See Nathan Koren, *Jewish Physicians: A Biographical Index* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), 82, 118, and 136. Koren separately lists Vital Cohen and both of his sons Leon and Samuel as physicians in his biographical index. His source for both sons is Ernest Wickersheimer's *Dictionnaire Biographique des Médecins en France au Moyen Age*, vol. 1 (E. Droz, 1936), 523 and 732. Wickersheimer's source for the sons is the Barthélemy article cited above. As such, we only know of the contract for their education, but have no record of their completion of studies or possible subsequent medical practice.

*Fifteenth Century Italy*

On January 17, 1466, a Jew by the name of Benjamin Romano, representing the Jews of Sicily, received official authorization from King John of Aragon to establish a Jewish university endowed with all the rights and privileges of similar institutions, including the power to confer degrees in all subjects.<sup>11</sup> Mentioned in the decree is the ability to train doctors, lawyers, and teachers.<sup>12</sup> There is no mention of any religious element in the original decree, and Roth assumes that “Jewish studies would clearly have been out of place” at this institution.<sup>13</sup> There is no evidence that this proposed endeavor ever came to fruition. I humbly challenge Roth’s assumption, for if indeed a Jewish university would have opened its doors, I suspect that some form of Torah study would have been part of its design, though likely extracurricular.

*Fifteenth Century Spain*<sup>14</sup>

We find yet another example from fifteenth century Aragon of a program combining yeshiva and medical education. The source of testimony about this program is somewhat unusual. Yosef Galuf Yeshua was a charismatic and popular rabbi in mid-fifteenth century Saragossa. Shlomo Bonfed somehow evoked the ire of the Saragossa Jewish community, leading to his banishment from the city. In a literary act of revenge, Bonfed penned a scathing poetic indictment of the community and its rabbi (whom he labels the Satan amongst them), replete with biblical allusions to the names Yosef and Yeshua, as well as references to their immorality and licentiousness. It is in this context that he lists Yeshua’s activities and remarkable accomplishments, though decidedly undeserved according to Bonfed. One such example is his teaching of medicine in addition to the standard

<sup>11</sup> For the original decree, see B. Lagumina, *Codice Diplomatico dei Giudei di Sicilia* 2 (Michele Amenta, 1890), 28-29. For discussion, see, for example, Cecil Roth, “The Medieval University and the Jew,” *Menorah Journal* 19:2 (November-December, 1930), 128-141.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World* (Hebrew Union College Press, 1938), 381.

<sup>13</sup> Roth, “Qualifications,” 838.

<sup>14</sup> Hayyim Shirman, “Shlomo Bonfed’s Dispute with the Elders of Saragossa” (Hebrew) *Kovetz al Yad* 14 (n.s., vol. 4) (Mekitze Nirdamim, 1946), 8-64, esp. 21-22; Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society*, 22-23. Shatzmiller records a communication from Mordechai Breuer, a historian of the Jewish medieval period, that the latter had new evidence about the medical education in Galuf’s yeshiva. Shatzmiller is skeptical as to whether medicine was taught alongside traditional rabbinic studies in any of the *yeshivot* of the Middle Ages and maintains that medicine was primarily studied privately through tutoring and mentorship.

Torah curriculum. While Rabbi Yeshua taught other sciences as well, apparently his medical lectures earned a unique reputation. Bonfed writes that, with respect to medicine, his house of study was equated with the house of study of Shem and Ever, and students flocked from far and wide to attend.<sup>15</sup> Though embedded with sarcasm and tainted by animosity, this source nonetheless reveals the existence of combined teaching of medicine and Torah on a large scale.

*Rabbi Dr. Judah Messer Leon (1422-1498)*

Another lesser-known and short-lived endeavor was initiated by one of the more remarkable figures in Jewish medical history, Rabbi Dr. Judah Messer Leon.<sup>16</sup> On February 21, 1469, The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, while visiting Italy, bestowed upon Judah Messer Leon a double doctorate in medicine and liberal arts, in addition to the title of Count Palatine, granting him the right to confer doctorates upon other Jews of proven worthiness.<sup>17</sup> He would exercise this extraordinary privilege a number of times during his lifetime.<sup>18</sup> He later taught at the University of Padua Medical School and continued the practice of medicine.<sup>19</sup>

According to Rabinowitz, Messer Leon opened a yeshiva for students to receive a Jewish education while being trained in the secular disciplines

<sup>15</sup> This passage is rife with brilliantly interwoven anatomical and physiological allusions coupled with sarcasm. He derisively writes that Yeshua gives the impression that he knows more about the pulse and cardiovascular system than did Galen and his peers. In one example, Bonfed writes: "This time I will grant him one thing. He is an expert in '*melekheth ha-nitzuah*' ... knowing all the comings and goings." The phrase literally means the art of disputation or controversy, of which, Bonfed adds, he is also familiar with the art of deception. The word-play here alludes to "*melekheth ha-nittuah*," dissection and anatomy, with the phrase "comings and goings" referring to the knowledge of how the vessels traverse the body.

<sup>16</sup> On Messer Leon and his work, see Isaac Rabinowitz, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow by Judah Messer Leon: A Critical Edition and Translation* (Cornell University Press, 1983); Daniel Carpi, "Rabbi Yehuda Messer Leon and his Work as a Physician" (Hebrew), *Michael* 1 (1972), 276-301.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Carpi, "Notes on the Life of Rabbi Judah Messer Leon," in E. Toaff, ed., *Studi sull'Ebraismo Italiano: In Memoria di Cecil Roth* (Rome: Barulli, 1974), 39-62; Debra Glasberg Gail, *Scientific Authority and Jewish Law in Early Modern Italy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University (2016), 117.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 51, 56-58.

<sup>19</sup> Messer Leon, who was a professor at the University of Padua, initiated the halakhic discussion on the wearing of academic robes (called Cappa gowns), in light of the prohibition of "and in their statutes you shall not walk" (Lev. 18:3). The seminal responsum of Rabbi Yosef Colon on this topic (Maharik #88), was addressed to Messer Leon. See also Judith Bleich, "Clerical Robes: Distinction or Dishonor," *Tradition* 50:1 (2017), 9-34.

necessary for higher studies in humanities, philosophy, and medicine. The yeshiva apparently functioned wherever Messer Leon established residence until approximately 1495,<sup>20</sup> and medical students were among those who attended.

Another indication of the melding of medical education and Torah learning is reflected in one of Messer Leon's works, *Nofet Tzufim*, the first Hebrew work published in the lifetime of its author. The work's purpose was to teach rhetoric, a skill essential for success in university training, but the core text utilized for instruction is the Torah. In the introduction, Messer Leon states that he was urged to compose this work at the insistence of Jewish medical students, who required a rhetorical study guide.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the students could learn Torah in the course of university training.

*The Curriculum of Yohanan Alemanno (1435-1504)*

As mentioned above, Messer Leon was granted the right to bestow university degrees upon deserving Jews. One such disciple was Yohanan Alemanno, an Italian humanist philosopher, upon whom Messer Leon bestowed the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Medicine on February 27, 1470.<sup>22</sup> Alemanno drafted a detailed curriculum "intended for those whom God has granted the ability to achieve ultimate personal success, designed for our time, with the literature available today, tailored to one's efforts and desires."<sup>23</sup> While there is no evidence that this program of study was ever implemented, it is nonetheless instructive regarding its educational objectives. In addition, Alemanno's curriculum might shed light on that of his teacher, Messer Leon, who left no similar detailed record of his educational initiative. Indeed, Alemanno specifically recommends the works of Messer Leon, including *Nofet Tzufim*,<sup>24</sup> as part of his program.<sup>25</sup>

From age four to thirteen, Alemanno recommends intensive study of Torah, *Nevi'im*, and *Mishna*. This is to be followed by seven years' study of the *Talmud* and codes. The remainder of the program is divided into similar seven year segments and includes Hebrew linguistics, logic, mathematics, philosophy, and natural sciences.

<sup>20</sup> On the locations and dates of Messer Leon's institute, see Carpi, "Notes."

<sup>21</sup> Rabinowitz, *Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*, li-llii.

<sup>22</sup> Carpi, "Notes," 51, with transcript of the degree on pp. 56-58.

<sup>23</sup> For the text and discussion of this curriculum, see Moshe Idel, "The Study Program of R. Yohanan Alemanno," (Hebrew) *Tarbiz* 48 (1979), 303-331.

<sup>24</sup> Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo also recommended the study of *Nofet Tzufim* to master the power of language. See Rabinowitz, *Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*, xvii.

<sup>25</sup> Idel, "Study Program," 304.



For those who desire to attain further wisdom, he suggests a further curriculum of natural sciences. Within this seven-year segment he includes the study of medicine, recommending the works of Ibn Sina, Ibn Falaquera (*Tzarei ha-Guf*), as well as works on therapeutics and alchemy. It is unclear whether this curriculum was designed with the medical student in mind (as he himself was a physician), or simply for the intellectually ambitious. In either case, this is one of our most detailed examples of a combined yeshiva and medical learning program (along with that of Provenzali below), and also emphasizes the importance of a solid Jewish education prior to embarking on a journey into the world of secular knowledge.

*Rabbi Dr. Ovadia Sforno (1475-1550)*

Sforno, though known primarily for his biblical commentary, was a practicing physician, having earned his medical degree in Ferrara in 1501.<sup>26</sup> In a recent article on Sforno's last will and testament, Berns writes that, in addition to his activities as a physician and banker, Sforno established a Jewish academy (yeshiva) that catered especially to students who were interested in pursuing medical careers alongside their religious studies.<sup>27</sup> The source for this information is a sentence in a letter from a father to his son:

While you are still pursuing your medical training lend your ear and listen to all that the master physician, prince of God (*ha-Gaon*) Rabbi Ovadia Sforno commands you, and your heart should incline to his opinion, for he possesses both knowledge and wisdom, and who is like him that preaches justice (*moreh tzedek*).<sup>28</sup>

While one cannot necessarily infer the existence of an institution from this letter, at the very least Rabbi Sforno was providing religious guidance for those training in the field of medicine.

*David Provenzali (Sixteenth Century)*

Perhaps the most famous proposal for a curriculum to unite Jewish and secular studies is that of David Provenzali for the creation of a school in

<sup>26</sup> The text of Sforno's diploma is published by V. Colorni, *Judaica minora* (A. Giuffr , 1983), 461–72.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew D. Berns, "Ovadia Sforno's Last Will and Testament," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 68:1 (Spring 2017), 1–33.

<sup>28</sup> Yaakov Boksenboim (ed.), *Iggerot Yehudei Italya* (Hebrew University, 1994), letter 94, 140 (my translation).



Mantua in 1564.<sup>29</sup> David was a descendant of Jacob Provenzali,<sup>30</sup> a student of Messer Leon, who wrote passionately about the relationship of secular (specifically medical) and Jewish education in a letter to Messer Leon's son, David.<sup>31</sup> As such, this proposal, like Alemanno's, must be viewed as a conceptual heir of its predecessors.<sup>32</sup>

The objective of Provenzali's institute was to train students in both secular and Jewish studies in order to prepare them for university. Provenzali's proposal gives us great insight into the motivation for the institution, and, while he proposed a broad educational initiative, I focus here on his attention to the medical students. In the tenth item of his proposal, he writes:

Those who are versed in Latin can read scientific books dealing with logic, philosophy, and medicine and thus become acquainted with them step by step. In this way, students desiring to become physicians need not waste their time in a university among Christians, in sinful neglect of Jewish studies. On the contrary, through his own reading he should inform himself gradually of all that he needs to know. Then, if he should later study in a university for a brief period of time, he will be able, with God's help, to obtain his degree. But even those who do not as yet know any Latin may read such scientific books as have already been translated into Hebrew, and thus save time: for the basic thing in knowledge is not language but content.<sup>33</sup>

Minimizing exposure to the non-Jewish environment, with its negative influences and its detraction from Jewish studies, was clearly a motivation for this initiative.

#### *University of Padua (Fifteenth-Eighteenth Centuries)*

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, university education was provided under Catholic auspices and was, as such, generally off limits to the devout religious Jew. While Jews sporadically attended universities throughout history, the University of Padua, founded in 1222 as a break-away from the

<sup>29</sup> For discussion of the proposal, see Ruderman and Miletto, "The Teaching Program."

<sup>30</sup> On Provenzali, see *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.), s.v., Provenzali, Jacob ben David, col. 1258.

<sup>31</sup> Eliezer Ashkenazi, *Divrei Hakhamim* (Mayer Samuel, 1849), 63-75.

<sup>32</sup> Rabinowitz mentions the connection between Provenzali's proposal and the earlier program of Messer Leon (xxiii, n. 32), though he does not mention that Jacob Provenzali was a student in Messer Leon's yeshiva.

<sup>33</sup> Ruderman and Miletto, "The Teaching Program," 130-131.

University of Bologna in search of academic freedom independent of the Church, was the first university in Europe to officially open its doors to the Jewish medical student in the late fifteenth century. The politics and logic behind this historic decision were not specific to Jewish students, though Jews were clear beneficiaries of the new policy.<sup>34</sup> As a result, for a few hundred years there was a steady stream of Jewish students walking the halls of the medical school. We have record of some of these students who sought avenues to continue their Jewish education during the course of their medical training.<sup>35</sup> Below I discuss efforts at combined programming, both formal and informal, documented and speculative, that are connected to the University of Padua and its graduates.

- *The Rabbis and the Medical Students*

If a student coming from Germany or Poland to attend the famous university of Padua Medical School wished to maintain their Torah learning or religious observance, they would certainly connect with the local rabbis of the community. The Jewish Quarter was mere yards away from the university campus, and the grand city of Venice was only a few miles away. A number of rabbis of great renown in both Padua and Venice maintained relationships with the medical students throughout the centuries.

Rabbi Yehuda Minz (1405-1508) was considered the most prominent Italian rabbi of his time, serving as rabbi of the Padua community for forty-seven years.<sup>36</sup> According to Nepi-Gerondi's *Toledot Yisrael*,<sup>37</sup> Minz was a professor of philosophy at the University of Padua. This period was the very beginning of the university's permissive policies allowing Jews to attend the medical school. It was during this time that Judah Messer Leon was affiliated with the school. In fact, the latter's son, David, received rabbinic ordination from Minz.<sup>38</sup> It is quite possible that the medical students attended Torah lectures at his yeshiva.

<sup>34</sup> Glasberg Gail, *Scientific Authority*, 114-127.

<sup>35</sup> For more on the Jewish students who attended the University of Padua Medical School, see Edward Reichman, "The Valmadonna Trust Broadside Collection: A Virtual Reunion of the Jewish Medical Students of Padua," *Verapo Yerape* 7 (2017), 55-76; idem, "Confessions of a Would-Be Forger: The Medical Diploma of Tobias Cohn (Tuvia HaRofeh) and other Jewish Medical Graduates of the University of Padua," forthcoming in K. Collins and S. Kottek, eds., *Ma'ase Tuvia (Venice, 1708): Tuvia Cohen on Medicine and Science* (Medical Library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2019).

<sup>36</sup> On Minz, see Hayyim Moshe Zorgar, "Rabbi Yehuda Minz, Rabbi of Padua in Italy" (Hebrew), *HaOtzar* 4 (Sivan 5777), 280-296.

<sup>37</sup> 122-124.

<sup>38</sup> Carpi, "Notes," 54.

Another major rabbinic figure who served as leader of the Padua community for many decades was Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen (1482-1565), known as Maharam mi-Padua. He married the granddaughter of his teacher, Rabbi Minz. We have testimony of at least one young scholar, Avtalyon mi-Modena, shuttling between Maharam's yeshiva and the medical school, and presumably he was not alone.<sup>39</sup>

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh de Modena (1571-1648) was a well-known personality of the Italian Renaissance, involved in halakhic discourse, dialogue with non-Jews, choral music performance in his synagogue, and discussions about the propriety of gambling, among other endeavors.<sup>40</sup> Though he lived in Venice, the close proximity to Padua facilitated much cross-pollination between these two cities. He maintained a close connection with a number of the medical students at the University of Padua. He not only wrote poems for some of the medical graduates, but in one case he collected and published an entire volume of letters and poems dedicated to his prized student Joseph Hamitz, who graduated in 1623.<sup>41</sup> Modena later granted rabbinic ordination to Hamitz. Perhaps his most famous student from Padua's medical school was Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo.<sup>42</sup>

Rabbi Yehudah Briel (1643-1722) was another prominent rabbinic figure who maintained a close relationship with many of the medical students from Padua. Gabriel Felix, the close friend of Tuvia Cohen (author of *Ma'ase Tuvia*), wrote Rabbi Briel regarding matters of Talmudic learning as well as personal issues.<sup>43</sup> Briel continued the connection with the medical students even beyond their years of training when he served as Chief Rabbi of Mantua. Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Lampronti corresponded with Briel regarding the interpretation of a Talmudic passage referring to spontaneous generation. This now famous exchange is recorded in

<sup>39</sup> Judah Saltaro Fano, *Mikve Israel* (Venice, 1607), 35a-36b.

<sup>40</sup> See Howard Adelman, "Leon Modena: The Autobiography and the Man," in Mark R. Cohen, trans. and ed., *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's Life of Judah* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 30.

<sup>41</sup> See N. S. Leibovitz, *Seridim mi-Kitve ha-Pilosof ha-Rofe ve-haMekubbal R. Yosef Hamitz* (Darom Books, 1937).

<sup>42</sup> On the relationship between De Modena and Delmedigo, see Ruderman, "The Diffusion of Scientific Knowledge," in his *Jewish Thought*, 118-52.

<sup>43</sup> Felix and Tuviah Cohen both left the medical school in Frankfurt to complete their training in the University of Padua, on account of its more receptive attitude toward Jewish students. For a record of the correspondence of Felix and Briel, see David Kaufmann, "*Une Lettre de Gabriel Felix Moschides a R' Juda Briel*," *Revue Des Etudes Juives* 32 (1896), 134-7.

Lampronti's magnum opus, *Pahad Yitzhak*.<sup>44</sup> Briel also granted rabbinic ordination to Shimshon Morpurgo some eleven years after he graduated Padua's medical school. Upon Briel's death, Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Cantarini, one of the more prominent medical graduates of Padua, penned a magnificent eulogy in his memory.<sup>45</sup>

One of the more colorful and controversial Jewish figures in Paduan history was Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (1707-1746), author of the well-known ethical work *Mesillat Yesharim*. While his works are part of the contemporary cannon of Jewish literature, he was controversial during his brief lifetime for his radical mystical and kabbalistic beliefs. While some historians suggest he may have attended the University of Padua, no record of his attendance exists, though a number of his relatives attended the medical school.<sup>46</sup> However, he certainly associated with a group of students there, many from the medical school.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Luzzatto wrote congratulatory poems in honor of a number of Jewish medical graduates of Padua.<sup>48</sup> A number of medical students attended his regular study group, an informal way of continuing their Jewish education. Two in particular, Moshe David Valle and Yekutiel Gordon, went on to become Luzzatto's staunch advocates and supporters.

- *Solomon Conegliano*

The most well-known effort to provide a combined Jewish and medical education program was that of Solomon Conegliano, himself a medical graduate from the university in 1660.<sup>49</sup> Seeing a genuine need to assist

<sup>44</sup> *Pahad Yitzhak*, s.v., *tzeda asura*. On the Lampronti-Briel exchange and spontaneous generation, see, for example, Natan Slifkin, "The Spontaneous Sweat-Louse," in *Sacred Monsters* (Gefen Books, 2007), 349-81; Moshe Meiselman, *Torah, Chazal, and Science* (Israel Bookshop, 2013), 279-95.

<sup>45</sup> See Samuel David Luzzatto in Y. Blumenfeld, *Otzar Nehmad* 3 (Vienna, 1860), 148-9. The eulogy is a masterpiece of word play, acronyms, and linguistic gymnastics.

<sup>46</sup> A. Modena and E. Morpurgo, *Medici E Chirurghi Ebrei Dottorati E Licenziati Nell'Universita di Padova dal 1617 al 1816* (Forni Editore, 1967). See "Luzzatto" in index.

<sup>47</sup> See Isaiah Tishby, *Messianic Mysticism: Moses Hayim Luzzatto and the Padua School* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> See Reichman, "Valmadonna Trust," 66-68.

<sup>49</sup> Modena and Morpurgo, *Medici E Chirurghi*, 26; Joshua O. Leibowitz, "The Physicians of the Conegliano Family" (Hebrew), *Korot* 2:3-4 (February 1959), 149-151; Bruno Kisch, "Cervo Conegliano: A Jewish Graduate of Padua in 1743," *Journal of the History of Medicine* 4 (1949), 450-459, esp. 453; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 111-113; Asher Salah, *Le Republique des Lettres: Rabbins, Ecrivains et Medecins Juifs en Italie au 18<sup>e</sup> Siecle* (Brill, 2007), 188-189. Solomon's preparatory school is also discussed in David Kaufmann, *Dr. Israel Conegliano* (Budapest: Adolf Alkalay, 1895); see p. 131 for a copy of Solomon's epitaph.

foreign Jewish students arriving in Padua with hopes of matriculating into the famous medical school, Conegliano not only honed their academic skills, he also provided them a nurturing environment and facilitated the continuation of their Torah learning. His program was intended to be a supplement, not a replacement, for the university training. Tuvia Cohen, in his introduction to his *Ma'aseh Tuvia*, recalls how his own transition to Padua was greatly eased and enhanced by Conegliano, from both the medical and religious perspectives. Conegliano in turn wrote a glowing poetic introduction and approbation to Tuvia's book.

- *The Academies of Rabbi Dr. Isaac Cantarini and Rabbi Dr. Isaac Lampronti*

Two graduates of The University of Padua Medical School were both renowned physicians and towering rabbinic figures, Rabbi Dr. Isaac Cantarini (1644-1723) and Rabbi Dr. Isaac Lampronti (1679-1756).<sup>50</sup> Ruderman writes that they both ran preparatory schools for medical students with a dual curriculum in rabbinic and scientific subjects.<sup>51</sup> I have not seen other details or references regarding these endeavors.

Most of the programs noted above originated in Italy, and with good reason. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries Jews were expelled from almost the whole of Western Europe. As Cecil Roth writes:

There was only one country of Western Europe in which Jewish life continued to flourish and to maintain its contact with the general world; thus the inquiry as to the position of the Jews in university life must in effect be very largely confined geographically to Italy, as it is, in point of subject, chiefly to medicine.<sup>52</sup>

After a review of the fifteenth century Sicilian proposal to establish a Jewish university, Roth concludes his 1930 essay with the following:

What came of this endeavor it is impossible to say. That such a conception should ever have crossed the medieval mind is, however, in itself a remarkable fact. It is an extraordinary anticipation of recent proposals in New York and elsewhere for universities primarily for the instruction of Jews alone.

While it is not at all remarkable to me that "such a conception should ever have crossed the medieval mind," as this has been the Jewish *modus*

<sup>50</sup> For references on Cantarini and Lampronti, see Reichman, "Valmadonna Trust."

<sup>51</sup> See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 257-260.

<sup>52</sup> Roth, "Medieval University," 134.

operandi since our religion began its encounter with other cultures, it is nonetheless remarkable how this “conception” has blossomed into a more fully formed entity in the modern era.

### *The Modern Era*

In the modern era, the number of Jews attending medical schools has increased exponentially. Regarding the medical education of Jewish students, as in the past, there have been challenges. For example, quotas were a major barrier to medical school admission in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>53</sup> Sabbath issues are a major matter of concern, and over the last few decades Sabbath observant medical residencies, which accommodate Sabbath observant doctors in training, have been offered sporadically by hospitals and institutions across the United States.

Our review of educational initiatives for Jewish medical students in the pre-modern era reveals a few small-scale and non-sustained programs. While these programs were admittedly largely failed ventures, the modern era has seen some remarkable, if underappreciated, developments in this area.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen a proliferation of Jewish educational offerings for those in the health related fields, largely focused on adult and continuing education. In addition, the focus of these offerings has been specifically on the relationship of science and medicine to Jewish law. While rabbinic literature has always dealt with medical issues, the late twentieth century witnessed the birth of a dedicated field of Jewish medical ethics, founded by Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits with the publication of his dissertation, *Jewish Medical Ethics*.<sup>54</sup> The field has expanded exponentially since the book’s publication in 1959, and, invariably, the Torah learning of Jewish medical students now includes a diet consisting, in part, of medical halakha. In this section we draw attention to some of the Jewish educational opportunities for the pre-medical and medical student in the modern era.

<sup>53</sup> See Nathan Ratnoff and Isidor W. Held, “Some Problems of the Jewish Medical Student,” *Medical Leaves* 4 (1942), 146-151; Alfred L. Shapiro, “Racial Discrimination in Medicine,” *Jewish Social Studies* 10:2 (April, 1948), 103-134; Lawrence Bloomgarden, “Medical School Quotas and National Health,” *Commentary* (January-June, 1953), 29-37; Leon Sokoloff, “The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Quota in Medical School Admissions,” *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 68:4 (November, 1992), 497-518; Edward C. Halperin, “The Jewish Problem in U.S. Medical Education: 1920-1955,” *Journal of the History of Medicine* 56 (April, 2001), 140-167.

<sup>54</sup> Immanuel Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics: A Comparative and Historical Study of the Jewish Religious Attitude to Medicine and Its Practice* (Bloch Publishing Co., 1975).

## TRADITION

### *Independent Institutes and Conferences*

There have been a number of organizations that have offered periodic conferences, seminars and programs on issues related to Judaism and medicine, with sessions dedicated to medical students.<sup>55</sup>

### *University-Based Programs*

- *Yeshiva University (YU)*

Yeshiva University, the bastion of *Torah u-Madda* in the United States, has contributed immensely to the Torah education of pre-medical and medical students. Its very existence has allowed for pre-med students to pursue their secular studies simultaneous with the highest-level Torah education, something unavailable to the students of Padua. A significant number of its Roshei Yeshiva, including , R. J. David Bleich, R. Yaakov Neuburger, R. Dr. Moshe Tendler, and R. Mordechai Willig, have expertise and international renown in the field of medical halakha. Medically related offerings have included a year-long “Chaver Program” in medical halakha, science and bioethics courses infused with a Torah perspective, and medical halakha courses at both Yeshiva and Stern College.

In recent years the YU Medical Ethics Society (MES), comprised primarily of students entering the health-related fields, has provided programming throughout the year on issues relating to medicine and Jewish law.

Yeshiva University opened its medical school, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in 1953. In the 1980s a rabbinic position for the Einstein Synagogue was created. This has served to provide for the religious needs for the community of medical students, residents, and attendings. The rabbis have always, based on their individual interests and capabilities, provided Jewish education for the medical students, including programming in medical halakha. Guest lecturers have also been invited to enhance the educational offerings.

Official electives are offered in the field of Jewish medical ethics, as well as the opportunity to write dissertations on Jewish topics. The topics of the dissertations focus primarily on modern medical advances from a

<sup>55</sup> Examples include the National Institute of Judaism and Medicine, San Francisco Institute for Jewish Medical Ethics, Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, Torah in Motion, The Schlesinger Institute, Jerusalem Center for Research, New England Institute for Jewish Studies, and the Lakewood Fellowship Medical Intern Program.



Torah perspective.<sup>56</sup> In addition, a course in Jewish medical ethics is offered in the Einstein Masters in Bioethics Program.

The Einstein students founded a journal devoted to medicine and Jewish law, *Verapo Yerape*, largely edited by the students themselves. Many of the submissions are from Einstein students, often a product of their research electives. Einstein students edited a halakhic guidebook for medical students and residents, comprised entirely of essays by Einstein medical students.<sup>57</sup>

- *Touro*

Lander College and Touro University System offers special courses for students in the pre-health fields, and Lander College for Men, like YU, affords the opportunity for pre-med students to pursue their secular studies simultaneous with the highest-level Torah education. It also requires a course in Jewish medical ethics for those entering the field of healthcare. New York Medical College, acquired by Touro in 2011, offers a master's program in medical ethics that focuses on Jewish medical ethics. Touro also offers courses in medical ethics, genetics, and biology through a Torah lens.

- *Israel*

Prominent Israeli personalities on the interface of medicine and Judaism offer courses at the medical schools in Israel supplementing their medical education with Jewish and religious content.

- *Combined Yeshiva and Medical School Program*

This past fall, the Technion American Medical School in Haifa established a new five-year combined yeshiva and medical school program (decelerated from the conventional four-year program), where students will simultaneously learn Jewish studies and medicine.<sup>58</sup> For the first year, the students have medical lectures in the morning, followed by Torah study and *shiurim* on topics related to medicine and halakha in the afternoon.

<sup>56</sup> See Edward Reichman, "The History of the Jewish Medical Student Dissertation: An Evolving Jewish Tradition," in J. Karp and M. Schaikewitz, eds., *Sacred Training: A Halakhic Guidebook for Medical Students and Residents* (Ammud Press, 2018), xvii- xxxviii.

<sup>57</sup> J. Karp and M. Schaikewitz, eds., *Sacred Training: A Halakhic Guidebook for Medical Students and Residents* (Ammud Press, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> This program was created by Dr. Tzvi Wilbur, with R.Yossi Sprung as the Rosh Yeshiva. It is run in close consultation and under the auspices of the renowned *posek* R. Osher Weiss.

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At the end of five years, the students will receive a medical degree as well as a certificate in Jewish law.

The modern developments discussed above are truly exceptional, and represent attempts in earnest, in varying degrees, to resurrect the Italian Renaissance model of synthesis. However, all the aforementioned programs are supplementary or preparatory for a separate medical school education under different auspices.

The Technion initiative is at once entirely new and extraordinary, yet simultaneously a continuation of a centuries-old tradition. Indeed, I believe this to be the first program in history to offer a combined yeshiva program, fully integrated with an accredited and complete medical school education. It is, however, a natural progression and continuation of a tradition to maintain and provide Jewish education for those pursuing a career in medicine.

The innate and intense desire of Jewish physicians to relate their medical training and practice to their Jewish tradition has been evident in every generation. Today's students are part of this longstanding and unwavering tradition of pursuing medical training through the prism of Torah. To use an expression anachronistic to their predecessors—it is simply part of our DNA.