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Movement, Geography, and Rabbinic Culture in High Medieval Northern Europe

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Abstract: Despite the distance between their different communities and the difficulties of medieval travel, the Jews of northern Europe developed typical common legal and communal traditions. Rabbinic students traveled hundreds of kilometers to study with famous rabbis, rabbis themselves often relocated from one community to another, and questions were regularly sent to faraway rabbinic authorities and were quickly answered. This article sheds light on the movement and communication patterns of medieval Jewish scholars as a social group. It includes three sections; the first focuses on the movement patterns of prominent rabbis, the second on their forms of communication, and the third on the way these practices were reflected in the organization of larger communal structures. Overall, the article highlights the major role that networks of movement and communication played in the intellectual culture of the rabbinic elite (and other Jews as well) in high medieval northern Europe.

Keywords: movement; rabbinic culture; Jews; geography; Middle Ages; northern Europe; travel; rivers; communication



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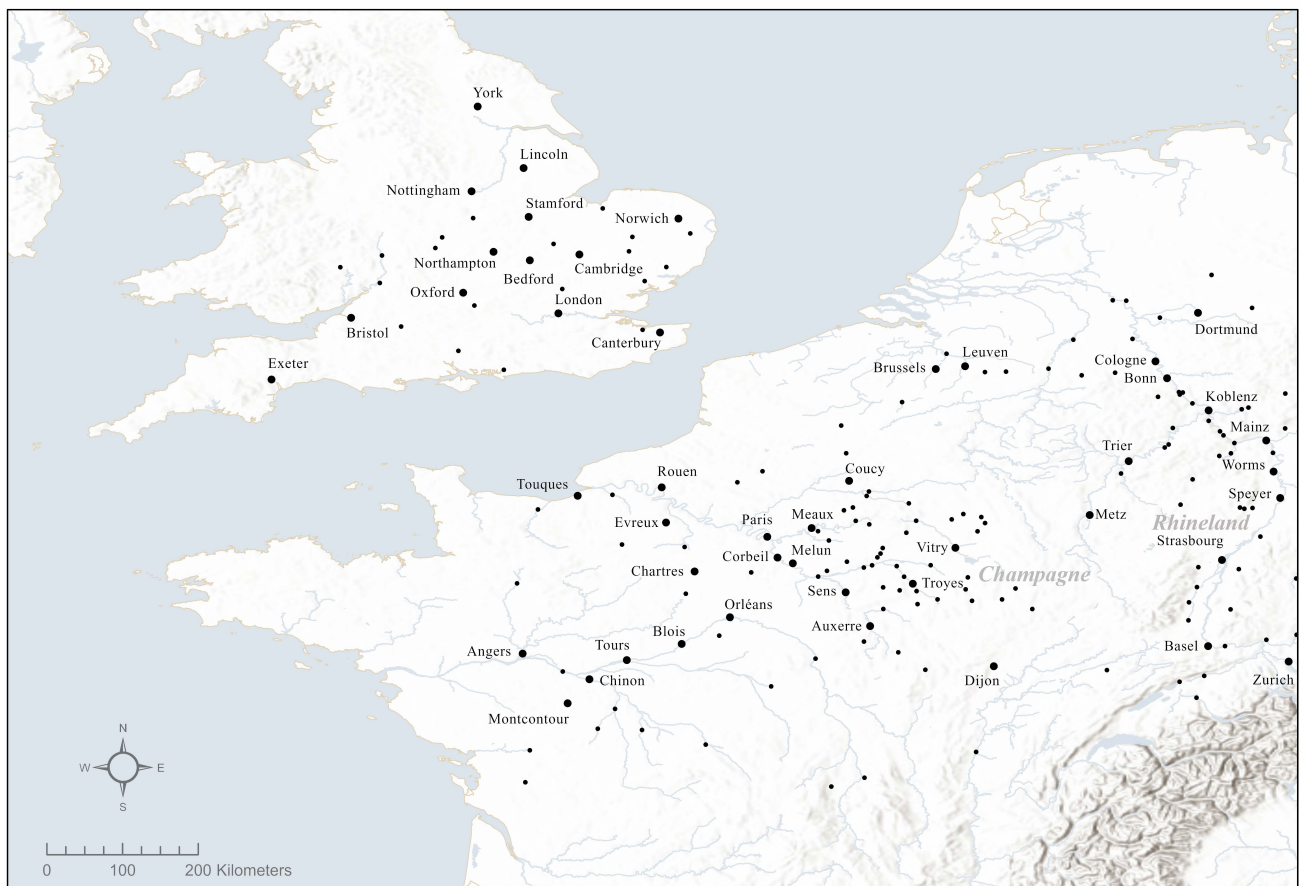
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1. Introduction

Medieval Jews in northern Europe faced major geographic challenges as they engaged in travel or long-distance communication. The areas inhabited by Jews in northern Europe during the High Middle Ages, that is, from around the year 1000 to 1350, stretch over close to half a million square kilometers: from Exeter in the West to Vienna in the East, from York in the North to Zurich in the South. Of course, these areas mostly contained woodlands, fields, and small villages that did not host any Jews on a regular basis. Jewish communities usually dwelled in towns, their sizes ranging from a thousand to two thousand people for the largest communities to a few households for the smallest ones, which were, naturally, the majority.¹ Even approximated total numbers are speculative, but the Jewish population probably added up to 1–5% of the total population (though in some towns, this ratio could have been higher).² Still, it is evident that Jewish communities were relatively small and far away from each other. For instance, the aerial distance between London, the largest community in England, and that of Vienna, the largest community in Austria, is over 1200 km. There were many communities in the middle, but often one would have to travel dozens of kilometers before reaching the next Jewish settlement when taking a trip between these two centers (see Figures 1 and 2 below).³ Thus, trips between faraway communities could not have been easy for medieval Jews, but still, as we will see, they traveled.⁴

Despite the distance and the difficulties of medieval travel, the Jews of northern Europe kept a fairly uniform culture across this space, broadly speaking. The Jews of northern France (*Tzarfat*), and those of England who were closely connected to them, kept different traditions than those of the western German Empire (*Ashkenaz*) when it came to a few legal and liturgical details. Still, their liturgical order contained many of the same elements, they used a similar script, and they established similar communal and social institutions.⁵ One of the most impressive aspects of this cultural unity was the common rabbinic traditions typical of northern Europe. Rabbinic students traveled hundreds of kilometers to study

with famous rabbis, rabbis themselves often relocated from one community to another, and questions were regularly sent to faraway rabbinic authorities and were quickly answered. This network of scholars allowed for the creation of common characteristics of Jewish law (*halakha*) throughout northern Europe (despite some regional variations), which were later developed into what came to be known as the Jewish Ashkenazi tradition. Indeed, as halakhic decisions shaped a wide range of aspects of the everyday life of medieval Jews, relative halakhic uniformity likely created similarities in the quotidian practices of northern European Jews.⁶ How could this have happened, despite the vast distances between the communities and the difficulties and dangers of medieval transportation? This article presents a few plausible ideas.



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Figure 1. Map of Jewish settlement in northern France and England in the thirteenth century. Cartography by Ruhama Bonfil. First published in Tzafrir Barzilay, Eyal Levinson, and Elisheva Baumgarten, eds., *Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Northern Europe, 1080–1350: A Sourcebook*, TEAMS Documents of Practice Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2022).

Answering the question above is more challenging than it might seem at first glance. With only a few exceptions, medieval rabbis did not bother documenting their travels or even their whereabouts. They mostly put in writing legal correspondence, commentaries on the Talmud, or other halakhic texts, all of which were designed to convey opinions about general laws, not specific circumstances. Even if a letter to a certain rabbi included specific names, places, or dates, these were often edited out by later scholars who compiled such communication into volumes of halakhic precedents (known as *responsa*) (Ta-Shma 2005, pp. 117–25; Soloveitchik 1990). To understand how rabbis moved and communicated in high medieval Europe, we should piece together the little available information and consider to what extent it represents a larger reality.⁷ The goal is to expose, as far as the sources allow, the movement and communication patterns of medieval Jewish scholars as a

social group. The article includes three sections; the first focuses on the movement patterns of prominent rabbis, the second on their forms of communication, and the third on the way these practices were reflected in the organization of larger communal structures. Overall, this article highlights the major role that networks of movement and communication played in the intellectual culture of the rabbinic elite (and, to some degree, also of other Jews) in high medieval northern Europe.

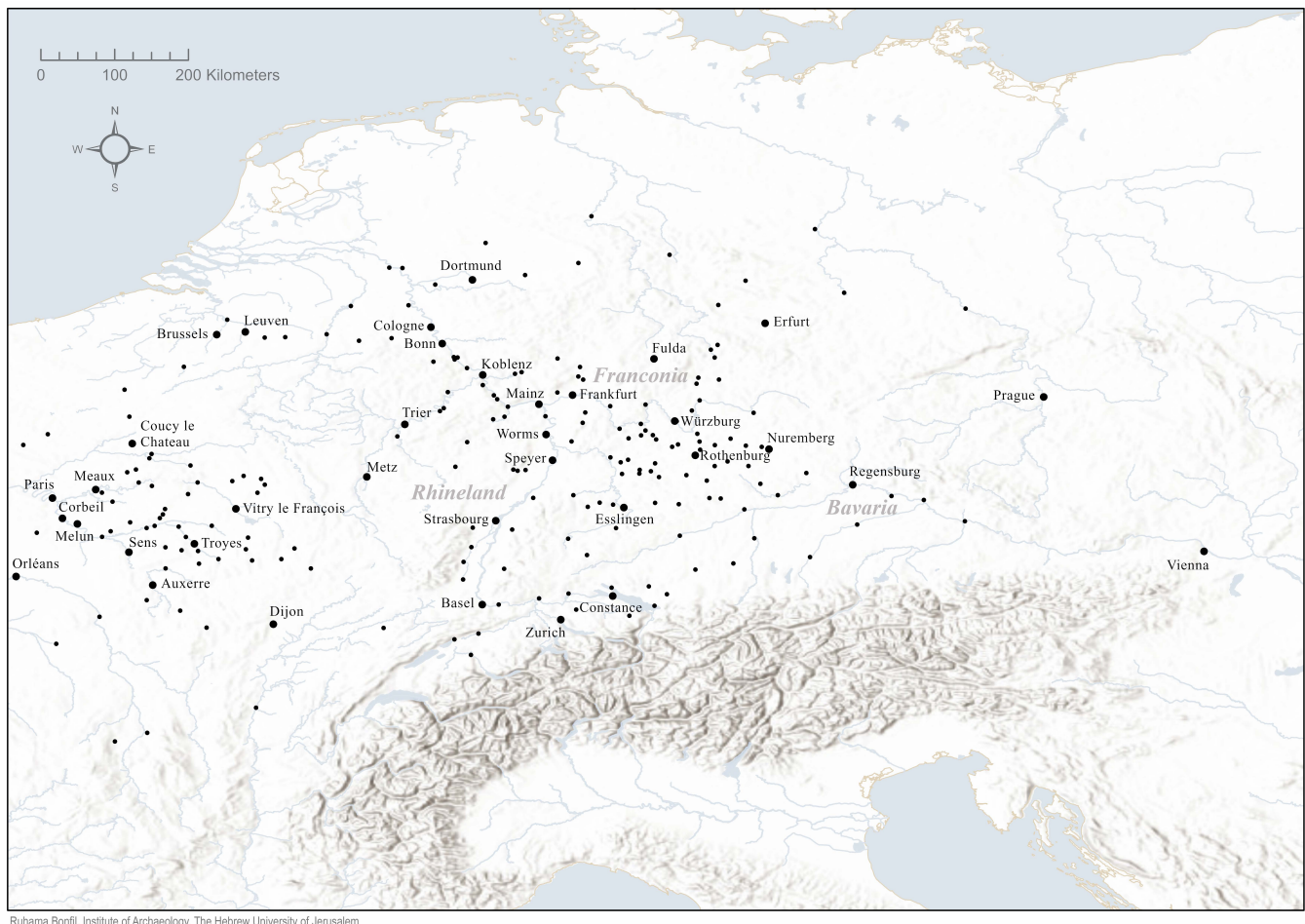


Figure 2. Map of Jewish settlement in north-central Europe in the thirteenth century. Cartography by Ruhama Bonfil. First published in Tzafrir Barzilay, Eyal Levinson, and Elisheva Baumgarten, eds., *Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Northern Europe, 1080–1350: A Sourcebook*, TEAMS Documents of Practice Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2022).

2. Traveling Rabbis

Taking a step back to the general practices of medieval Jews, several scholars pointed out their tendency to move, probably more so than their non-Jewish neighbors (Agus 1969, pp. 23–51; Chazan 2018, pp. 158–84; Chazan 2010, pp. 100–6; Toch 2013, pp. 90–93, 256; Baskin 2008, pp. 224–26; Liberles 2021, pp. 107–9; Grossman 1996, pp. 107–26). Since Jews often lived in small communities established at a distance from each other, they sometimes had to travel for communal or religious purposes. Not every community had a rabbinic court, a cemetery, or even a ritual bath (*mikveh*), and Jews of smaller communities would have to rely on those of larger towns to provide them with such services.⁸ Jewish traders would regularly travel to buy and sell property in central markets or deal with remote business partners (Toch 2013, pp. 87–97; Baskin 2008, pp. 232–33; Doron 2021a, pp. 349–50; Agus 1969, pp. 26–29, 40–42). Rabbis, however, seem to have traveled even more than other Jews, particularly those who did not often engage in long-distance trade. This should be stated tentatively, as non-elite Jews documented their travels even less frequently than

rabbis. What can be said for certain is that traveling, and often relocation for long periods, was a central part of the lives of many medieval rabbis.

Let us start with the most famous medieval example of rabbinic travel—R. Shlomo b. Isaac of Troyes, known by the acronym *Rashi*. He was born in Champagne around 1040, but around 1060 left for the great rabbinic center of Mainz, more than 350 km away, to study with R. Jacob b. Yakar. At some point after the death of R. Jacob in 1064, *Rashi* relocated to the other contemporary rabbinic center of the Rhineland, in the town of Worms,⁹ where he spent a few more years before returning to Troyes around 1070. While *Rashi* was not a rich man at the time, he spent his limited resources on staying in the Rhineland, perhaps traveling back and forth. He saw vital importance in gaining his rabbinic education with the most prominent scholars of his age, even if it took him away from his relatives and community members. Indeed, his studies abroad influenced his scholarship, in particular, his well-known exegetical work. Five years after his return to Champagne, *Rashi* again traveled to Worms to confront his once-teacher R. Issac ha-Levi on a certain halakhic matter, now as a colleague. He also kept in touch with other scholars of the Rhineland area, though he seems to have stayed in France during his later years, until his death in 1105.¹⁰ Thus, the most prominent rabbinic scholar of medieval France spent many of his days away from his hometown and took on long-distance traveling several times.

Rashi was not unique in his tendency to travel, and we can find evidence for the long-distance movement and relocation of Jewish scholars around the same time. *Rashi*'s uncle, R. Simon the Elder, studied under R. Gershom b. Judah of Mainz (*Me'or ha-Golah*, d. 1028), but later traveled to northern France and settled there (Grossman 1995, p. 124; Agus 1969, p. 27). We know more about four brothers who lived in the second half of the eleventh century, German rabbis known as the sons of Makhir. The brothers had significant ties with Mainz, and the older one, Nathan, spent much of his career there, despite also traveling elsewhere. Two other brothers, Neḥemiah and Yakar, studied at Mainz but moved to Worms for long periods, and Yakar likely spent some time in the nascent community of Speyer. The fourth brother, Menaḥem, moved away from the rabbinic towns of the central Rhineland and settled in Regensburg, Bavaria, some three hundred kilometers southeast of Mainz. This was not a small distance in medieval terms, but Menaḥem kept constant communication with scholars in Mainz, including his older brother. He also participated in the composition of a halakhic compilation with his brothers (Grossman 1976, pp. 114–20). One of the factors that made this possible was that the brothers were constant travelers. In their compilation, one of the brothers discusses problems arising when Jews traveled aboard river vessels, presumably operated by Christians, on the Sabbath: “When we travel by ship on Shabbat from Mainz to Worms, we extend a piece of wood out of the ship to allow for the carrying [of objects] in and out [of the ship]. And so instructed me our rabbi, the light of the exile, twice as I was traveling with him by ship.”¹¹ Without getting into the technical complexities of the legal situation that the solution described here is meant to resolve, it is evident that the halakhic conclusion is based in this case on personal experience. The author traveled from Mainz to Worms on a regular basis, twice in the company of another senior rabbi, even if the ship sometimes arrived at its destination after the Shabbat began.¹²

The devastating attacks against Jewish communities in 1096 may have caused some decline in Jewish travel during the following decades.¹³ The major rabbinic centers of Mainz and Worms suffered extensive destruction, which severed several important lineages of rabbinic scholars. This resulted in an intellectual decline during the early twelfth century and a rise of the northern French center that eclipsed that of the Rhineland.¹⁴ Thus, it is likely that the movement of rabbinic scholars to the Rhineland was less frequent during this period and was partly replaced by movement towards northern France, Champagne in particular. This is not to say that the movement of German rabbis had declined altogether. In the context of river travel on the Sabbath, Eliezer bar Nathan of Mainz commented in the mid-twelfth century: “and so we are used to doing [*ve-ha de-nahagi nami*—Aramaic], to embark on a ship on Shabbat eve [i.e., Friday] before the evening to travel to Worms or

Cologne.” (Eliezer bar Nathan 1958, 1:47a-b, and also 157a-b; Emanuel 2006, pp. 50–59). While this refers to movement between Rhineland communities, we should note that Mainz and Cologne are about 140 km apart, and such a journey is presented as a common occurrence that Eliezer had probably engaged in himself. While we have no evidence that Eliezer relocated permanently, other Jewish scholars in the second half of the twelfth century, including R. Judah b. Samuel (“the pious”), immigrated to Bavaria and other eastern regions of the German Empire. During this period, the community of Regensburg, on the Danube, gained importance as a prominent rabbinic center, as well as a commercial and political hub, and so did the city of Würzburg.¹⁵

If we turn to the French center, the most intriguing example of travel and relocation comes from the rabbinic school of R. Jacob b. Meir, known as *Rabbenu Tam*. He was the grandchild of *Rashi* and a great exegete of the Talmud in his own right, who apparently had an aversion to traveling. He seems to have only left his Champagne village of Ramerupt for a short period in Troyes, some twenty-five kilometers away (Reiner 2021, pp. 39–43; Urbach 1986, p. 68; Isaac b. Samuel 2019, p. 6). In contrast, his brother R. Samuel b. Meir, known as *Rashbam*, had traveled extensively around northern France (Golb 1998, pp. 226–39). Still, *Rabbenu Tam*’s reputation as a scholar was such that the small village soon became an attraction for rabbinic students from across northern Europe. A group of some ten documented students who previously studied in the Rhineland, mostly in Speyer, four of whom originated from Bavaria, found their way to Ramerupt in the 1130s. A larger group of students, close to twenty, likely originated from northern France and Provence, and it stands to reason that an even larger group of students remained undocumented. One student, R. Moshe, apparently traveled 1900 km to Ramerupt, all the way from Kiev! (Reiner 2021, pp. 316–17; Urbach 1986, pp. 114–64, 184–226; Kanarfogel 2018, pp. 153–57; Reiner 2004, pp. 276–77). Tracing the locations where these students resettled after their years in Ramerupt reveals a similar picture. Many of the French students returned to different locations in northern France, but three relocated to England. Two of the German students resettled in Bavaria, one further east in Prague, Bohemia, and another in Carinthia (modern-day Austria) (Urbach 1986, pp. 114–64, 184–226, 493–94; Reiner 2021, 316–36; Kanarfogel 2018, pp. 153–57; Reiner 2004, pp. 277–78). It seems that not all of the students chose to return to their places of origin, and *Rabbenu Tam*’s school thus facilitated permanent scholarly immigration. These students continued his legacy in halakhic reasoning and Talmudic exegesis, contributing to a common standard of intellectual culture across northern Europe. Notably, during the same period, the practice of relocation in order to study with a prominent scholar became popular with Christian scholars as well, especially among those who attended the cathedral schools of northern France (Wei 2007, pp. 74–79).

One final example can be taken from the biography of R. Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi, known as *Ra’avyah*. He was born to a rabbinic family in Mainz around 1140 and began his studies there. As a student, he traveled from one great teacher to another, spending time with Eliezer b. Samuel of Metz, Judah the Pious in Regensburg, and other rabbis in Speyer. At some point, he settled in Bonn, and later in Cologne, but traveled on different occasions to Worms, Frankfurt, Würzburg, Bingen, and Speyer again, until his death around 1223.¹⁶ His constant travels reveal something about the boundaries of the German intellectual sphere of his time, which now included not only the central Rhineland towns of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer, but a vast area stretching from Cologne in the northwest to Regensburg in the southeast, more than four-hundred kilometers apart.¹⁷ At the same time, his connections with the French center were limited in comparison to his predecessors.¹⁸ Perhaps due to his tendency for long-distance traveling, *Ra’avyah* often commented on related halakhic issues. In the context of the delivery of a marriage contract, for instance, he cited his father, R. Joel ha-Levi of Bonn, who noted that “the people of Cologne often travel to the market of Mainz to buy wine and grain. And so do the people of Mainz travel to the fair of Cologne.” (Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1989, pp. 27–40, §922, here 36). He dedicated a long section of his halakhic commentary to limitations set on travelers using river vessels who arrive at

their destination on the Sabbath. Much of the section presents a discussion with one of his teachers, R. Ephraim b. Isaac of Regensburg, who must have had his own significant traveling experience, as he gained his education under *Rabbenu Tam* in Ramerupt. Another section of the commentary focuses on those traveling by land who had to stop their journey for the Sabbath.¹⁹ The arguments are based, as is the case with halakhic commentaries, on the works of previous scholars, but on several occasions, the writers point out that many of the issues are pertinent to their contemporary circumstances. For example, regarding the question of whether a river vessel arriving at a certain harbor on the Sabbath had formally entered the town upon its arrival, Ephraim writes: “and that is the case [that the ship had entered the town for halakhic purposes] in a place where the ship comes into a deep port. . . and the water is deep behind the ship and where the city walls reach all the way to the water, like in the towns in which we dwell on the Rhine.”²⁰ Clearly, he was applying former halakhic principles to the geographical and urban conditions familiar to him, highlighting the regularity of the Jewish use of river vessels.

The early thirteenth century was likely another high point of Jewish mobility within the German Empire, at least in regard to rabbinic scholars. In contrast, Ephraim Kanarfogel and Simcha Emanuel have noted a sudden decline in the connections between rabbis and students from the Rhineland and those from northern France from the late twelfth century to around the 1240s. It seems that students from German lands no longer traveled to France, where many of the leading scholars of the period were based, which resulted in a gap in German rabbinic leadership. Kanarfogel points to intellectual reasons that have likely caused this break in travel and communication between these centers, but political instability in the Empire could have also contributed (Kanarfogel 2018, esp. 149–150, 153; Emanuel 2021, pp. 39–44, 85–99, esp. 85–87; Emanuel 2014, pp. 549–558; reprinted in Emanuel 2021, pp. 76–99). The crisis was resolved to some degree with the rise of R. Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg (known as *Maharam*) in the 1250s, whose prominence and connections to France allowed for a renewal of the communication between the centers, a tradition continued by his students. *Maharam* himself spent time in France as a student of R. Jehiel of Paris, and a few of his students may have traveled there as well. Still, travel between the rabbinic centers of France and the Empire apparently never returned to the zenith of the twelfth century (Emanuel 2014, pp. 558–61; Urbach 1986, pp. 521–99; Shwarzfuchs 2001, pp. 227–28). The destruction brought on many German communities by the Rintfleisch massacres of 1298 and the expulsion of Jews from France in 1306 closed the chapter of the parallel development of the French and German rabbinic centers in their medieval form.²¹

Since medieval rabbis were a small elite group with a tendency to leave written records, we can say more about the movement and relocation patterns of particular rabbis than of other Jews. Though some scholars have left little evidence, enough survived to determine that long-distance traveling and short-term immigration were a significant part of the training of rabbinic students from the eleventh to the thirteenth century in northern Europe.²² This trend was typical of Christian scholars as well, as they relocated in order to study in the emerging cathedral schools and universities. Travel was also a regular practice for high clergy and, of course, for mendicant friars (Wei 2007, pp. 73–82; Lapine 2007, pp. 104–22). For Jewish scholars, spending a few years with a prominent teacher was worth the expense and the danger of traveling the medieval roads, as well as facing the cultural barriers set by the unfamiliar language and institutions of the new surrounding Christian society. Some periods may have been more auspicious for scholarly traveling and immigration than others, though the existing sources are not extensive enough to distinguish them with certainty. Tentatively, the 1130s–40s and the 1250s emerge as the high points, while the early twelfth century and the 1190s–1240s were the low ones. Still, it is generally true that the high medieval rabbinic centers of the Rhineland, northern France, and later Bavaria developed by the cross-pollination of cultural knowledge and skill, which was partially due to the traveling life cycle of many rabbinic scholars and their willingness to (temporarily) immigrate.

3. Regular Communication and Its Practical Aspects

While traveling rabbinic scholars had an important role in the development of medieval Jewish culture in northern Europe, information could also travel without its authors. Prayerbooks and other ritual manuscripts, for example, could be transported, leading to a growing unification of Hebrew liturgical poetry across the continent, as well as other ritual practices (Hollender 2015, pp. 18–36; Chazan 1968, pp. 23–28). More notably, many of the important discussions regarding Jewish scholarship, and particularly halakha, took place by letters. Scholars would send questions to each other and debate legal issues by continuing correspondence.²³ Often, as we will see, former rabbinic students wrote to their once teachers, but some great rabbis received hundreds of questions, including from people they had never met. Sometimes, a particular question was brought before a local rabbi, who deemed it too complex or as having too extensive implications to decide on the matter, and he would turn to consult with a higher rabbinic authority. The most interesting halakhic responses of great rabbis were collected, edited, and copied by their students or later generations (mostly from the late thirteenth century onwards), creating a literary genre known as *responsa*.²⁴ The extensive responsa culture of high medieval northern Europe evidences not only legal and intellectual sophistication but also an established system of long-distance communication based on the regular movement of Jews.

Several of the responsa of Judah ha-Kohen of Mainz, who lived in the first half of the eleventh century, reveal evidence of such communication. One letter was sent to him from Hungary (*eretz Hagar*), asking for his ruling regarding a dispute between two local business partners. One of the partners bought goods in Hungary to be sold in Mainz and planned to use the profit to buy different merchandise in Mainz and sell it in Hungary after his return. The traveling merchant lost some of the initial investment after he encountered, in Mainz, the creditors of his business partner, and they demanded that the traveler pay his partner's debt out of their common goods. In their attempt to divide the resulting losses the two partners came into conflict and turned to the rabbi.²⁵ Surprisingly, the question was not brought before R. Judah by the traveling merchant when he was still in Mainz but was sent later from Hungary.²⁶ Thus, it is evident that communication across vast spaces, more than eight hundred kilometers in this case, was possible even in this early period, probably through the help of merchants like those described in this responsum.²⁷ Another question discussed the capturing of Jewish boys in Poland and the possible sale of one of them in Prague, but it is difficult to decipher how the information reached R. Judah.²⁸ A third question, regarding the limitations of communal authority, was sent from Troyes, which was apparently still a small community at the time, lacking in substantial local rabbis.²⁹ This information attests to R. Judah's prominent position as a halakhic arbitrator and also to an extensive network of Jewish communication in the early eleventh century.³⁰ The Jews who sent him these questions not only heard about his great knowledge in their disparate locations but were confident enough that they would be able to contact him and receive a response in due time.

Also *Rabbenu Tam*, who attracted students from across northern Europe, emerges as standing at the center point of a vast network of communication. In several cases, he continued his communication with his former students after they had left Ramerupt and spread across the continent. He argued extensively with R. Ephraim of Regensburg on several issues, for example, after the latter had resettled in Bavaria. He also kept in touch with another Bavarian former student, R. Isaac b. Mordechai.³¹ When it came to students who lived in the western parts of the German Empire, in northern France, or in England, communication was naturally easier and more frequent.³² In addition, *Rabbenu Tam* was approached by Jewish scholars from Provence, and perhaps even from southern Italy, and communicated with them on different halakhic matters, though his influence was much more limited in the South.³³ This level of communication in the mid-twelfth century corresponds to a period of extensive rabbinic movement, as we have seen, and both phenomena were likely connected. Rabbis who had a background studying in faraway locations naturally tended to keep ties with scholars in these locations after they resettled

elsewhere, but it is again notable that the physical conditions, in particular the movement patterns of other Jews, allowed for such reliable communication.

A final example of long-distance rabbinic communication, from the second half of the thirteenth century, comes from the writings of R. Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg, known as *Maharam*. While *Maharam* traveled as a student to France, Würzburg, and the Rhineland, he eventually settled in the town of Rothenburg on the Main.³⁴ As the senior rabbinic figure of the German Empire at the time, he received hundreds of letters requesting his decisions on different halakhic matters and served in practice as a high legal arbitrator. Many of the letters came from the well-established Jewish settlements of Rhineland, the Main Vally, and the western parts of the Danube basin—a vast area indeed (see Figure 2 above). In addition, *Maharam* kept regular communication with rabbis of the emerging rabbinic center on the Elbe, in the northeastern part of the Empire. In particular, R. Shmariah b. Isaac of Magdeburg wrote to *Maharam* often, despite the more than three hundred kilometers that separated them, and his rulings were incorporated into *Maharam's* decisions on several occasions. In the same manner, *Maharam* kept communication with scholars in Austria, especially in the Danube town of Krems and in Zwettl.³⁵ These new scholarly centers of the East expanded the boundaries of northern Europe's rabbinic network and were tied, in part through the mediation of *Maharam's* authority, to the traditions developed further west. Even if this network was not as vibrant as that of the mid-twelfth century (Emanuel 2021, pp. 77–99; Emanuel 2014, pp. 549–68; Kanarfogel 2018, pp. 150–66; Goldin 1996, pp. 136–38), it reveals the lingering importance of regular communication for rabbinic activity. A halakhic debate that developed in the 1240s between several German and French rabbis sheds further light on this communication network. The daughter of Judah of Düren, a rich and noble Jew, was betrothed to a young man from Rothenburg. After spending some time in Düren, the man asked that his fiancée join him in Rothenburg to execute the marriage, but the father insisted that she may not leave his home. The ensuing debate involved five scholars, one living relatively close to Düren, in Tienen or Cologne, one or two others who were northern French, and two or three more, including the young *Maharam* himself, who resided in the German Empire.³⁶ The father's social status and Düren's location in between the French and German rabbinic centers likely contributed to the fact that such an extensive network of scholars communicated over a single case. Still, it seems that even at times of limited communication and travel, such a network could be activated.

This leads us to consider the practical aspects of rabbinic communication and movement. How could medieval Jews be confident that these networks of long-distance travel and communication, stretching over hundreds of kilometers, would not fail them? How did they travel, and how did they send messages? How quickly did they expect their matters to be handled? Sometimes, scholars would use a messenger to deliver a responsum on a pressing matter to its destination, but they likely more often turned to regular Jewish travelers to convey their letters.³⁷ We have evidence that Jews traveled by land, using public roads, from one city to another. R. Samson b. Abraham of Sens was approached in 1212 regarding a Jew who “rented from his [Jewish] acquaintance a horse and a cart [to travel] to a certain location, an eight-day journey away,” but had to relinquish his endeavor after two days due to unusual dangers of the road.³⁸ One of the rabbis who commented on the Düren fiancée affair, Jehiel b. Jacob, pointed out that: “the roads are damaged and the rich [father] has some fame, and he is fearful to send his daughter [to Rothenburg] because of thieves”. The great distance between the cities, more than three hundred kilometers of aerial distance, is presented here as too extensive for a young woman to travel, especially if she may be a prime target for kidnapping (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 34b, §251). Another woman, however, did travel by horseback with a Jewish male partner between the towns of Barby and Zerbst, southeast of Magdeburg, at some point in the second half of the thirteenth century. The couple was worried that the woman might be ambushed by local Christians, and thus rode on to the next town despite the Sabbath (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:107–108, 2:739, §374). These sources suggest that while land travel

was possible, and was likely used for short distances, it could also be dangerous. This was especially true for women, but other Jews, including those who carried responsa letters, were also at risk.³⁹

River travel had some advantages over land travel. It was faster and cheaper, especially with regard to long-distance journeys; a situation reinforced by the general inadequacy of the roads, particularly before the thirteenth century. Thus, medieval transportation and trade were largely dependent on the major rivers of the continent, especially in the North. River vessels sailed regularly along the Loire, Seine, Thames, Rhine, Mosel, Main, Danube, and their many tributaries. This was largely the case even if not all rivers were navigable, sailing upstream was slow, and traveling from one river basin to another still required the hauling of goods over land (Verdon 2003, pp. 28–30; Werther and Kröger 2017, pp. 67, 71–73; Fütterer 2019, pp. 61–78; Irsigler 2007, pp. 13–27; Pfeiffer 1997, esp. 98–108, 122–25). Jews, and scholars in particular, relied on river travel as well. We have noted that the Makhir brothers, Eliezer bar Nathan, *Ra'avyah*, Joel of Bonn, and Ephraim of Regensburg had all discussed river travel as a feature of Jewish daily life, and sometimes even stated that they themselves had used it.⁴⁰ The ships were often operated by Christians, and the Jews boarded them as passengers (Barukh b. Issac 1979, 132, §224; Eleazar of Worms 1960, 80–81, §182–183; Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 2:78, §146; Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:588, §270; Soloveitchik 2008, pp. 238, 246–47). In addition, Gershom Me'or Hagolah, Judah ha-Kohen, and Maharam had been approached with questions involving river travel as a business practice, in which Jews rented vessels for the transportation of goods (Gershom b. Judah 1956, pp. 154–158, §67; Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 88b, §898; Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:588, §270. Also see Soloveitchik 2008, pp. 41–44, 246–50). Maharam, for instance, was asked regarding “a ship that was loaded in Cologne, and there were both gentiles [Christians] and Jews aboard, and Reuven placed thirteen packs [of merchandise] on the ship and Simon placed three, one placing his packs in a certain area and the other in another. When they arrived in Worms they started to unload, and gentiles were hired to carry the packs.”⁴¹ Such traveling Jewish merchants or passengers could have easily carried letters from one community to the next and allowed for quick and frequent rabbinic communication (Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1989, pp. 27–40, §922, esp. 34, 36; Reiner 2021, p. 319, n. 13; Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 2:78, §146). Even in cases when rabbis acquired messengers to deliver their responsa, these messengers had likely often used routine river transportation as well.

Many of the large Jewish communities of northern Europe were established in towns located on the major navigable rivers (see Figures 1 and 2 above), often in bustling economic centers (Toch 2013, pp. 71–72, 94–97; Baskin 2008, pp. 232–33; Agus 1969, pp. 26–29; Romain 2011, pp. 23–41). Finding a ship that sailed from one to the other, or even a Jewish merchant who did so, was probably not difficult (Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1989, pp. 27–40, §922, esp. 34, 36). This form of movement allowed for quick transport and communication between faraway communities. R. Barukh b. Isaac, who lived in northern France, commented on the issue in the second half of the twelfth century.⁴² He was considering whether Jews should avoid boarding ships for three days before the Sabbath, as a Talmudic dictum states,⁴³ but concluded that such a precaution was unnecessary, since the common sailing trips in northern Europe were short, “and they [halakhic rulers] were not very strict about this issue, and regarding the sea that one crosses to go to the island called England, [the sailors] can cross it twice in one day, when they have favorable wind.”⁴⁴ The crossing of the English Channel, some forty kilometers of sailing at its narrowest point, apparently took half a day or so and was a common affair. Barukh's familiarity with the area of Paris, which was well connected to England through sailing down the Seine, probably allowed him this knowledge. As for river transportation, the Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela mentioned in around 1173 that the trip from Cologne to Regensburg, an aerial distance of 340 km, took fifteen days. He pointed to the Rhine as the major route of transportation, but since Regensburg lies on the Danube, some overland travel between the two rivers was necessary (Benjamin of Tudela 1907, p. 71). Even with different problems of accessibility taken into

consideration, it seems that river travel allowed for communication between many of the large communities of northern Europe in a matter of weeks or sometimes even days.

This kind of fast transportation set the basis for rabbinic movement and communication. If a trip from one rabbinic center to another could be undertaken fairly quickly and cheaply and river vessels were widely available for use, a German student could study with a French rabbi and vice versa. If Jewish travelers could carry letters from one city to the next on a regular basis, including rabbis from all across northern Europe in an important halakhic debate could be plausible. Thus, the often-unspoken network of Jewish movement, mostly along the major rivers of northern Europe, created an important foundation for high medieval rabbinic culture and for the responsa literature in particular.

4. Imagined Rabbinic Communities

This conclusion opens another set of questions regarding Jewish identity and rabbinic authority. Since communication and travel were apparently common between Jewish communities, did Jews consider themselves a part of a communal structure larger than their local urban Jewish community? Did the authority of rabbis extend beyond arbitration in particular issues, and how far geographically could such an authority be implemented? In other words, did Jewish movement shape institutional and organizational patterns? A northern French responsum of the mid-eleventh century, sent to R. Joseph b. Samuel *Tov Elem*, sheds some light on the problem. Several Jews from Reims were captured by bandits on their way to the fair of Troyes (another example of the dangers of land travel), and local Jews had to pay thirty *livres* to set them free. This was a significant sum, and the Jews of Troyes wrote to other French communities in the hope that they would take on some of the cost. They sent letters of request to the Jews of Auxerre, Châlons, and Sens, but the latter refused to assist them, and thus they had to turn to R. Samuel for help. The rabbi, however, determined that one community could not force another to obey its rulings.⁴⁵ It seems that the Jews of Troyes considered the larger Champagne area as a unit, at least for practical purposes. The political independence of Champagne at this period and its growing economic importance likely contributed to this view.⁴⁶ The Jews of Reims crossed more than one hundred kilometers on their way to Troyes market, and the letters from Troyes quickly reached Auxerre, Châlons, and Sens, all more than sixty kilometers away. Despite the distance, inhabitants of Troyes saw these Jews as their partners when it came to solving communal problems and assumed that communal regulations would apply to them all. While R. Joseph ruled against this opinion, this sentiment indicates that constant Jewish movement led some Jews to consider relatively faraway settlements as part of their immediate circle of influence. The small size of each urban community (Châlons apparently hosted only two Jews or two Jewish households) likely contributed to this perception.⁴⁷

Communal regulation (*taqqanot*) can serve as a window into medieval Jewish perceptions of wider communal space. Such regulations could be issued by a prominent scholar, a group of scholars, or an assembly of communal representatives, often with some halakhic background. Typically, they controlled social behaviors that were not strictly contradictory to religious law but could cause tensions between Jews. These included adherence to communal obligations, internal jurisdictional issues, rules of conduct within one's family, etc. A medieval tradition attributed a group of such regulations to Gershom *Me'or Hagolah*—that is, to the early eleventh century—but it is difficult to determine whether this tradition is reliable. Some of the regulations seem to have been in place during the eleventh century, yet it is unclear to what extent they were respected. Still, this was likely a first attempt at regulating communication and institutional authority beyond the municipal community level (Grossman 2001, pp. 132–49; Blondheim 2020, pp. 260–68). Shlomo b. Samson, writing in the 1140s, described late eleventh-century Cologne as a communal center “out of which came life, and nourishment, and constant regulations [*din qavuah*—this can also be a reference to a court of law] to all our brethren dispersed throughout the land [*be-kol qatzvot*]”. Many Jews, including communal leaders, gathered at Cologne three times a year to trade at the local fair, and the opportunity was used to discuss common Jewish issues

(Haverkamp 2005, pp. 401, 429). The city was not known as a rabbinic center at the time but apparently served as an administrative communal hub, as Benjamin of Tudela has also observed.⁴⁸ Such intercommunal communication and coordination required the movement of people and knowledge, facilitated by Cologne's central economic position as well as its location on the Rhine (Irsigler 2007, pp. 13–14; Huffman 2018, pp. 143–46, 199–200; Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1989, 27–40, §922, esp. 34, 36; Soloveitchik 2008, pp. 246–249). During the twelfth century, mostly in its second half, the center of intercommunal administration seem to have converged with the rabbinic centers of the central Rhineland, particularly in Mainz, Worms, and Speyer. Several sources mention Jews who traveled there to plead their cases before the “assembly of communities” (*va'ad ha-kehilot*).⁴⁹ Some of the communal leaders were rabbis but not necessarily all of them. How often these leaders met and how extensive their authority was is difficult to conclude.

A more systematic, or at least better documented, attempt at establishing a wider Jewish authority took place in northern France around 1160. A small group of scholars from around Troyes, led by *Rabbenu Tam* and *Rashbam*, drafted a short regulation document containing ten clauses. It focused on the defense of Jewish institutions from intervention by Christian authorities, but several laws regarding communal jurisdiction and familial issues were later added to it.⁵⁰ The document was circulated in the areas of Champagne, Reims, and the royal domain of France, but copies were also sent to Normandy, Anjou, Brittany, Poitou, and even Lothringia so other Jewish leaders could approve it.⁵¹ The scholars of Troyes could not, or would not, compel other communal leaders to follow their regulations, but they likely hoped that the authority of *Rabbenu Tam* as a scholar would gain their cooperation. Evidently, they saw the Jews of northern France (but not those of the South) as a fairly unified body that could, and should, have common legal standards. To what degree their attempt to achieve this was a success is questionable.⁵²

German rabbis had come together to instate communal regulation in Mainz in 1220, and again in 1223. These were mostly scholars from the cities of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer; therefore, the document is known as *taqqanot ShUM*, an acronym representing the Hebrew names of these communities. Still, *Ra'avyah* had also arrived from Cologne to attend, and so did R. David b. Qalonimus of Münzenberg. They reaffirmed some of the regulations attributed to R. Gershom and *Rabbenu Tam* and added many more.⁵³ While the regulations were named after the communities of the central Rhineland, they were applied to a much larger area, as far as Cologne in the north and Würzburg, Rothenburg, and Nürnberg in the east (see Figure 2 above). Representatives of these communities continued to assemble during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to discuss different issues and sometimes acted as an administrative body vis-à-vis Christian authorities.⁵⁴ The fact that these communities were organized around the Rhine–Main basin likely contributed to the communication required for such an intercommunal organization, as it facilitated movement between them. Rainer Barzen has shown that Jews in the Empire considered themselves to be organized in large “districts” that together comprised the land they called “Ashkenaz” and that this term came to include areas much vaster than the central Rhineland, to which it originally applied (Barzen 2004, pp. 233–43; Barzen 2002, pp. 293–366; Barzen 2019, pp. 58–113; Barzen 2021). The idea of such large communal units suggests an ability to move and communicate across them.

The conclusion that Jews attempted, and in some cases succeeded, in organizing themselves in large territorial units and enacting regulations that applied to these units fits well with our findings regarding rabbinic movement and communication. Rabbinic leaders could only hope to regulate such units if Jews in faraway locations could communicate with them, or even travel to them, at a reasonable speed and cost. The same applies to the scholars' communication with each other on issues of communal regulations and organization as well as on halakhic questions. We should not assume that these unities were tightly controlled by rabbinic authorities, but the fact that they were even conceivable despite the limited size of Jewish communities and the extensive distances between them

again suggests significant movement and communication by rabbis and, more generally, by other Jews as well.

The three aspects of rabbinic culture examined in this article—travel and immigration for education purposes, regular communication, and intercommunal organization—all suggest that movement and communication were vital for the existence of this culture. Communicating complex messages over distance during the Middle Ages, we should remember, required the traveling of people for diverse periods, or even permanently, and the transfer of objects (letters and manuscripts). Therefore, some of the cultural products well known to scholars of medieval Jewish culture could only be the result of extensive networks of movement and communication, even if such networks were not often explicitly discussed in the writings of rabbis. River travel, often relying on vessels regularly operated by Christians, served as the main infrastructure allowing for these networks to function and recover after periods of crisis. Thus, travel, and river travel in particular, was a necessary precondition for the creation of the relative uniformity of medieval Jewish culture in northern Europe, as discussed above. Rabbis had to travel or even relocate, send and receive correspondence, and rely on other Jews to move as well in order to function as scholars and communal leaders. Without these networks of travel and communication, the major Jewish intellectual and organizational developments of the period would have been inconceivable.

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Notes

- ¹ For the general makeup of the European countryside: (Hoffmann 2014, pp. 113–55). For estimates of the medieval Jewish population: (Stow 1987, pp. 1087–88; Toch 2018, pp. 344–51; Toch 2013, pp. 73–74; Grossman 1982, pp. 126–27; Romain 2011, p. 23). For information on particular communities: (Gross 2011; Elbogen et al. 1934; Avneri 1968).
- ² This is a wide range, since total numbers of medieval European populations are difficult to assess: (Billor 2000, pp. 6, 9–12). For some attempts: (Hoffmann 2014, pp. 116–17; Herlihy 1984, pp. 136–48; Russell 1972).
- ³ For the layout and development of Jewish settlement in northern Europe, see also maps in (Haverkamp and Bardelle 2002; Nahon 2004, pp. 214–15; Mundill 2004, p. 229; Barzen 2021, pp. 64–67, 75; Toch 1997, pp. 57–61; Soloveitchik 2008, pp. 39, 42–44, 131, 133). Some areas, like Champagne or the central Rhineland, were denser in Jewish settlements. Naturally, through the High Middle Ages, many new settlements were established, especially in the German Empire, and so their density increased: (Gross 2011; Elbogen et al. 1934; Avneri 1968).
- ⁴ Travel and communication were easier for Jews in Mediterranean areas during this period, due to general higher connectivity: (Goldberg 2012; Ben-Shalom 1996, pp. 177–99; Garbois 1996, pp. 93–105). Still, there is evidence of long-distance travel by medieval Jews originating from northern Europe: (Jacobs 2014, pp. 21–49).
- ⁵ (Baumgarten 2014, pp. 3–5; Baumgarten 2022, pp. 1–5; Grossman 1995, pp. 539–54; Hollender 2015, pp. 18–24; Beit-Arié 2020, esp. pp. 69, 80–81, 582–92). The uniformity of northern European Jewish culture is more evident when compared to the traditions of southern Europe, particularly Italy and the Iberian Peninsula.
- ⁶ (Grossman 1995, pp. 539–54; Kanarfogel 2013); and the classic: (Urbach 1986, esp. 165). The idea of connecting intellectual phenomena with wider social realities in the context of medieval northern European Jewry has already been discussed: (Baumgarten 2022, pp. 9–11; Hollender 2015, pp. 18–36; Chazan 2010, pp. 27–32). For quotidian life: (Barzilay et al. 2022); and additional publications by the *Beyond the Elite: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe* research team: <https://beyond-the-elite.huji.ac.il/publications> (accessed on 12 December 2023).
- ⁷ This article focuses on such information without further contextualizing the work of each scholar or analyzing every halakhic issue mentioned here (which, in any case, would be impossible in a short text). The works of historians of medieval rabbinic law are often cited below to give such context.
- ⁸ (Haverkamp and Bardelle 2002, maps B1-5). Jews in some villages could not even assemble ten adult men for prayer: (Finkelstein 1924, pp. 178–79, 206, 213; Barzen 2005a; Barzen 2013, pp. 6–17).

For the Rhineland rabbinic centers in this period and the other scholars involved: (Grossman 2001, pp. 233–96). (Grossman 1995, pp. 122–31; Agus 1969, p. 27). For more about *Rashi* and Troyes: (Grossman 2021; Taitz 1994, pp. 61–94). (Jerusalem Ms ff. 507b–508a). For the wider halakhic discussion: (Ta-Shma 1996, pp. 168–85). The rabbi mentioned was not Gershom b. Judah *Me'or Hagolah* but Isaac b. Judah: (Grossman 1976, p. 132). (Pfeiffer 1997, p. 108) suggest that the decline in Jewish slave trading during this period resulted from these attacks. (Grossman 2001, pp. 435–40). For the wider cultural response: (Chazan 1987, pp. 148–69). For the major Hebrew sources on 1096: (Haverkamp 2005). The literature on the 1096 persecution is extensive and cannot be discussed here; see historiographical reviews: (Cohen 2001; Cohen 2004, pp. 31–54; Haverkamp 2009, pp. 320–22, esp. n. 5). For the rise of the French rabbinic center: (Urbach 1986, pp. 59–164; Grossman 1995, pp. 438–47; Kanarfogel 2013, pp. 54–70, 111–204). (Barzen 2021, pp. 72–76; Shoham-Steiner 2017; Reiner 2021, pp. 317–19; Urbach 1986, pp. 195–226; Kanarfogel 2013, pp. 43–51). Judah himself was averse to traveling after his settlement in Regensburg: (Liberles 2021). (Urbach 1986, pp. 378–82; Aptowitz 1938, pp. 4–21; Barzen 2005b, p. 73, map) Ra'avyah's extensive movement and communication. (Barzen 2021, pp. 62–76; Barzen 2005b, p. 73). Notably, Ra'avyah's student, R. Isaac b. Moses of Vienna, known as *Or Zarua*, has traveled even more extensively, spending significant periods in Bohemia, Austria, the Rhineland, the Main Valley, and northern France throughout his life: (Urbach 1986, pp. 436–38). Like Ra'avyah, he commented on issues related to travel: (Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 2:78, §146). Reiner and Roth in (Isaac b. Samuel 2019, pp. 16–18; Kanarfogel 2018, pp. 152–53). (Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1963, pp. 414–21, 424–30). For Ephraim b. Isaac: (Urbach 1986, pp. 199–207; Reiner 2021, 320–27). (Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1963, p. 421, §386). See a different version of the same discussion, with even more specific local details, in (Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 2:4–5, §6). For 1298 and later persecution: (Lotter 1988; Cluse 1996). For 1306: (Shwarzfuchs 2001, pp. 260–64, 280–86; Jordan 1989, pp. 177–251). See also: (Breuer 1989, pp. 450–57; Yuval 1986, pp. 550–54). This was likely the case for the most prolific genre of medieval Hebrew literature, namely halakhic commentaries. However, the editing of these commentaries often makes it difficult to pinpoint the ways in which particular contributions were made to the whole: (Urbach 1986, esp. 20–26, 165). (Ta-Shma 2005, pp. 117–25; Soloveitchik 1990, pp. 11–15; Goldin 1996, pp. 129–38). For Simcha Emanuel's analysis of the creation of *Maharam's* responsa, the most extensive medieval collection, which includes over a thousand responsa: (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:21–182). Preserved in (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 80b, §904); see also §903 and §935 for other responsa by R. Judah discussing Hungary. §935 also mentions trade connections between Hungary and Mainz. On Judah ha-Kohen, see (Judah ha-Kohen 1977, pp. 7–34) and a reprint of this response on p. 48. The author mentions that the goods were meant to be sold “here in Hungary” (*henah be-eret Hagar*): (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 80b, §904). (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 80b, §903, 94a, §935) includes other responsa by R. Judah discussing Hungary. §935 also mentions trade connections between Hungary and Mainz. For early evidence regarding Jews in Hungary: (Szende 2016, pp. 120–26). For Mainz as a center of Jewish communication: (Soloveitchik 2020, pp. 243–49). Preserved in (Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1963, pp. 114–117, §900); other versions: (Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 1:196, §694; Aptowitz 1938, pp. 451–52); reprint: (Judah ha-Kohen 1977, pp. 54–56). For early evidence of Jews in Poland: (Ta-Shma 2005, pp. 224–53; Cygielman 1991, pp. 25–33). (David 2006, 8:71–77, §142; Judah ha-Kohen 1977, pp. 52–53). For analysis: (Soloveitchik 1990, pp. 87–106). For the community of Troyes before *Rashi*: (Taitz 1994, pp. 61–81). Such networks of communication were described for the eastern Mediterranean in this period but not for the North: (Goldberg 2012, esp. 56–92, 185–210). (Reiner 2021, pp. 318–327; Goldin 1996, p. 129); some of these students in Eastern Europe also kept in touch with each other: (Urbach 1986, pp. 196–206, 215–16). (Reiner 2021, pp. 303–52; Urbach 1986, pp. 66–71, 493–94; Kanarfogel 2018, pp. 155–60; Chazan 1968, pp. 23–31; Goldin 1996, pp. 134–36). If we add *Rashbam*, R. Isaac b. Samuel of Dampierre (*Rabbenu Tam's* brother and cousin) and their students to this network, its density becomes even clearer: (Golb 1998, pp. 229–52); Reiner and Roth in (Isaac b. Samuel 2019, pp. 9–16). (Emanuel 2006, pp. 70–75; Reiner 2021, 353–70; Urbach 1986, pp. 68–69). Isaac b. Samuel of Dampierre, *Rabbenu Tam's* cousin, also communicated with scholars in Northern France, the Rhineland, and the South: Reiner and Roth in (Isaac b. Samuel 2019, pp. 14–22). (Emanuel 2014, pp. 558–61; Urbach 1986, pp. 521–27); Emanuel in (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:179–181; Goldin 1996, pp. 129–130).

- Emanuel in (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:51–53, 104–111, 182).
- (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 34b, §251; Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 1960, 147a–149a, §147; Urbach 1986, pp. 530–34); Emanuel in (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:135–136, 2:867–873, §449). Emanuel challenges the identification of some of the participants as suggested by Urbach; still, Jehiel b. Jacob addresses his responsum to “our rabbis in Ashkenaz”, suggesting that he was elsewhere: (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 34b, §251); Emanuel in (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:135, n. 23).
- (Ta-Shma 2005, pp. 117–18; Goldin 1996, pp. 129–34). Sometimes, rabbis even relied on Christian messengers: (Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 2:78, §146). For the communication system of rabbis in the South: (Ben-Shalom 1996, pp. 177–99; Garbois 1996, pp. 93–105).
- (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 1608, 29a-b, §201). The danger that caused the Jewish traveler to terminate his trip was the presence of “shepherds,” a reference to the so-called Children Crusade of 1212. Étienne of Cloyes, who led this movement in France, was a shepherd: (Cartellieri and Stechele 1909, p. 70). For background and additional sources: (Dickson 1995, pp. 53–63, 82–94). The involvement of Jews in horse trade was not unusual: (Doron 2021b, esp. 403–7).
- (Baumgarten 2014, pp. 185–89; Agus 1969, pp. 23–25, 28; Liberles 2021, pp. 110–11). Still, we have to keep in mind that cases in which Jews traveled safely were less likely to produce halakhic conflicts and thus be documented in responsa. We have some evidence that such safe travels did occur: (Barukh b. Issac 1979, 133, §225; Eleazar of Worms 1960, 80, §182; Isaac b. Moses of Vienna 2010, 2:78, §146; Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1989, pp. 27–40, §922).
- (Jerusalem Ms ff. 507b-508a; Eliezer bar Nathan 1958, 1:47a-b, 157a-b; Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi 1963, pp. 414–421, 424–430; Aptowitz 1938, p. 465). Also see (Ta-Shma 1996, pp. 168–85). For evidence from a mid-twelfth century Latin source: (Hermannus quondam Judaeus 1963, p. 115).
- (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:588, §270). Reuven and Simon are stock names, often used in responsa literature to obscure the identity of the actual parties involved.
- (Urbach 1986, pp. 346–49) mistakenly recognizes R. Barukh as “Barukh of Worms”, but he was a French scholar: (Emanuel 2021, pp. 20–39).
- Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat, 19a. See also: (Ta-Shma 1996, pp. 168–85).
- (Barukh b. Issac 1979, p. 132, §224). For the connectivity of English Jews with northern France: (Mundill 2004, pp. 221–22; Soloveitchik 2008, pp. 41–44, 247–50).
- (Agus 1954, pp. 39–42). For background and discussion: (Soloveitchik 1990, pp. 77–86; Grossman 1995, pp. 46–64).
- (Taitz 1994, pp. 61–81; Shwarzfuchs 2001, pp. 78–81; Soloveitchik 2008, pp. 40–50). For medieval Champagne more generally, see (Bur 2005; Bur 2020).
- The community of Troyes was also not large: (David 2006, 8:71–77, §142; Judah ha-Kohen 1977, pp. 52–53; Taitz 1994, pp. 61–81).
- (Benjamin of Tudela 1907, p. 71). See also: (Shoham-Steiner and Hollander 2021, pp. 243–46; Barzen 2019, 41–44).
- (Barzen 2019, pp. 44–56). For evidence of Rabbinic courts: (Kanarfogel 2013, pp. 38–43).
- Different versions of the text are printed and compared in (Finkelstein 1924, pp. 150–215).
- (Finkelstein 1924, pp. 36–55; Chazan 1968, pp. 26–27) suggest that Jewish scholars and leaders arrived for a “synod” at Troyes, but this was not the case: (Reiner 2021, pp. 230–36; Barzen 2019, pp. 31–38). For maps, see (Nahon 2004, p. 221; Goldin 1996, p. 139). (Shwarzfuchs 2001, pp. 133–48) saw the French regulations as a continuation of R. Gershom’s initiative, but this is difficult to prove. His suggestions on p. 142, that the locations mentioned are simply the large duchies and counties of the North, is plausible.
- Some leaders were apparently slow or reluctant to sign the regulations: (Reiner 2021, pp. 234–36; Shwarzfuchs 2001, pp. 142–43; Barzen 2019, pp. 34–38). *Rabbenu Tam*’s authority was also invoked to promote the annual fast day for the Blois affair of 1171: (Chazan 1968, pp. 23–31; Goldin 1996, pp. 131–33).
- (Barzen 2019); and an older edition in (Finkelstein 1924, pp. 56–71, 218–57).
- (Barzen 2019, pp. 58–75; Goldin 1996, pp. 127–28). More about the organization of communal regulations: (Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg 2012, 1:340–341, §82). For rabbinic courts: (Kanarfogel 2013, pp. 39–53).

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