

THE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN ITALY

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In 1987 the Union of Italian Jewish Communities signed an agreement with the Italian government which established the overall framework of activity for this institution and its relationship to the Italian authorities. This agreement, published as a state law, changed many aspects of the former system of organization of the Italian Jewish communities. The agreement also empowered the Union of Jewish Communities to draft a constitution for Italian Jewry which will govern its internal life and institutions.

Historical Roots in the Italian States

In the nineteenth century, the Italian peninsula was not united in a single commonwealth but divided into many small states, each of which treated its Jews differently. Consequently, each Jewish settlement was organized along different lines and principles. This situation continued after 1870 when the entire area was united in a comprehensive state.¹

In the Piedmont region, for instance, Jewish communities were organized under the provisions of a law of July 4, 1857, which declared that the Jewish community (*kehillah*) was a

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public organization consisting of all Jews living in its area of jurisdiction. From a legal point of view, the law equated the status of Jewish communities with that of municipalities, i.e., it viewed the Jewish community as a local government agency encompassing the Jews in its area of jurisdiction. Under this status, the state laid down the aims and goals of the Jewish community. Its purpose was to provide religious education and services to its members, in exchange for the right to impose taxes on them.

A similar situation prevailed in the dukedom of Tuscany as well as in other areas.² Elsewhere, Jewish communities were organized along the lines of other laws, such as those of the Austro-Hungarian empire which were applicable in Trieste. However, if the Piedmont law determined all details of the organization of the community and its task, the laws of Tuscany and of Austria-Hungary were content to lay down the principle that Jewish communities were organizations necessitated by reality, so that all Jews had to register with them. Furthermore, these laws also established the right of the communities to tax their members. By these examples we see that in order to learn about the internal organization of Jewish communities in Tuscany or Trieste, it is insufficient to consider only state law. One must study the internal laws and regulations of the respective Jewish communities as well.³

There were also communities that organized themselves as voluntary societies, as was the case in Bologna where the community subsisted solely upon donations. Another example is the community of Mantua which organized in 1819 as an obligatory agency imposing taxes on its members. However, in 1868 it changed its status to that of a voluntary organization based upon donations.⁴ A different situation prevailed in Rome, where the Jewish community had earlier been under the rule of the Papal state. After Rome's incorporation into the comprehensive state, the Jewish community assumed the form of a moral and religious organization whose statutes were approved by the national regime. On the other hand, the Milan Jewish community was no more than a voluntary association, devoid of any legal basis.

As public personalities, the Jewish communities were under government control, not unlike the municipalities.⁵ The difference between the two was inherent in the character of the juridical personality of the Jewish community: whether it was a voluntary association in which Jews were not obliged to register by law, or a compulsory organization in which all Jews living in a certain city or town were obliged to register as community members. This does not necessarily mean that in places in which the Jewish community was a compulsory organization independent Jewish societies or organizations did not exist. The result was that the authorities treated the Jews of a certain city as a whole, as one juridical personality, and thereby exempted themselves from relating to those Jews as individuals, at least from the religious standpoint. Such an attitude toward the Jewish community is rooted in the independent states of Italy, and afterwards in the united Italian commonwealth, both considered to be substantially Christian societies.

With the unification of the entire Italian peninsula into one single commonwealth, a new legal basis for each Jewish community was required, one in which each community continued as a locally comprehensive institution. Subsequently, a need was felt for an organization that would unite or at least act as liaison between all the Jewish communities, one that would be concerned with their common affairs and needs. After great efforts, such an organization of Jewish communities in Italy was established in 1911, the *Consorzio*, a federation of voluntarily incorporated Jewish communities. Later, an attempt was made to provide that roof organization with a legal basis identical with that of the local Jewish communities throughout Italy. As early as the 1920s, a committee was appointed to draft a new constitution for the Jewish communities, one which was accepted in 1930 by the Fascist Mussolini government as the law of state.⁶

Major Constitutional Issues

The law of 1930 remained in force for nearly sixty years and it relates to many of the same important subjects and problems which reappeared in the deliberations over the new agreement between the Union of Italian Jewish Communities and the Italian

government signed in February 1987. First, the 1930 law discussed the intervention of the government in the organization of the Jewish communities and the principle that the constitution of one Jewish place of settlement could be promoted to become the law of state. In the opinion of M. Falco, the alternative was for the state to restrict itself to establishing the general outlines of the organizations and to grant leeway to the communities and their roof organization to determine their own organizational laws.⁷ However, Falco failed to adopt the conception that the Jewish communities should enjoy full state-sponsored autonomy, one granted by the secular state, but rather that there be some sort of separation between religion and state as is common nowadays. In his view, the constitution of Italian Jewry should in any case also be the law of state. The implications of these two different approaches will be dealt with later. Yet Falco did conclude that the state was obliged to establish its relationship to Italian Jewry in a general law, in order to insure the interests, needs, and protection of the Jewish minority.⁸

Another important subject concerned the issue of voluntary or enforced membership in the Jewish community, i.e., was a Jew living in a certain area obliged to register in the Jewish community or could he or she be permitted not to be a member and yet remain Jewish. The implications of this problem became obvious where at the same location different Jewish congregations might exist which did not recognize one another, similar to the situation today between Orthodox and Reform Jewry, or to that in the Jewish community of Milan where there is a settlement of Lubavitch Hassidim which refuses to give recognition to the local rabbinate.

Another result of the 1930 law was that, since the Jewish community was a public body recognized by the authorities at each location, it became inconceivable to establish parallel Jewish communities in the same place, such as one community for Ashkenazi Jews and another for Sephardi Jews, or separate communities for Orthodox or Reform Jews, etc. There might, of course, be heterogeneity within one and the same community that could find its expression in elections to the community's institutions, but it would be unthinkable to have a situation in which every synagogue could claim community status on its own.

In the case of someone declaring that he or she did not want to be a member of the community or had embraced a different religious faith, the individual forfeited all rights the community had bestowed upon its members including the right of burial in a Jewish cemetery as well as other Jewish communal services.⁹ In other words, the setting up of the community was within the jurisdiction of the state, because the state was interested in attaining the aims of the community.¹⁰ This raised the question of whether it was the duty of the state to provide religious services to its citizens.¹¹ Finally, there was the question as to whether the Jewish community was a private or a public institution.

The law of 1930 purported to unify the organization and legal status of all Jewish communities in Italy. Prior to 1930, the relationship of the state towards the Jewish communities varied, with communities in the same area having different status. The 1930 law was based primarily on Piedmont state law, in accordance with which each and every Jewish community represents all the Jews living within that community's jurisdiction, irrespective of whether or not they want to be members of the community or participate in religious services.¹² As already noted, the Italian state was interested in interfering in matters pertaining to Jews in particular and to all minorities in general, among other reasons because it conceived of itself as a state with an official Catholic Christian character. In this spirit, the state in June 1929 had promulgated a law permitting the practice of non-Catholic religious rites in Italy.

The law of 1930 determined the sphere of activity of the Jewish community, its institutions, its composition, and its functions. The juridical personality of the Jewish community was to be that of a moral and religious organization catering to the religious needs of Jews in accordance with Jewish tradition.¹³ That particular paragraph also listed certain goals every Jewish community had to set for itself: to organize religious services, to engage in religious education, to initiate cultural activities, and to manage welfare institutions for the needy. The problem of membership in the community, a debate which is going on to this day, was discussed in Par. 4, which said that all Jews living within its geographical parameters were to be members of the local community. That meant, as Falco explains, that under the

law, Jews were to be automatically registered in the community on account of being inhabitants of the area. However, the law did not relate to a person's connection with Jewry and to the question of "Who is a Jew?" It therefore left to Jewish tradition the task of determining the mode of one's link with the Jewish religion. In contrast, it also established the process of severing one's link with Jewry and the Jewish community. Thus, anyone who left the Jewish faith for another one ceased to be registered in the community. Likewise, expulsion from the community was warranted if an individual informed the Jewish community authority that he or she no longer wished to be considered a Jew.¹⁴ Those same subjects, which had been on the agenda sixty years ago, still constitute the central problems of Jewish public life in Italy today as well.

In regulating the institutions and organization of the communities, the 1930 law determined that every community had to have a council, an executive committee, a president and a vice president. According to Par. 6, "The council consists of: 3 members of a community provided it has no more than 500 Jews; 6 members of a community with no more than 1,000 Jews; 9 members of a community whose membership does not exceed 5,000 Jews; 12 members of a community with no more than 10,000 Jews; 15 members of a community which has more than 10,000 Jews." The council was elected for six years, with one-third of its members replaced biennially.¹⁵ The functions of the council were to establish rules for the provision of services by its institutions; formulate rules of conduct and discipline for the employees and officials of the community; set the rate of the membership tax and the rate of payments for religious services; nominate the chief rabbi or remove him from office; and finally, determine the budget of the community.¹⁶ Hence, the council was the principal institution of the Jewish community and responsible for its orderly management.

The executive committee was composed of the president of the community and one-third of the council members. The functions of the executive committee were to prepare the annual budget proposal and to nominate or remove from office the officials and employees of the community.¹⁷ The president of the community was the person at its helm and its official representative. The president was elected by and from among the council

members, and the election was subject to approval by the ministry responsible for religious affairs and by the countrywide Union of Italian Jewish Communities.¹⁸ Among the president's functions was setting the agenda of council and executive committee meetings, signing documents, and approving all financial expenditures of the community.¹⁹ As has already been noted, since the status of the communities was parallel to the status of local government institutions, according to the law all activities of the community council were under the control of the civil authorities. The ministry in charge of religious affairs at the time the law was promulgated was the Ministry of Justice. Later, from the inception of the Republican era, these functions were taken over by the Ministry of the Interior. This ministry, too, had to approve the budget of the Union of Jewish Communities.²⁰

The status of the rabbi within the framework of the community organization was that of an official of high rank. The rabbi was appointed by the community council, which also paid his salary and had the power to fire him as well. As noted, the community council was responsible by law for religious education and other religious services. Hence the council was obliged to deal with the appointment of rabbis who carried out the tasks of religious education.²¹

The 1930 law also set down the rules of organization and spheres of activity of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (the *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane*). This organization was established for the purpose of uniting the communities throughout Italy and was the heir to the *Consorzio* that had been established in 1911. The difference between the Union and the *Consorzio* was that the latter was a voluntary federation of communities financed by donations, whereas the Union was an obligatory body. Par. 35 of the 1930 law stipulated: "All Jewish communities within the realm and its colonies unite within a compulsory union called the Union of Communities." The Union was obliged to concern itself with the communal needs of all Jews in the state, and it was therefore also the coordinating agency between the different communities and represented them vis-a-vis the government and the public at large. The Union was also the body responsible for the education of rabbis and teachers, and the body that acted as liaison with other Jewish communities throughout the world.

Under the law, the institutions of the Union were: the Congress (Congresso), the Council (Consiglio), the Committee (Giunta), and the President (Presidente). The Congress was composed of representatives of the various communities elected by their councils, and it convened once every five years. Participating in the Congress were five rabbis. Its tasks were to receive a report on the activities of the Union, to discuss problems of Italian Jewry, and to elect the members of the Council of the Union and the Rabbinical Council. The Council of the Union consisted of fifteen members in addition to three rabbis who formed the Rabbinical Council. Its functions were to elect from among its members a president and vice president of the Union and another three members who, in addition to one rabbi, composed the Union Committee. The Council received reports on the activities and budget of the Union and voted on all issues affecting the Union. The Executive Committee convened once a month and was expected to carry out the decisions of the Congress and the Council. The President of the Union was the chairman and the person responsible for its activity.

One innovative feature in the law was the setting up of a Rabbinical Council (Consulta Rabbinica), which consisted of three rabbis elected by the Union Council, whose function was to control the Rabbinical Seminary. Furthermore, it served as a supreme judicial body with regard to all religious matters in the state, so that it had to express its consent to the nomination of the chief rabbis, and it mediated in conflicts that might occur involving the communities.²²

The situation described above was still in force up to the 1980s, when the foundations of the status quo began to shatter and the conception of the community underwent a change.

The New Agreement between the Union of Italian Jewish Communities and the Italian Government

In 1984, the Supreme Court of Italy (Corte Costituzionale) ruled that obligatory membership in a religious community was not compatible with Italy's constitution. Because the law of 1930 was based on this principle, the ruling was to cause a total reshuffling of the entire community organization.²³ In its wake,

a committee was set up by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities to reconsider the subject. The result was the agreement between the Union of Jewish Communities and the Italian government in February 1987. The agreement was published on March 8, 1989, as an appendix to the state law entitled "Rules for Relations between the State and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities." The law is based on the Republican constitution which assures equality of status to all religions. However, up until 1984, Catholicism was the state religion and only in that year did the Italian government sign a new agreement with the Vatican which did away with the priority status of Catholicism. With this procedure, the Republic of Italy became a secular state and this paved the way for signing agreements with the religious minorities.²⁴

One interesting innovation of the 1987 law is Par. 4, which recognizes the right of Jews to observe the Sabbath as their weekly day of rest. It specifies that Jewish state employees or other Jewish public servants are entitled to rest on the Sabbath provided they return the missed hours of work on another day. The same applies to soldiers and students. Not only does the Italian state recognize the right of Jews to observe the rules of Jewish tradition but it also sets down rules to make it possible for them to enjoy this right in practice. This concept inspires the law in other matters as well, such as ritual slaughter or public *kashrut* observance.²⁵

One subject which has inspired extensive public debate concerns religious education in public schools. In these schools, until recently, Catholicism was an obligatory subject of study. Now the state insures the freedom of belief and worship and recognizes the right of pupils not to receive religious education. Furthermore, the pupils can request to receive a Jewish education at school, at least in principle.²⁶ In any case, the Jewish communities have the right to set up schools of their own which are entitled to the same status as other public schools.²⁷ Meanwhile, in most schools Christianity remains a subject of instruction.

Pars. 18 and 19 deal with the character of the Jewish communities and the Union of Jewish Communities. Here again is a discussion of state intervention in defining the public status of the Jewish communities. The communities are described as

being traditional organizations of Italian Jewry which meet the religious needs of Jews in accordance with Jewish law and tradition. The establishment of new communities or the abrogation of existing ones is by decree of the President of the Republic, at the request of the community and the Union of Jewish Communities. The Union of Jewish Communities is the institution representing the Jewish religion vis-a-vis the state. Its functions are to look after the religious interests of Italian Jews, preserve Jewish tradition and culture, coordinate between the various communities, and maintain contact with Jewish institutions abroad.

Contrary to the law of 1930, Par. 25 of the 1987 law specifies that religious activity is to be carried out in accordance with the constitution of Italian Jewry without intervention by the state or by local government institutions. The same applies to the orderly management of communities and Jewish institutions, which is also to be carried out without government intervention. Under the law of 1930 the management and activities of the Jewish communities had been under the supervision of government ministries.

The change was inspired by the concept that the Jewish community is a public institution pertaining to the system of local government. The state now restricts itself with regard to everything associated with the religious affairs of its citizens because the concept of religion as entertained by the state has undergone a change. At the same time, a change has also occurred in the concept of the status of the Jewish community in this respect. If the state no longer considers it its duty to see to the religious interests of its citizens, then the Jewish community too is no longer part and parcel of the state-sponsored system of government. The result is a certain separation between religion in general and the state, and, as a further consequence, the Jewish community is given a corresponding measure of autonomy.

Here we can see what may be called the "tri-dimensional development of relations between the Jewish settlement in Italy and the state." This applies to three dimensions in which the system of contacts between the Jewish communities and the state have developed: a change in government conception of the meaning of religion and its status in general, a dynamic devel-

opment of the internal organization of the Jewish community, and therefore the determination of a new system of contacts between these two factors.²⁸

The New Constitution of the Union of Jewish Communities

Based upon the new agreement with the government, the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy was empowered to draft a constitution for Italian Jewry. The idea to draft a special constitution for the Jews derives from Par. 8 of the Italian Constitution which reads: "All non-Catholic religions are entitled to organize themselves in accordance with their constitution." Thus, in December 1987, a special Congress of the Union of Jewish Communities convened in order to approve a draft constitution for the Jews of Italy, and afterwards a copy of this draft was submitted to the Italian Ministry of the Interior. Therefore, the law which was subsequently published could state that the religious activities of the Union of Jewish Communities and the individual communities themselves are carried out according to the constitution of Italian Jewry — this having meanwhile been adopted.²⁹

Par. 1 of this constitution sets out the functions of a Jewish community: to concern itself with matters of worship, to provide religious services and Jewish education, to foster Jewish thought and promote the use of the Hebrew language, to preserve Jewish cultural treasures and material assets, to organize and manage schools and courses for Jewish studies, to set up and manage social institutions such as homes for the aged or youth camps, etc., to promote the publication of Jewish books and newspapers, to foster spiritual and social contacts with the State of Israel and with other Jewish communities in the diaspora, and to fight anti-Semitism and intolerance.

Under the old law, the responsibility to provide religious services had rested on the community council and not on the rabbi. In the new constitution too, the rabbi is but an official providing religious services on behalf of the executive of the community council, to whom he is responsible.

Par. 2 deals with the issue of membership in the community, a central theme in the previous law as well. The paragraph reads: "In accordance with Jewish law and tradition, all those Jews living within its confines belong to the Jewish community. The rights and duties deriving from this constitution depend on registration with the community by declaration." Here, for the first time, a voluntary factor makes its debut — the declaration which a Jew has to make if he wants to be registered with the Jewish community. Yet while membership in the community has become voluntary, whoever does not want to be a member of the community is not entitled to community services. The choice is up to the free will of every Jew.

Another innovation of the Union constitution can be found in Par. 3 which says that every community is entitled to draft an internal constitution for itself, provided it is in line with the constitution of the Union of Jewish Communities. That does not appear to be particularly significant, especially not under the conditions of Jewish communities in Italy today. This is meant to insure a certain autonomy within the general framework of the Union of Jewish Communities. To date, only a few communities have even nominated committees to prepare such an internal statute.

A central theme of this constitution is the new definition of the institutions of the community and of the Union. Their functions, composition and rules for elections are specified. But the composition of the system of the community remains intact as it was under the 1930 law. In fact, there are no substantial changes involved except for the tenure of office of the council, which has been shortened to four years, and without biennial changes as was the case under the preceding regulation.

Par. 20 is interesting because it imposes upon the chief rabbi of the community, as the supreme moral and religious authority, the rather unpleasant task of rejecting a council member elected to office if he fails to act on behalf of Jewish continuity (has intermarried) or, on the other hand, if his activity does not suit the principles of this constitution as defined in the constitution's first paragraph. Naturally, such a member has the right to appeal any decision to a special committee consisting of a rabbi to be chosen by the council member indicted, another rabbi chosen by the community rabbi who made the declaration, a

third rabbi chosen by the Assembly of Italian Rabbis, and three additional members elected by the Committee of Appeal (Consiglio dei Probiviri) of the Union of Jewish Communities.

The economic position of the community is discussed in Pars. 33 and 34, which specify that the revenue of the community should come from income from property, membership dues, payments received in exchange for services, funds from donations of all categories including public assistance, and revenue from activities of the community. In accordance with this, every member of the community pays an annual tax proportionate to his income.

That part of the constitution dealing with the Union of Jewish Communities specifies that this is the institution representing all the Jews of Italy and that looks after their needs. The Union is to coordinate between the various communities and is to be concerned with the preservation of Jewish tradition and the provision of the religious and cultural needs of the Jews. Likewise, it is to be concerned with the preservation of Jewish cultural and artistic treasures in Italy, supervise the Jewish communities, initiate religious and cultural activities, maintain contacts with the State of Israel and with other Jewish communities in the diaspora, and actively promote the image of Italian Jewry. In order to achieve these goals, the Union collects taxes from every community in accordance with its size and economic standing.

Just as the institutions of the community did not change substantially at the outset of the new situation, the institutions of the Union and their composition also remained as they had been. It is worthwhile to note that the Union's Congress, which constitutes its organizational basis, is defined in Par. 40 as consisting of representatives of the various Jewish community councils, representatives elected by the registered members of the Jewish communities, and representatives elected by the Rabbinical Assembly. The Congress convenes regularly every four years and, if necessary, a special congress can be called to discuss subjects concerning Italian Jewry at large.

A new institution established in the constitution is the Committee of Appeals (Consiglio dei Probiviri), consisting of seven members elected by the Union's Congress. Their task is to decide appeals submitted to the Union and to rule on disagreements

and conflicts involving Jewish communities, the Union itself, one of the rabbis, or one of the members of a community.³⁰

The Significance of the New Situation

The enactment of a new constitution for the Union of Jewish Communities is perhaps the most important application of the agreement between the Italian government and the Union. The regular Union Congress last convened in December 1990 and its agenda included debates and reports on the activities of the Union during the preceding four years. In addition, there was a discussion on the situation of the Italian rabbinate and the rabbinical seminaries in Italy, as well as a debate on the present and future prospects of Italian Jewry as a whole. Admittedly, the very fact that the situation of Italian Jewry and of the Rabbinate of Italy are debated should be evaluated positively. However, it seems that these debates and discussions did not produce any tangible results and the existing worsening situation remained unchanged.³¹

A vehement discussion erupted with regard to the meaning of Par. 9 of the new constitution which deals with the right of a person to be elected to the institutions of the community. As noted earlier, the paragraph says, in a somewhat vague wording, that only whosoever insures the continuity of Jewry is eligible for election. The original purpose was to prevent someone who married a gentile from being elected to an institution of the community. Meanwhile, however, this purpose was retracted and it was decided that any member of the community may be elected, without restriction, even if he is not a member of a Jewish family and even if his children are gentiles.

In addition to the legal aspects, we cannot disregard the Jewish and social reality when analyzing how the range of new laws affects the system of Jewish communities in Italy beyond the legal aspect. In Italy's Jewish communities today the prevailing situation is one in which Jewish roots are being abandoned, in which we encounter particularly high percentages of assimilation. Although the Union of Jewish Communities reached an agreement with the government on Sabbath observance for Jewish public servants, students and pupils, in reality, very few

individuals are taking advantage of this right. There are twenty-one Jewish communities in Italy, at least half with a membership of less than 100. The percentage of mixed marriages is very high.

Par. 37/B of the Constitution, which lays down one of the tasks of the Union as the preservation of Jewish tradition, merely exists in theory. Consequently, par. 3 of the constitution, stipulating that every community may draft an internal constitution of its own, does not seem to be particularly practical. Most communities, with the exception of those in Rome and Milan, are today very small and aging. The disintegration is an internal process within the framework of the community and has no bearing whatsoever on the relationship between the community and the civil authorities. This is a society in a situation of cultural as well as religious stagnation. Now that the entire community system has been subjected to reorganization, we could have expected that the new constitution would at least address the most burning problems of assimilation and lack of Jewish consciousness and provide solutions for them. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and the constitution merely imposes upon the Union of Jewish Communities the concern for the preservation of tradition and for preparing rabbis. It is too low a target that can provide no solutions. The reality is that, presently, Jewish substance and ideological ferment are direly lacking in Italy, the level of Jewish education is particularly low, and the level of religious practice — observation of *mitzvot* — nearly zero. In many communities, synagogues have been converted to museums commemorating an Italian Jewry of the past which no longer exists. Perhaps the most extreme example in this respect is the fate of the synagogue of Soragna, a small townlet near Bologna, which has been converted into a public concert hall.

It is not easy to disregard all these sad phenomena. This is a Jewish society which lives on memories of a glorious past. The result is that Italy's Jews are far more concerned with their external image in the eyes of gentiles than with the proper functioning of their communities. In most of these communities, they prefer to set up museums for tourists, which underlines their orientation toward the past rather than trying to raise the level of Jewish awareness in the present. Torah-studying Jewish youngsters constitute a negligible percentage of Jewish youth in

general. It would seem that Jewish awareness is progressively waning. It is also true that the number of Jews in Italy is quite modest — a little over 30,000 souls. But what is lacking is not so much the quantitative aspect as it is the aspect of quality, of Jewish quality. The level of Jewish awareness could be improved only by the study of Jewish sources and by deepening the knowledge of Jewish culture. Of course, this requires an effort, not only of the intellectual kind, but also of time spent, energy invested, and means expended. In the present situation, the chances to bring about a change must strike one as utopian. Therefore, the new agreement signed with the government and the new constitution which the Union drafted for itself are merely an empty shell. They are merely a frame eluding the central question of Jewish identity in Italy today: How can the problem of assimilation be overcome?

Against this backdrop, the agreement with the government and the constitution of the Union should be understood as something makeshift and theoretical. This is not to minimize the positive effect of signing an agreement with the government insuring, for instance, the right of Sabbath observance. However, on the whole, the agreement is only words on paper. Hence, though it is important to look at the dynamic processes at work here both from a legal point of view and from the point of view of their place in the Jewish political tradition, we must understand the whole picture in order to weigh their actual importance for the future of Italian Jewry.

Notes

1. We shall not deal here in detail with the legal history. For a more extensive study of the history of the law of 1930, see A. Calò: "La genesi della legge del 1930," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 3-LI (1985), pp. 334-402, and the bibliography appearing there.
2. See M. Falco, "Lo spirito della nuova legge sulle comunità israelitiche," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* VI (1931), p. 3-4; and also, M. Falco, "La nuova legge sulle comunità israelitiche," *Rivista di diritto pubblico* X (1931), p. 1.
3. M. Falco, "La nuova legge," p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
6. I have provided an analysis of the agreement in Y. Lattes, "The New Status of the Italian Jewish Community," *Jerusalem Letter* 103, (15 June 1988).
7. M. Falco, "La nuova legge," p. 15.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
9. See the debate on the subject in M. Falco, "La nuova legge," pp. 17-18.
10. M. Falco, "La natura giuridica delle comunità israelitiche italiane," *Raccolta di studi in onore di Francesco Scaduto* (Firenze, 1936), p. 4.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
12. *Ibid.*
13. The law of October 30, 1930, No. 1731, Ch. I, Par. 1.
14. Par. 5 of the law. See also M. Falco, "La nuova legge," pp. 7-8.
15. M. Falco, "La nuova legge," pp. 9-10.
16. Par. 15 of the law.
17. Par. 17 of the law.
18. Pars. 18-19 of the law.
19. Par. 19 of the law.
20. M. Falco, "La nuova legge," pp. 13-14.
21. See Riccardo Di Segni, "Rapporti tra Rabbino e Comunità," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 3-LI (1985).
22. Pars. 54-55 of the law.
23. Y. Lattes, "The New Status," p. 2; *Comunità Ebraiche e Unione, Norme legislative* (Roma, 1989), p. 4.
24. Y. Lattes, "The New Status."
25. Pars. 6-7 of the law.
26. *Ibid.*, Par. 11.
27. *Ibid.*, Par. 12.
28. Y. Lattes, "The New Status," pp. 4-5.
29. Par. 25 of the law.
30. *Ibid.*, Par. 52.
31. See the report on the legal aspects of the work of the Congress in the Jewish newspaper *Shalom* (December 1990). Though the report is unspecific and full of enthusiasm — almost one-half of the brochure is devoted to the deliberations of this Congress — it is surprising that all that is said about the new documents deals with their legal aspect only, not their religious or cultural side.

Here, too, the Congress was dealing with external relations, with the subject of contacts with other communities and with the authorities, but not at all with problems of identity within Italian Jewry. See, for instance, the mention of Luzzatto's lecture to the Congress on pp. 6-7 of the brochure. The same applies to all of the articles dealing with the description and history of the community system. They all deal with the legal aspect only. See in this connection all the articles in the two brochures of *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* devoted to the agreement with the government and to the internal constitution of the Union of Jewish Communities: RMI 3-LI (Sept. 1985) and RMI 1-LII (Jan. 1986). For further expansion on the peculiarities of the identity, culture and demography of Italian Jewry, see Sergio Della Pergola, *Anatomia dell'ebraismo italiano* (Roma, 1976).