Introduction

For about one century, from the 1720s to the 1820s, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, functioned as the center of a far-flung philanthropic network in support of the Jews in Palestine, linking Jewish communities throughout the empire and beyond, from the Caribbean in the west to India in the east, and from England in the north to Yemen in the south. This pan-Jewish network of beneficence operated under the patronage of the Committee of Officials for the Land of Israel in Istanbul (Va'ad Pekidei Erets Yisra'el be-Kushta), which was established in 1726 in response to a severe crisis caused by the underfunded immigration of a group of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe to Jerusalem in 1700.[1] The *Pekidei Kushta* ("Istanbul Officials"), as they were called, continued their work well into the nineteenth century, though by the 1820s Amsterdam had emerged as a rival center, organizing Jewish philanthropy on behalf of the Holy Land in much of Western Europe.[2] The *Pekidim* (Officials) in Istanbul represented the interests of the Jewish communities in Palestine to the Ottoman imperial government, they negotiated the restructuring of debts incurred by the Jews in Palestine, and they organized continuous fund-raising among Jewish communities in the Ottoman lands and throughout the Jewish world.

Suffering from a cycle of financial crises and political turmoil in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Jews of Palestine had little choice but to appeal to their coreligionists in the diaspora to come to their rescue. In the late seventeenth century, Jewish notables in Cairo and Venice took the lead, but it was the Pekidim in eighteenth-century Istanbul who succeeded in establishing a long-lasting and centralized philanthropic operation, no doubt in large part

because of their proximity to the center of political power in the imperial capital. They dispatched rabbinic emissaries throughout the Jewish world, where the *shadarim* (as those emissaries were known in Hebrew) propagated the enduring centrality of the Holy Land as well as the obligation of Jews everywhere to provide financial support for their coreligionists in Palestine.[3] The emissaries collected pledges and contributions, which were then sent on to Istanbul and distributed from there to the four holy cities in the Land of Israel: Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron, and (from the 1740s on) Tiberias.

Through the frequent visits of emissaries and the ongoing exchange of information on the situation of the Jews in the Holy Land, the network organized in Istanbul created what we might call a "contact zone" that allowed Jews from distant geographic areas and diverse cultures to encounter one another. As they participated in a shared philanthropic project, they experienced themselves synchronically as part of a broader, pan-Jewish community that transcended the boundaries of geographic, linguistic, and ethnic divisions. Rather than imagining the Jewish community primarily through a common mythical, biblical past or a common utopian, messianic future, Jews now were challenged to think of themselves as part of an intertwined community that could act collectively in the present.

This "simultaneity" of experiencing the Jewish diaspora as one interrelated community, linked together by a shared sense of solidarity with the Jews of *contemporary* Palestine, represented an important shift that was part of a broader change experienced by Jewish cultures in the early modern period.[4] The territorial divisions that had shaped medieval Jewish cultures and identities after the eleventh century now underwent a major transformation as a result of massive dislocation and migration, often of entire Jewish communities.[5] In the words of Elisheva Carlebach, in the course of this period, "pieces of a cultural mosaic that had been placed precisely and not moved for centuries were suddenly shaken up and scattered about in entirely new combinations."[6] There was, of course, the long series of expulsions that concluded the medieval period of Jewish history, culminating in the expulsion from Spain in 1492; the constant trickle of *conversos* (Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had been forced into baptism) who left the Iberian Peninsula throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and into

the eighteenth centuries; and the large number of Jews who fled war and persecution in mid-seventeenth-century Poland for Western Europe and for the Ottoman Empire. Other factors too brought Jews from different backgrounds into contact: the increased mobility of individuals, moving in overlapping circuits of rabbinic, trading, or family networks; students from Eastern Europe attending medical school in Italy; Moroccan Jews deciding to spend their old age in the Holy Land; or the Amsterdam Sephardic community sending its poor on to the Dutch colonies in the Caribbean.[7]

As Jacob Katz pointed out in his classical study *Tradition and Crisis* (which focused, though, on the Ashkenazi world of Central and Eastern Europe), "the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries produced a strengthening of bonds between the various widely separated sections of the Jewish people. It is doubtful whether there ever was a time since the decline of the Roman Empire when Jewry's political organization was still centralized, in which contact between Jewish groups was as intense as in [this] period."[8] The philanthropic network in support of the Holy Land and the rabbinic emissaries were part of this dynamic as well and contributed to the "globalization" of the Jewish diaspora in the early modern period, which witnessed a radical realignment of the demographic map of the Jewish world. The network of *shelihut* (the Hebrew term referring to the missions of the rabbinic emissaries) can be seen as both a symptom of this broader transformation as well as—especially in the eighteenth century—an important (if understudied) factor contributing to the rise of a pan-Jewish community.

The increased frequency and intensity of the contact—and clash—between different Jewish cultures in the early modern period put notions of Jewish unity and solidarity constantly to the test. As Jews encountered other Jews (or, we might say, the internal "Jewish Other"), they were forced to confront the cultural diversity of a Jewish world imagined as unified yet experienced as fragmented. Historians often focus on the interface between Jews and the various non-Jewish societies among whom they lived as the catalyst for the formation of different Jewish cultures. Just as important in shaping the ways Jews understood themselves and the world around them, however, was—certainly in the early modern period—the meeting of Jews with *other* Jews. While early modern Jews by and large lived their lives under the sacred canopy of a

shared textual tradition—the Bible, Talmud, and the rabbinic tradition more broadly—they also encountered one another as differentiated by cultural attributes such as language or bodily practice. The "narcissism of minor differences," to appropriate a term from Freud, accentuated sub-ethnic divisions, for example between Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and Maghrebi Jews. What was new in the early modern period was that these sub-ethnic identities themselves were increasingly trans-regional, linking Sephardic Jews in London with those in Curaçao and Venice, or Ashkenazi Jews in Prague with those in Amsterdam, Verona, and Jerusalem. Although a shared sense of Jewishness was still taken for granted, feelings of solidarity more often than not were extended to fellow Ashkenazim, or fellow Maghrebi Jews, or fellow Salonikans but not necessarily to the wider Jewish community.

Throughout this period a tension persisted between sub-ethnic patterns of solidarity and identity and the pan-Jewish sensibility propagated by the Pekidim in Istanbul, whose emissaries often experienced resistance to their activities. The philanthropic network of shelihut was predicated on the notion that Jews, wherever they lived, should be tied to one another by bonds of solidarity and that Jewish communities all over the world should feel an attachment to the Land of Israel that was strong enough to override competing claims for charitable munificence. In reality, however, neither one of these factors could easily be taken for granted. As many an emissary learned, solidarity of Jews with one another qua Jews was challenged by a reality inherited from the fragmented Jewish world of the medieval period. Jews often identified with their local environment or a particular region, or with a sub-ethnic group such as the Western Sephardic diaspora, more closely than with a more abstract, pan-Jewish community in the name of which the emissaries from the Holy Land presented their pleas. The idea of the Holy Land, too, was undoubtedly central to Jewish collective memories and spiritual aspirations, but the actual, contemporary Land of Israel remained marginal and far removed from the daily lives of most Jews. These were challenges that needed to be overcome through a relentless effort on the part of the rabbinic emissaries and their allies in Istanbul. To the degree that they succeeded in establishing their philanthropic network, however, the Pekidim in Istanbul in the eighteenth century were instrumental in encouraging a sense of

belonging to a pan-Jewish diaspora community, which eventually prepared the ground for the more far-reaching, pan-Jewish international philanthropy of the nineteenth century, in particular in the guise of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and similar organizations.

By emphasizing the importance of the emissaries and the link they forged between the Jews of Palestine and those in the Jewish diaspora I do not suggest a return to the telos of Zionist historiography that took for granted a Land-of-Israel-centric pan-Jewish peoplehood and solidarity rather than historicized it as something that needed to be constructed and maintained in the face of competing forms of Jewish identities. On the other hand, the post- (or anti-) Zionist reading that claims that modern Jewish nationalism essentially "invented" the idea of a Jewish nation out of whole cloth also distorts the complex genealogy of modern Jewish peoplehood and its link to Palestine.[9] This book argues instead that the unfolding sense of a pan-Jewish identity in the early modern period can provide us with a better understanding of how to historicize the emergence of modern notions of Jewish peoplehood and to appreciate the complex and contested nature of that process.

At the same time, the focus on the rise of a pan-Jewish sensibility and its discontents in the eighteenth century also allows for a new approach to the early modern Jewish experience in its own right, and not simply as a precursor of developments in a later period. In his recent book *Early Modern Jewry*, David Ruderman notes that, according to many scholars of the early modern era, "Jewish history in this period can only be reconstructed on the microlevel. Its variegated histories are radically singular, diverse, and heterogeneous. . . . The general thrust of the recent narratives of early modern Jewish history is to deny the possibility that a distinct early modern Jewish cultural experience can ever be meaningfully described. I wish to assert that such a description is possible and desirable."[10] As I will argue in the chapters that follow, a focus on early modern networks—commercial, scholarly, or, as in the case of this study, philanthropic—allows us to reconstruct an early modern Jewish experience that is understood not only within its many different contexts but also as a dynamic process of interaction *among* Jewish cultures, between Jews and other Jews.

Though the focus of this book probably also displays my own bias as a scholar of Sephardic Jewry, Ashkenazim in Eastern Europe did

play a relatively minor role in the network of shelihut until the immigration of Ashkenazi Jews to the Holy Land gained momentum in the nineteenth century. The Ashkenazi communities were also more likely to resist the claims to pan-Jewish solidarity made by the Istanbul Officials' emissaries and preferred to deal with "their own," i.e., Ashkenazi emissaries raising money for the benefit of Ashkenazi Jews living in the Holy Land. Most shadarim were destined for communities in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and, in Europe, to Italy and to the major Sephardic communities of the port cities of the Atlantic seaboard. Emissaries visited the Ashkenazi communities of Italy, the German-speaking lands, France, and the Netherlands en route to major Sephardic centers such as Amsterdam, but relatively few ventured to Eastern Europe, something that only changed in the course of the nineteenth century when emissaries became a common sight in the Ashkenazi communities throughout that region as well.[11]

The prominence of Sephardic Jews in the network of shelihut was not accidental, as the philanthropic enterprise of the Istanbul Pekidim did not exist in isolation. The Pekidim themselves derived their position from their proximity to the Ottoman imperial government and were able to tap into the ties linking Istanbul with cities in the provinces, including those of Damascus and Sidon, to which southern and northern Palestine belonged at the time, respectively. The international framework of the fund-raising and the emissaries' missions, in turn, overlapped with trading networks that facilitated travel, communication, and the transfer of money. While they were in the estimation of many historians past their prime, the Sephardic and converso trading networks of the early modern period were still formidable in the eighteenth century, and the mostly Sephardic communities of the major port cities of Italy and the Atlantic seaboard continued to be the home of many wealthy merchants and philanthropists who could be tapped to sustain their coreligionists in Palestine.[12] Much recent research on early modern Jewish history, in particular in the orbit of Sephardic Jewry, has focused on these trading networks and emphasized the special path to modernity of "port Jews" living in the cosmopolitan centers of early modern commerce.[13]

Shelihut needs to be understood in this context as one factor that interacted with many others in creating the specific character of the

early modern Jewish world. It was both instrumental in shaping cross-cultural contact between Jews and, at the same time, can be seen as a symptom of a much broader "globalization" of the Jewish diaspora in the early modern period. The philanthropic network of the Istanbul Pekidim and their emissaries provides, however, a unique vantage point that sets it apart from the more widely studied merchant networks of the time. The Sephardic trading diaspora was so successful in part because it reached beyond the confines of the Jewish community when that proved economically beneficial—one of its key advantages over contemporary Armenian trading networks, for example.[14] At the same time, though, the Sephardic merchants largely limited their operation to the Sephardic-converso diaspora, rather than branching out to involve non-Iberian Jews. The network of shelihut, on the other hand, connected Jews all over the world *as Jews*, and, though centered around the Sephardic communities of the Mediterranean basin and Europe, reached well beyond to include Ashkenazim, the Arabic-speaking Jews of the Mashreq and the Maghreb, and others, thus putting notions of Jewish solidarity, unity, and peoplehood to the test.

In 1951, Abraham Ya'ari (1899–1966), a scholar and bibliographer working at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem (today the National Library of Israel) and author of numerous books and articles on Jewish history and the history of Erets Israel, published a massive tome on the emissaries from the Holy Land. His 947-page opus on shelihut can be seen as an example of what is sometimes called the "Jerusalem school" of Jewish historiography in the spirit and service of the Zionist project.[15] Ya'ari presented shelihut as a continuous institution dating back to the days of the Jerusalem Temple, proving an uninterrupted connection between the Jews in exile and their ancient homeland. Not only that, but the enduring practice of shelihut demonstrated, in Ya'ari's view, the centrality of the Land of Israel despite centuries of Jewish life in dispersion. The "main lesson" to be learned from the history of shelihut, he maintained, was that "even in those times when the *yishuv* in the Land of Israel was small, depleted, and oppressed, its influence on the Jews of the exile (*yehudei ha-golah*) was great beyond measure. This influence was enduring, as enduring as [the institution of] shelihut itself, and extended to every country where Jews lived."[16]

In the year following the publication of Ya'ari's *Sheluhei Erets Yisra'el* (Emissaries from the Land of Israel), historian Jacob Katz wrote a scathingly critical review of the book. Though he agreed with the estimation that the Jews of the pre-emancipation era generally met the requests presented by the shadarim from the Holy Land with sympathy, he criticized Ya'ari's portrayal of the emissaries and their interaction with the Jewish communities of the diaspora as a "romantic idealization." More importantly, Katz lamented that Ya'ari did not seem to have "any analytical categories" at his disposal and therefore "it appears that any fact known to him was worthy to be included in his description."[17] In other words, while Ya'ari succeeded in amassing an incredible amount of information about hundreds of emissaries from several centuries, he failed to analyze and interpret his material and thus move beyond an endless parade of mini-biographies of emissaries and their itineraries.

Given the wealth of material collected by Ya'ari it is surprising that sixty years have gone by since the publication of *Sheluhei Erets Yisra'el* without Jewish historians showing much interest in the institution of shelihut and the role of the emissaries in Jewish history.[18] Over the years, some scholars have published additional information and material regarding the visits of individual emissaries. The wealth of information accumulated by those scholars and by Abraham Ya'ari himself (without which the present book could not have been written) has not engendered, however, any sustained effort to study the significance of shelihut in Jewish history, especially during its heyday from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries.

Several Israeli historians, to be sure, have mined the material related to the philanthropic network in support of the Holy Land for information on the history of the yishuv (as the Jewish communities in Palestine were referred to collectively), but they have largely been uninterested in the emissaries themselves and their encounter with the communities of the diaspora. Minna Rozen, for example, perused a manuscript preserving hundreds of letters asking for financial support from abroad for her study on Jerusalem in the seventeenth century; Jacob Barnai explored the record book (*pinkas*) of the Istanbul Officials for his monograph on the Jews of eighteenth-century Palestine; and Arieh Morgenstern employed the vast collection of letters written

by the Pekidim ve-Amarkalim in Amsterdam, another philanthropic organization operating in support of the Holy Land under the leadership of Zvi Hirsch Lehren, for his studies on the Ashkenazi yishuv in the nineteenth century.[19] In this book, by contrast, I focus on the diaspora side of the story, employing shelihut and the activities of the emissaries and their supporters in order to better understand the dynamics of communication and exchange between various parts of the Jewish world in the period before the emancipation of the Jews.

The sources employed in the present study range from texts produced by the emissaries—including sermons, literature in praise of the Land of Israel and its virtues, and legal opinions (responsa)—to the correspondence emanating from those who organized the philanthropic network in the eighteenth century, in particular the over five hundred letters of the Istanbul-based Officials for the Land of Israel from the mid-eighteenth century preserved in a manuscript now held at the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Another unique source for the eighteenth century is the extensive travelogue written by one of the most prominent Sephardic rabbis and emissaries at the time, Haim Joseph David Azulai, published as *Ma'gal tov*; other such texts only exist from the nineteenth century, with Jacob Sapir's *Even Sapir* being of particular interest. In addition, letters from and to emissaries, extracts from their record books, and letters provided to support them, have been published, for the most part in Israel, and complement the material compiled in Abraham Ya'ari's classic study of the topic. Invaluable insight into the visits of emissaries in the communities of the diaspora can also be gained from the rich material preserved in the archives of the Jewish community in Livorno, the busy Tuscan port city that was home to the largest Jewish community in Italy in the eighteenth century and that served as a central way station for many emissaries from the Land of Israel. No doubt many more sources, from letters to account books, still lie untapped in numerous Jewish community archives around the world, and the present study can only (re-) introduce a topic that still deserves a great deal of further research.

The language of the sources used here is itself indicative of the overlapping networks that traversed the Jewish world of the eighteenth century and onto which the philanthropic network of shelihut was mapped. When writing to their appointed representatives in Jerusalem,

for example, the Jewish Officials in Istanbul employed Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), written in Hebrew characters; however, when writing to their counterparts in Livorno, a major Sephardic community in the West, they used a Hispanicized Ladino, written in Latin characters. Whereas varieties of Judeo-Spanish thus served as a lingua franca connecting different parts of the Sephardic diaspora, Hebrew was used when crossing the linguistic divide separating the various sub-cultures of the Jewish world, for example when Ashkenazi communities of Germany or Eastern Europe wished to address the Jewish community in Livorno or those of Turkey addressed their counterparts in North Africa. The Istanbul Officials also tended to employ Hebrew, rather than Ladino, when directing themselves to the rabbinic scholars of the Holy Land. Even Hebrew as a shared language, however, still accentuated the differences between various Jewish communities because Ashkenazim and Sephardim used different Hebrew handwriting (and varying pronunciation, in the case of personal encounters between emissaries and Jews in the diaspora). When the community of Livorno corresponded with Lazzaro Uffenheim of Innsbruck in the early 1790s, for example, the scribe employed by the community carefully transcribed all Hebrew letters received from Austria into Sephardic handwriting.[20]

Rabbis published their own literary works in Hebrew, which continued to be the language of highbrow literature, but in their interaction with the various communities of the diaspora, the emissaries used all the linguistic skills they could marshal, with Sephardic rabbis often employing Ladino in their dealings with Sephardic communities in the Ottoman Empire and in Western Europe, and Hebrew when visiting Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi communities or other Jews whose vernacular they did not share. Internally, the Livornese community maintained its documents in Portuguese, the vernacular language of the Western Sephardic diaspora of the eighteenth century—or rather, a Livornese Judeo-Portuguese that displayed many influences from Castilian Spanish and Italian and included numerous Hebrew loan words.

The ability of the Pekidim in Istanbul to exercise control over the philanthropic network in support of the Holy Land was limited by the circumstances of communication and travel in the early modern period. We should not imagine a highly centralized, hierarchical, and stable operation, and overseeing the fund-raising of their emissaries

meant that the Pekidim in the Ottoman capital had to contend with difficulties similar to those experienced by early modern long-distance trading diasporas. Unlike international Jewish organizations of the nineteenth century, such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, with their hierarchical structure and centralized bureaucratic apparatus, philanthropic support for the Holy Land in the eighteenth century functioned as a "network," which we may define for the purpose of the present discussion as "any collection of actors that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange."[21] A network, by definition, may be enduring but is also inherently unstable and needs to be understood dynamically as something that "happens" rather than a structure that simply "is." It is best described as a "circuit" connecting a "nodal center" (or centers) with a "cluster of dispersed nodes around it," and is maintained by the ongoing movement of bodies, goods, and information between the nodes and the nodal center.[22] It was this constant circulation of people and information within the network that had the potential of forging separate places across geographic distances into one community.[23]

Whereas the Pekidim in Istanbul served as the central node of communication, mediating between the various actors, they ultimately had no way to impose their will and to assert their authority in any direct way. The basic challenges faced by the Officials in Istanbul, their emissaries, and community leaders in the diaspora and in the Holy Land mirrored those identified by Abner Cohen in a seminal study on the organization of trading diasporas: how to create and maintain relations of trust, how to develop and maintain an authority structure, and how to ensure the regular exchange of information, all in the face of long distances and the inevitably slow pace of communication in an era predating telegraphs, railroads, and steamships.[24] In the chapters that follow, I explore these issues by focusing on instances when the smooth functioning of the philanthropic network was challenged. Establishing mutual trust was central, for example, in ensuring the success of the emissaries: whereas proper written credentials could be provided to assuage legitimate concerns about impostors making the rounds deceiving Jewish communities in the diaspora, the initial appointment of an emissary had to rely on the reputation of trustworthiness of the

individual involved. Despite all precautions, unauthorized emissaries were by no means infrequent, and even a legitimate emissary could end up embezzling funds. More intangible issues such as cross-cultural suspicions between Ashkenazi communities and Sephardic emissaries, or vice versa, were more difficult to address and persisted, despite the best efforts of the Istanbul Officials to overcome such divisions, into the nineteenth century.

There was nothing inevitable about the emergence of the philanthropic network of shelihut in the eighteenth century. Most immediately, as we will see in Chapter One, the Jewish leadership in Istanbul responded to an acute financial crisis of the Jewish community in Jerusalem in the early eighteenth century. In and of itself this was nothing unusual: throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period, individuals with connections to the central government had come to assist distressed Jewish communities of their respective countries. The role of *shtadlan* (an ad hoc or even permanent representative of Jewish interests to the government) was common throughout the Jewish world, and the Istanbul Officials came to play this role as intercessors for the Jews in Palestine, under Ottoman rule at the time, during the eighteenth century.[25] New, however, was the international dimension and longevity of the rescue effort coordinated by the Pekidim in Istanbul. Their activities transcended the confines of the Ottoman Empire and thus the traditional role of shtadlan as an intermediary between a clearly defined Jewish community and the gentile political authorities, and their philanthropic endeavor did not remain a one-time response to an acute crisis but grew into an organized network that lasted for more than a century. What allowed the Pekidim in Istanbul to play this role was their prominence in the imperial capital—many of them belonged to the financial elite, including a number of banking families who served as the main financiers of the Ottoman Janissary corps—and the emergence, by the middle of the eighteenth century, of "a very competitive and developed financial market in Istanbul, fully integrated with the major financial centers of Europe."[26] Overseeing the fund-raising operation for the Holy Land involved ensuring that money collected in the diaspora could be properly invested and transferred to beneficiaries in Palestine. The rise of the Ottoman capital as a financial and trading hub, well connected to its European counter-

parts, facilitated the rise of the philanthropic network under the auspices of the Istanbul Officials.

On the level of ideology, too, we should not assume that the Istanbul Officials simply tapped an already existing sense of Jewish solidarity and unquestioned commitment to the welfare of the Jews in the Holy Land. Abraham Ya'ari, in his classical study of shelihut, conjured up an image of the emissary network as an uninterrupted tradition going back to the days of the Second Temple. The data collected by Ya'ari himself, however, suggest that shelihut and the organized support for the Jews of the Holy Land were largely a phenomenon of the early modern and modern periods, in particular the "long" eighteenth century: thirty-one pages of his extensive study document emissaries before the Ottoman conquest of Palestine in 1517, and forty pages those from the Ottoman conquest to the year 1700—the remaining 570 pages deal with the period from 1700 to the mid-nineteenth century. (Admittedly this imbalance likely is also a reflection of the preservation of sources in different time periods and different regions. Still, the overall impression remains that the network of shelihut experienced its heyday between the late seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries.)

What the Istanbul Officials and their emissaries accomplished, then, was to initiate a process that sought to put the contemporary Land of Israel at the center of an interconnected, global Jewish community, overcoming the ambiguity found in medieval and early modern Jewish society when the Holy Land remained somewhat of an abstraction, a memory of a glorious past and the promise of a utopian future, but marginal to Jewish life in the present. Indeed, the number of Jews living in the Land of Israel in the eighteenth century remained small, both as a portion of the Jewish population around the world and as a portion of the overall population in Palestine. Historians have estimated the average number of Jews in eighteenth-century Erets Israel to have been around six to eight thousand, out of a total population of anywhere between 100,000 and 250,000. Another estimate puts the Jewish population in Palestine around the year 1800 at about 5,000, along with a Christian minority of 25,000 and a total population of 275,000 (though the two religious minorities combined accounted for about half of the urban population).[27] Despite this reality, the rabbinic emissaries sent forth from the Holy Land argued, with varying success, that

Erets Israel remained central to the Jewish world even at present, that its sanctity was by no means diminished by the desolate situation of its Jewish population, and that indeed the Jews living in the holy cities of Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron, and Tiberias were a spiritual vanguard who should benefit from the generosity of their brethren in the diaspora.

A note about terminology: throughout this book, I use "philanthropy" and "beneficence" interchangeably. I have avoided describing the network of support maintained by the rabbinic emissaries from the Holy Land as "charity," in part because its Hebrew equivalent, *tsedakah*, was generally understood as poor relief and the emissaries considered their own mission, as we are going to see, in rather different terms. Moreover, a clear distinction between "traditional" forms of beneficence or charity and "modern" forms of philanthropy is somewhat misleading when considering a transitional era such as the eighteenth century. It is true, though, that the philanthropic enterprise discussed here differed from self-consciously modern (or modernizing) philanthropic endeavors, which sought to transform, "improve," or "civilize" their beneficiaries, whereas the benevolent activities of the Istanbul Pekidim and their emissaries were emphatically conservative. Another term that I use frequently is "pan-Jewish," a neologism roughly the equivalent of the Hebrew term *klal-Yisra'el*, which in turn is an invention of modern Hebrew.[28] I use the term to describe both the idea and the experience of an interconnected Jewish diaspora community that transcended regional or ethnic divisions between, for example, Sephardic and Ashkenazi or Ottoman and European Jewries. Finally, without the intention of making a political statement, I have chosen to use the terms "Land of Israel" (the equivalent of the Hebrew *Erets Yisra'el*, always employed by the Jewish sources of the time), "Palestine" (found in contemporary European texts and often preferred by modern historians), and "Holy Land" interchangeably. For the sake of simplicity and uniformity, I have also decided to refer to the Ottoman capital by its modern name, Istanbul, rather than Constantinople.