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# THE CAREER OF MOSES SHAPIRA, BOOKSELLER AND ANTIQUARIAN

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## ABSTRACT

This article takes a look at the career of Moses Shapira, the notorious bookseller, antiquities dealer, and possible forger of 19th-century Jerusalem. Despite Shapira's fame among scholars, his career is little discussed beyond the episodes of the Deuteronomy strips and, to a much lesser extent, the 'Moabite pottery.' By surveying his career as a whole, I will put these episodes into a clearer context, shedding additional light on Shapira's methods and motivations. In addition, since we have more information by far on Shapira's career than on that of any other seller of antiquities in Late Ottoman Palestine, understanding his career provides important insights into how the antiquities trade in Palestine operated at the time.


## KEYWORDS

Moses Shapira; antiquities trade; souvenirs; forgeries; Ottoman Palestine

## Introduction

Of the many people who sold antiquities in 19th-century Palestine, by far the best known is Moses Shapira (1830–1884). The story of Shapira's supposed ancient Deuteronomy manuscript has been told many times, in scholarship and popular media (see most recently Dershowitz 2021a, 2021b; Nichols 2021). But even the most detailed scholarly discussions of the history of the Deuteronomy manuscript usually provide only a brief overview of the years-long 'Moabite pottery' affair, and little or nothing on the rest of Shapira's career as a merchant. Instead, the most complete surveys of the remainder of his career are found in trade books (Tigay 2016, Sabo 2018). The result of this scholarly failure to exploit many of the sources available on Shapira has been to obscure important aspects of his biography.

In this article, I will attempt to remedy that failure by presenting a critical, scholarly overview of the entirety of Shapira's professional life. This change of focus to Shapira's broader career will help to illuminate Shapira himself. Today, scholars generally think of Shapira as an antiquities dealer, as he is remembered primarily for his role in the Deuteronomy affair and to a lesser extent in the Moabite pottery affair. But in his day, he was also commonly known as a bookseller, with a shop in Jerusalem that was highly recommended for books and related pilgrim and tourist souvenirs, of which antiquities

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were but a part. I will also argue that a careful study of Shapira's professional life shows that fraud and deception run throughout his entire career more deeply than is generally understood. Shapira offered thousands of fake antiquities for sale over the course of more than a decade, made up stories to sensationalise (and raise the value of) many of them, misrepresented himself in his quest to acquire manuscripts, and smuggled thousands of antiquities and manuscripts out of the country in violation of then-existing Ottoman law.

No less important, the change of focus to Shapira's broader career will also help to illuminate the operation of the antiquities trade in Palestine in the Late Ottoman period. Since we have so much more information on Shapira's career than on that of any other contemporary seller of antiquities in the country, looking at it in depth will provide a new understanding of how antiquities were bought and sold at that time. Despite the thousands of fake antiquities sold and the fame they brought; antiquities were not even Shapira's main business. This fact is significant and may reveal important things about how the antiquities trade developed in Jerusalem in the second half of the 19th century.

### Shapira's early career

Our knowledge of Shapira's early life comes from a statement he made to the Prussian Consulate in Jerusalem when applying for protection in 1860 (Eliav 1973, 9–10, quoted in Sabo 2018, 38–39; see also Tigay 2016, 36–37, 51). According to the statement, Shapira was born in 1830 in Kamenetz-Podolsk (today Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine), in Russian Poland near the border with the Ottoman Empire and left for Palestine in 1855. Because he was forced to surrender his passport when crossing into the Ottoman Empire in Romania, he was stuck for several months in Bucharest. There, he encountered Christian missionaries and converted to Christianity. Once he arrived in Jerusalem in 1856, Shapira joined the Jewish Christian community at Christ Church in Jerusalem, near Jaffa Gate (Figure 1). The church had been founded in the 1840s as a joint Anglican-Lutheran bishopric for both British and German communities in Jerusalem; it was a centre of missionary operations for both the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, known colloquially as the London Jews' Society (LJS).

According to mission records, Shapira's career began with an apprenticeship at the London Jews' Society's House of Industry for three years (Tigay 2016, 41–42; Sabo 2018, 29). What did he do next? It is commonly believed that, after he finished his term at the House of Industry, Shapira opened his own antiquities shop; several recent accounts give the year as 1861 (Eisenberg 2001, 21; Conrad 2007, 327; Heide 2012, 193; Tigay 2016, 43). No evidence has been published to support this claim, however. Instead, it appears that Shapira moved next door, from the mission's House of Industry to its book shop, sometimes called the Book Dépôt (Figure 2). A series of missionary periodicals and reports, some provided by Shapira himself, attest to his employment there for several years in the early to mid-1860s (British Foreign and Bible Society 1862, 82; 1864, 101; 1867, 153; 'Young Simon' 1861, 172; 'A Scene in Jerusalem' 1863, 55; Fleischhacker 1864, 269; 'Correspondenz: Jerusalem' 1867, 316; 'Mission Work of the Past Month' 1868, 38). Shapira's years of working in the mission bookstore have been separately demonstrated by Yoram Sabo, based on LJS/Christ Church documents (Sabo 2018, 29–30; cf. Tigay 2016, 42, though Tigay misinterprets the mission's book



**Figure 1.** 1865 Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem map, detail of the Western part of the Old City.

1: Christ Church; 2: The LJS House of Industry and Book Depôt; 3: Shapira's shop (location of Shapira's shop following Guil 2012; Allegro 1965, 18).

(Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem, by Captain Charles W. Wilson, R.E. under the direction of Colonel Sir Henry James, R.E. F.R.S. & C. Director of the Ordnance Survey, 1864–65, revised 1876. Huntington Rare Books, Sir Richard Francis Burton Map Collection, 623674, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.)



**Figure 2.** Photo of al-Mawqaf (the square inside Jaffa Gate), looking south, showing the Christ Church complex with the LJS House of Industry and the Book Depôt. Bonfils photo, c. 1900 (detail)

(Lenkin Family Photography of the Holy Lands Collection at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania.)

depot as a library instead of a bookstore, as well as the length of time that Shapira held this position). These records indicate that Shapira was hired by the bookstore in 1859 and continued to work there until he left the position in March 1869.

From these sources, we learn that Shapira's job involved selling Bibles in different languages as well as missionary literature like Rev. Carl Pfander's popular *Mizan al-Haqq* (British Foreign and Bible Society 1862, 82) or John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* ('A Scene in Jerusalem' 1863, 55), or lending them to those who could not afford them, as part of the goal of spreading the Gospel. Shapira's reports highlight the diplomats, Ottoman officials, and other wealthy customers that patronised the shop, and claim that in one year the depot distributed over 2,000 copies of the Bible (British Foreign and Bible Society 1864, 101). There are also hints of Shapira's future entrepreneurial activity. One convert to Christianity reported that 'Mr. Shappira [sic], of the Book Store, induced me to ornament the book-boards of olive-wood with garlands and appropriate Bible verses, by which means the sale of the books to travellers has been greatly increased' ('Mission Work of the Past Month' 1868, 38).

These years of Shapira's career are also marked by unofficial missionary work. He accompanied missionaries on trips to Jews outside of Jerusalem: in January 1867 to Tiberias, Safed, Damascus, Tripoli, and Beirut ('Correspondenz: Jerusalem' 1867, 316), and in November 1867 to the Galilee (Courtenay 1883, 310–11). A remarkable letter in Welsh from a visitor in 1866 describes how Shapira would post Bible verses said to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah up on the walls of Jerusalem on Saturday mornings—since, as it was the Jewish Sabbath, this was the one day that the Jews would not immediately tear them down, as work of any kind is prohibited (Jones 1866, 308). The letter also explains that Shapira would preach while standing on a wall or stone in the busiest parts of the city, though he commonly faced mockery (Jones 1866, 308–09). Charles Warren, in Jerusalem in 1867 for the PEF, briefly describes similar activity from an unnamed Jewish convert; based on the letter's testimony this might also be Shapira:

The mission to the Jews naturally assumes an aggressive form; that is to say, the glad tidings are poured into unwilling ears, and the Jewish proselyte who weekly preaches a sermon to the Jews floating past the Jaffa gate, courts martyrdom; for he is exposed to insults and mis-siles from his brethren (Warren 1876, 106).

## Shapira the bookseller

Based on the evidence, it appears that Shapira went into business on his own in the spring of 1869, opening his shop on Christian Street, now commonly known in English as Christian Quarter Road.<sup>1</sup> Records attest to his leaving in March 1869, and, as Sabo has shown, by the time his younger daughter Maria was baptised (in May 1869), his profession is listed in church records as 'bookseller' (Sabo 2014; also Tigay 2016, 53). Meanwhile, the earliest reference we have to Shapira's business activities also comes from 1869 (Baer 1870), and the earliest explicit reference to his shop that I have found to date is a Dutch traveller's account written in early 1870 (Westrik 1870, 196).

Archaeologists and biblical scholars typically refer to Shapira as an antiquities dealer, but it is clear from contemporary sources that his shop was primarily a



bookstore. The first reference to his shop, from Westrik (1870, 196), refers to Shapira as a ‘bookseller and antiquarian’. This was Shapira’s own preferred phrasing. Westrik uses the phrase in English in the midst of his Dutch prose, suggesting he was copying Shapira’s usage. The same phrase appears on Shapira’s business cards, found on his body after his death (‘Gemengd Nieuws’ 1884; ‘Binnenland’ 1884, 2). According to later reminiscences, Shapira also had ‘Bookseller and Antiquarian’ printed on the sign above his shop (Harry 1919, 59; Vester 1950, 138). We have further evidence that Shapira’s business was first and foremost selling books. The early editions of Baedeker’s guidebook in German, English, and French recommend Shapira’s shop for books and photographs (Baedeker 1875, 150; 1876, 145; 1880, 21; 1882, 153, 223). Antiquities, by contrast, are not mentioned.

In the first half of the 1870s, Shapira’s shop became famous for antiquities, yet there are several accounts of the store in this period that make no mention of them (Westrik 1870, 196; Adams 1874, 69; Sweetser 1875, 76–77; Baedeker). Even excluding references to antiquities, Shapira appears to be the most widely mentioned and recommended merchant in the city at the time. At least initially, Shapira’s stock seems to have focused on Bibles, albums, and other objects of olive wood as well as wood of Hebron oak (Westrik 1870, 196), suggesting both a carry-over from his years in the LJS bookstore and a possible specialisation in souvenirs for pilgrims. Later visitors who mention the Moabite pottery and other antiquities also indicate that he continued to sell items like books with olivewood covers and albums of pressed flowers (Appleton 1877, 74, 149; Hyndman 1878, 123). At the same time, by the mid-1870s Shapira’s store also seems to have carried 19th-century novels, particularly Tauchnitz editions of British novelists like Thackeray; the author of the American publication *Europe for \$2 a Day* suggests that Shapira had a library of these books available via subscription (Sweetser 1875, 76–77). Shapira’s photographs for sale included views not only of Jerusalem and Palestine but also of Constantinople and the Suez Canal (Frutiger and Eisler 2008, 123).

We have several indications of who Shapira’s suppliers were. Testimony from the Jerusalem banker Johannes Frutiger indicates that the missionary shop of C. F. Spittler & Co., for which Frutiger originally worked, had a close connection with Shapira, supplying him with Bibles and other Christian literature (Frutiger and Eisler 2008, 122–23). Shapira’s photographs included views of Palestine by Frank Mason Good, but with his shop’s label over Good’s name, thereby suggesting that Shapira himself had taken the photographs (Kyrām 1995, 229). Files pertaining to Shapira’s bankruptcy and creditors in 1884 (M. W. Schapira, 1872–84) provide more extensive evidence. Not surprisingly, Shapira sold photograph albums and books with olive-wood covers provided by the LJS House of Industry, for which he had previously worked (see also British Foreign and Bible Society 1871, 216). His photographs were provided not merely by local photographers in the city; they can be traced to the photographer Tancredi R. Dumas in Beirut and the store of Ch. Smyrniadis in Port Said. In 1872, Shapira also sold books and plans of Jerusalem and local costumes provided by the Sardinian engineer Ermete Pierotti, for which Shapira asked twenty-five percent commission. The files suggest that he sold maps provided by the PEF as well.

## Shapira's antiquities

Whatever else Shapira sold, it appears that the basic function of his shop was a bookstore and souvenir shop for pilgrims and tourists. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that what brought Shapira the most international attention were the antiquities he offered for sale. By 'antiquities' I mean specifically artefacts from clay, stone, and similar materials. Manuscripts are also antiquities, but they are a special type that was usually bought and sold separately; I therefore treat them, as others have, as a separate category.

The first report we have of antiquities appearing in Shapira's shop comes from the autumn of 1871, when Shapira was showing customers what he claimed was a new 'Moabite stone' that commemorated Moses's conquests of Moab (Lumley 1872a). As demonstrated by Emanuel Deutsch, however, the inscription was actually a poor copy of a Nabatean inscription (Lumley 1872b) recently published by Charles Warren in the *PEF Quarterly Statement* (Warren 1870, 327) and studied by M. Levy in *ZDMG* (Levy 1871).

Over the course of 1871 and early 1872, Shapira offered for sale a series of other fake stone inscriptions, apparently inspired by the recent dramatic discovery of the Mesha stele (aka the Moabite stone) in 1868–69 and Charles Clermont-Ganneau's discovery of inscriptions around Jerusalem in 1870–71. According to Albert Socin (1872, 180), Shapira had a fake copy of the Temple Warning inscription, the original of which had been recently discovered by Clermont-Ganneau. It appears that there were at least two fake copies of this inscription at the time (Koch 1876, 80), but other sources do not confirm that either was in Shapira's shop. Shapira definitely had a forged inscription with the text of Psalm 117, said to be 2 ½ feet x 1 ½ feet x 8 inches (Socin 1872, 180; Koch 1876, 83–84). While it is not clear that either of these inscriptions ever sold, Shapira did succeed in selling a different, fake porphyry stone with inscriptions on both sides, to Englishman Horatio Bland (Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 26; Koch 1876, 73–74).

Other fragments may have been intended to cash in on the fame of the Mesha stele more directly. Christian Ginsburg, in Jerusalem in January 1872, saw a small, inscribed stone fragment with Moabite-looking writing in Shapira's shop window and fantasised it was one of the missing fragments of the Mesha stele which had been smashed in 1869 and only partly recovered. Inspecting that fragment and several more inside the store, Ginsburg concluded that his initial impression had been wrong (Ginsburg 1872, 18 [26 January], quoted in Reiner 1995, 112; Tigay 2016, 96, 99–100). These fragments are likely those mentioned in one of several letters from Shapira to George Granville Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, third Duke of Sutherland. Shapira later claimed that he gave them free to the German government along with their purchase of the Moabite pottery (Koch 1876, 67).

There were other stone inscriptions, too, but with only vague descriptions it is difficult to distinguish one from another among the several sources, or to tell which inscriptions actually existed and which existed only in copies. Shapira offered the Duke of Sutherland a porphyry stone with a bilingual inscription and a depiction of a scorpion and a snake; he mailed the duke a copy of this inscription, with pieces of porphyry said to be fragments of the stone (Wright 1872a; 1872b; Conder 1873a, 14; Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 24–25; Koch 1876, 67–68, 74). Along with the copy of the 'Scorpion Stone' Shapira

also sent the duke a copy of a ‘Moabite pillar’ or ‘door-post,’ with a hieroglyphic-looking inscription possibly inspired by the recent publication of the first-known Hieroglyphic Luwian texts, the so-called Hamath Stones (Johnson 1871, 30; cf. Heath 1873, 333). In the end, it is unclear whether these two inscriptions existed beyond the copies: the duke did not agree to the sale, and no one reported seeing them in person.

Perhaps because of the relative failure of these fake stone inscriptions to sell, in the spring of 1872 Shapira transitioned to a new type of object, the so-called ‘Moabite pottery’ or Moabitica (Figures 3 and 4). Over the following five and a half years, he offered for sale thousands of these clay objects, all of them fake. The exact number is unclear. The American artist and writer A. L. Rawson (1874, 397), who frequented Shapira’s store in 1874, suggested a total of around 15,000 objects of all types, of which 1,000 had inscriptions, but there is little direct evidence to support his estimate. We do know that the Moabitica probably included at least 2,000 or 2,500 items: perhaps 1,814 purchased by the German government for the Royal Museum in Berlin in 1873 (PEF 1874, 206–07) and another 724 catalogued by Koch in 1875 (Koch 1876, 21–22).<sup>2</sup> It is likely there were some additional items, but how many is impossible to say.



**Figure 3.** Moabite pottery in Shapira’s shop, photograph by H. H. Kitchener, c. 1874. (Palestine Exploration Fund photographs PEF-P-5111).





**Figure 4.** Moabite pottery in Shapira's shop, photograph by H. H. Kitchener, c. 1874. (Palestine Exploration Fund photographs PEF-P-5112).

The Moabite pottery are known to have consisted of clay vessels and statuettes of humans, some with inscriptions and some without. The evidence suggests, however, that the term may have encompassed a much wider group of clay artefacts. Two potters who confessed in early 1874 to forging the pottery, Abd el-Baqi and Hasn ibn el Bitar ('The Shapira Collection' 1874; Clermont-Ganneau 1874), described making not just full human figures but also standalone body parts such as heads and hands; animals, including birds and dogs; and clay discs. Other contemporary sources confirm this range, adding calves, bull's heads, tortoises and other animals, crescents, clay knives, and genitalia (J. 1872; Weser 1873; Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 162–64; Koch 1876, 4–22).

Our perception of the Moabite pottery may be distorted by the fact that the well-known statuettes and vessels with raised (and sometimes incised) inscriptions on them have traditionally received most of the attention. They appear in most published photographs and drawings, and the descriptions of them given by contemporary scholars like Koch (1876, 4–22) are far more detailed: Koch describes each larger human figure individually, but generally lumps the other figural items together as *kleine Gegenstände*, 'small objects'. However, several sources (PEF 1874, 206–07; Koch 1876, 22; Rawson 1874, 397) agree

that most of the Moabitica had no inscriptions. The two photographs taken by Horatio Kitchener in 1874, with several examples of the familiar Moabitica types, also show some unusual small items, confirming that the group included a wider range (Figures 3 and 4).

Two photographs possibly supplied to the PEF by Conrad Schick around 1874 (PEF-P-6603 and PEF-P-6604; Figures 5 and 6) may provide additional photographic evidence of this range (they are thought to show items on display in Shapira's shop, but this identification is not secure).<sup>3</sup> P-6603 includes some examples imitating plaque figurines, clay figurines made by pressing one side of a piece of clay in a mould. (The result, instead of a free-standing figurine in the round, is a plaque showing an image in relief.) At the time, probably the only plaque figurine known was one discovered by the Bergheims, a banking family in Jerusalem, during the construction of a farmhouse on the mound of Tel Gezer (Abu Shusheh), after they had acquired the farmland of the modern village of Abu Shusheh around 1870. The plaque figurines in the photo are obvious fakes: they display various features unknown in the ancient coroplastic corpus of Palestine, including the fact that they represent male figures, unattested on authentic plaques from Palestine. It appears that these fakes were likely based on the Bergheim plaque, but executed poorly, because the Bergheim plaque was the only model available and (judging from a photo by Clermont-Ganneau) did not have entirely clear features (Clermont-Ganneau 1896, 242; cf. Conder and Kitchener 1882, 439). In the summer of 1875 Adolf Koch, while studying the Moabite pottery to determine its authenticity, saw the plaque at Samuel Bergheim's house in Jerusalem and considered it identical to the Moabite pottery (Koch 1876, 27).

As early as the autumn of 1872, there were doubts about the authenticity of the Moabite pottery. As a result, Shapira organised an expedition, the first of several he sponsored over the next five years, to find Moabitica east of the Jordan. Most of these were



**Figure 5.** Objects from Moses Shapira's shop(?), photographer unknown, photograph possibly donated to PEF by Conrad Schick, c. 1874. (Palestine Exploration Fund photographs PEF-P-6603).



**Figure 6.** Objects from Moses Shapira's shop(?), photographer unknown, photograph possibly donated to PEF by Conrad Schick, c. 1874. (Palestine Exploration Fund photographs PEF-P-6604).

conducted by Shapira's employee Selim el-Qari, the rest by Serapion Murad, the dragoman-chancellor of the German consulate who played a central role in reporting Clermont-Ganneau to the police for illegal excavations in response to Clermont-Ganneau's Moabite pottery investigations (Shepherd 1987, 216–18). Shapira himself went on some of these expeditions. Shapira and el-Qari would accompany Europeans east of the Jordan, take them to various sites, and dig up Moabite pottery—that is, fakes that had been planted by Selim el-Qari and his associates. All of these expeditions were successful in digging up Moabite pottery except one, which was not led by el-Qari; the members were only able to purchase some Moabite pottery from Bedouin east of the Jordan. Meanwhile, no other expeditions east of the Jordan, such as those mounted by the PEF or the American Palestine Exploration Society (APES), found any traces of such pottery. Similarly, though Shapira was not the only merchant in Jerusalem to sell fake stone inscriptions in 1871–1872, he had an almost complete monopoly on the thousands of Moabite pottery and figurines offered for sale in the city between 1872 and 1877 (for more on these expeditions, see Conder 1873a, 13–15; Weser 1873; Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 32–45; Shapira 1877).

The photographs provided by Schick (assuming they are indeed of Shapira's shop) also suggest that Shapira sold many other antiquities in the mid-1870s besides Moabite. These include metal rats, ceramic lamps, Egyptian scarabs, and coins, many if not all of which were fakes. (A few objects, such as the lamps, may have been authentic but it is impossible to be sure from the photograph alone.) Contemporary textual sources only hint at objects of this type, with singular references to lamps (Holmes 1884), antique or ancient armour (Hyndman 1878, 123), and coins (Harper 1894, 34).

The last antiquity (as defined in this section) that we know Shapira tried to sell was 'Samson's coffin,' offered to the PEF offices in London in 1877. It was a lead coffin—probably inspired by recent finds of early Christian coffins of lead (e.g., Conder 1876, 19)—with a paleo-Hebrew inscription, indecipherable except for the final word, the name *Shimshon*, 'Samson' (Clermont-Ganneau 1885, 77–80; cf. Besant 1902, 164–65).

According to Clermont-Ganneau (1885, 77), when the PEF rejected this, Shapira claimed he offered it only to show a sample of the poor quality of Holy Land forgeries. It is unclear if Shapira continued to sell artefacts, whether real or fake, after this.

Overall, a close review of the evidence shows that Shapira sold thousands of fake antiquities, but it is unclear whether he sold a single authentic one.

## Shapira's manuscripts

Works on Shapira commonly suggest that he focused on selling manuscripts only after the final failure of the Moabite pottery around 1877 (Heide 2012, 219; Tigay 2016, 173–74). In fact, Shapira was involved in selling manuscripts from the very beginning of his business. This makes sense, as selling manuscripts is a natural outgrowth of selling books, just as selling antiquities is a natural extension of selling pilgrim and tourist souvenirs. The very first items, of any kind, that we can identify Shapira offering for sale are two Torah scrolls—one dating to the eleventh century from Sanaa in Yemen, the other of unknown date from Hebron—that Shapira consigned to Johannes Alt, a 'business friend' in Frankfurt, in 1869 (Baer 1870). That same year, the Swiss orientalist Albert Socin later reported, Shapira tried to pressure him and fellow scholar Eugen Prym into buying a manuscript in Jerusalem (Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 16).

There is further evidence from the years immediately following. In 1870, Shapira showed the German biblical scholar Anton Scholz a Hebrew manuscript of the biblical book of Jeremiah that he (Shapira) claimed was the Vorlage, the original Hebrew text, of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Bible; Shapira further claimed the manuscript dated from the time of Jesus and came from Sinai (Scholz 1875, 229). Scholz noted that this manuscript was sold within days to another customer. In 1873, Shapira showed a customer his collection of 'ancient parchments', one of which the customer described (presumably told by Shapira, though this is not made explicit) as coming from 'the mountains of Moab' and describing their gods and their 'religion older than the law of Moses' (Smith 1875, 225). At this time, Shapira was recognised as a manuscript expert: Charles Tyrwhitt Drake, for instance, cited Shapira as his main source when writing on Torah scrolls (Tyrwhitt Drake 1872, 295).

What does change over the course of the 1870s is the market for Shapira's manuscripts. Whereas in the early 1870s he offered them for sale in his Jerusalem shop (or via a business associate in Germany), from 1873 he began to bring them to Europe to sell to museums and libraries. His first sale in Europe was to the Royal Library in Berlin in 1873, presumably on the same trip that he brought his first collection of Moabite pottery (Zunz 1873, 54). He followed this up with sales of dozens of additional manuscripts to the Berlin library in 1877, 1879, and 1881 (Steinschneider 1878, v; 1886, 34). After Berlin came London, which he first visited in 1877: the same trip in which he offered 'Samson's coffin' to the PEF saw him make an initial sale of manuscripts to the British Museum. Over the next seven years, Shapira sold over 200 manuscripts to the British Museum.<sup>4</sup> While in England on these trips, he also made sales to the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Madan 1905, 583, 589). What is remarkable is that the British Museum continued to buy manuscripts from Shapira even after his infamous Deuteronomy was dismissed as a forgery. These last purchases consist of two groups of four



manuscripts each, one sold in October 1883, the other in January 1884 (first noted by Sabo 2014; Sabo 2018, 141).

How did Shapira acquire his manuscripts? One significant source was Yemen. From the beginning of his career, Shapira owned manuscripts from Sanaa and offered them for sale. One of the two Torah scrolls consigned to Alt in 1869 came from there (Baer 1870, 10), as did others mentioned by Tyrwhitt Drake (1872, 295, 303). We have no definite information about how Shapira acquired these specific scrolls, but he likely purchased them in Jerusalem; there is evidence that he was purchasing scrolls in the city by the late 1860s (Jefferson 2021). We do know that Shapira made trips to Yemen in 1877 and again in 1879 (Shapira 1882c, 174), but in mentioning and describing them Shapira never refers to earlier travels there. He acquired a number of manuscripts during these two journeys, but he provides little information on how he managed to do so. In the introduction to his catalogue of manuscripts brought to Europe in 1879 (reproduced in Fenton 2011, lxxii–lxxvi), he refers to the ‘amount of difficulties to get these books!’ After mentioning ‘curses and bans’ that had been on them for centuries, he adds, ‘how I was enabled to overcome the supperstishness [sic] of this people is of course out of place in a Catalogue’ (Fenton 2011, lxxvi). This characterisation alone is suspicious: discovery stories often depict the owners of manuscripts as ignorant people who endanger the very texts they had preserved. This depiction is a common literary device used to justify the removal of those manuscripts, often by ethically and legally dubious means (see, e.g., Mroczek 2018).

For more information, our main source is the community of Yemenite Jews in Jerusalem, who would in later years tell different versions of a similar story. Shapira had come to their communities in Yemen and pretended to be a rabbi in order to purchase their manuscripts; if they refused, he would bribe Ottoman officials, reappear with an escort of soldiers, and forcibly take the manuscripts, leaving a nominal sum for payment. The best-known versions of these stories were all published long after Shapira’s death (see Tigay 2016, 195–97; Sabo 2018, 78–80). But an article in the Russian Jewish newspaper *Hamelitz* from September 1883 confirms that the basic story was already in circulation then (‘Daily Events. 2: Abroad’ 1883, 1096; also mentioned by Sabo 2018, 80). Shapira may also have employed an agent, the Sanaa coppersmith and historian Hayyim Habshush, to purchase manuscripts on his behalf (Verskin 2018, 144; Jefferson 2021).

Nor was Shapira publicly forthcoming about his manuscripts from other countries. He attributed this reticence to a desire to protect the privacy of the sellers: ‘As the sellers of the MSS. wished their names not to be mentioned, and as there are in general only one or two in each place I visited who possess MSS., I think the reader will excuse my not mentioning names and places’ (Shapira 1882a). As Tigay (2016, 198) notes, this is not a reliable statement given what we know about Shapira’s purchases in Yemen. More than that, protection of privacy is a familiar excuse for lack of transparency in the antiquities and art trade, often hiding the fact that the sellers do not exist, that the manuscripts are stolen, and/or that they were smuggled from their country of origin (Yates 2016).

We do have some other information on the sources of his manuscripts. Sources at the time indicate that Shapira bought them in Hit (Iraq) and in Cairo (Hoerning 1889, v). Most of these manuscripts belonged to Karaite Jewish communities. For the manuscripts



from Egypt, we have some further information. Geoffrey Khan (1990, 3–4) has observed that some of these manuscripts bear close similarities to material from Taylor-Schechter collection of Cairo Genizah material at Cambridge University: they are written by some of the same scribes, and in at least two cases the leaves have the same dimensions. This identification is supported by Shapira's own handwritten catalogue of these manuscripts (Shapira n.d.), donated by his widow to the Royal Library (now the State Library) in Berlin (Steinschneider 1897, 21). In it he describes several manuscripts coming from the 'Geniza of Kairo' (Shapira n.d., folio 209r.). As Rebecca Jefferson (2018) has noted, the term 'Cairo Genizah' actually covers multiple sources in late 19th-century Cairo; but Shapira's 'Geniza of Kairo' probably refers to the genizah of the Karaite synagogue, due to its relative ease of accessibility at the time (R. Jefferson, pers. comm., May 2021) in addition to the contents. At the same time, in the catalogue Shapira sources one manuscript to the Ben Ezra synagogue itself (Shapira n.d., folio 209r.). Jefferson (pers. comm., May 2021) notes that several visitors made clandestine removals from one specific, accessible scroll in the Ben Ezra synagogue in this period, and Shapira would appear to be one of them. One of Shapira's contacts in Cairo, Mosheh al-Qudsi the second (the chief rabbi of Cairo at the time), may have helped Shapira acquire these manuscripts (Jefferson 2021).

Shapira's most famous manuscript, of course, is the Deuteronomy he offered in Berlin and London in 1883. (Unlike most other aspects of Shapira's career, this episode has been discussed at length in scholarly literature, and a detailed treatment is not necessary here.) It appears that Shapira moved on to this manuscript after the failure of the Moabite pottery. Shapira's last public statements on the Moabite appeared in the London literary journal *Athenaeum* in April 1878 (Shapira 1878); he would later claim that he first encountered the Deuteronomy manuscript three months after this ('Mr. Shapira's Manuscript' 1883).

In May 1884, two months after Shapira's death, the American orientalist Isaac Hollister Hall (1885, cxc) identified a scroll of the book of Numbers in the Philadelphia Library, said to have been purchased from Shapira around 1872. The scroll was actually a composite of fragments from several different scrolls, stitched together. A physical investigation of the composite scroll, presented in July 1884 by Cyrus Adler (Adler 1885), showed that it had been chemically altered to appear older. Hall further noted that the scroll was accompanied by a certificate of authenticity from Constantin von Tischendorf that had been originally attached to the two scrolls Shapira had deposited with Alt in 1869 (Hall 1885, cxc). If Hall is correct and Shapira definitely sold the manuscript, this would suggest that he had not only doctored it, but also laundered the forgery by recycling Tischendorf's certificate. This reuse of authentic documentation to launder illicit or forged antiquities is a method well-known in the modern antiquities trade (e.g., Brodie 2017; Kersel 2007, 83–84); it is interesting to see it in use in the 19th century.

Shapira does seem to have concentrated more on manuscripts than on antiquities starting around 1877, but to what extent is unclear from lack of evidence pertaining to his store in this period. At the same time, Shapira had always been interested in manuscripts and sold them in his shop, going back to the very first items we have record of his offering for sale, in 1869. The major shift, starting already in 1873 but intensifying in the late 1870s, involves Shapira's switch to target European institutions as customers rather than simply pilgrims and tourists in Jerusalem. This shift may also explain why Shapira

started traveling abroad to acquire manuscripts rather than continuing to rely on local sources: to interest European libraries he presumably needed larger and better supplies.

### Shapira the scholar

Shapira seems to always have had scholarly aims or pretensions: in his long-preferred phrasing he appears as ‘antiquarian’, not antiquities dealer. Early in his career, Shapira was known as a Hebrew and Talmud scholar (Fleischhacker 1864, 269; Tyrwhitt Drake 1872, 295), presumably from his schooling as a Jewish child. But he tried to make himself into an expert on many other topics. Rebecca Jefferson (2021) highlights Shapira’s lengthy efforts to understand his Yemenite and Egyptian manuscripts in the late 1870s and early 1880s (e.g., Shapira, n.d.; see also his summaries in letters to the *Athenaeum*, Shapira 1882a; 1882b; 1882c). In the early 1880s, Shapira also focused his scholarly efforts on ancient Semitic inscriptions. He was a member of the *Deutscher Verein zur Erforschung Palästinas* (German Society for the Exploration of Palestine; DVEP) from about 1881 until his death in 1884 (DVEP 1881, x, xix; 1882, xxv; 1883, xix; 1884, v). As a subscriber he would have received copies of the society’s *Zeitschrift* (journal). Shapira also inserted himself into scholarly discussions on the Bible and inscriptions, writing letters to the *Athenaeum* in which he published his own translation of the newly discovered Siloam Inscription (1881a) and debated it with the English scholars Adolf Neubauer and A. H. Sayce (Shapira 1881b; Neubauer 1881a; 1881b; Sayce 1881c). During his second trip to Yemen, Shapira also acted as an amateur surveyor, recording topographic data which he provided to the cartographer Heinrich Kiepert (Shapira 1880; Kiepert 1880).

Though Shapira was widely respected for his knowledge of Torah scrolls and rabbinic literature, views of his competence to study the Siloam inscription were mixed. Conder (1881, 198) thought that Shapira’s ‘intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew idiom (as a Talmudist of 20 years’ education) seems to render his opinion worthy of consideration.’ Sayce, while valuing his manuscript sales to British libraries (Sayce 1880, 421; 1881a; 1881b, 301), suggested that Shapira’s rabbinic knowledge had little bearing on abilities as an epigrapher (1881c).

As Jefferson (2021) observes, Shapira’s scholarship suggests a love of knowledge. This is best seen in the detailed catalogues he made of the different material he studied, particularly his medieval and early modern manuscripts. But there may also be additional factors at work. Researching the history of manuscripts might help to increase their value when sold, for instance. The German orientalist Theodor Nöldeke—writing in the midst of the Moabite pottery affair in 1873—suggested (half-jokingly?) that, in helping Tyrwhitt Drake with Torah scrolls, Shapira may have been trying to sell manuscripts that he would represent as ‘older than the Mishna’ (Nöldeke 1873, 117). When Isaac Hall saw Shapira’s collection of Cypriot antiquities in the mid-1870s, Shapira refused to say from whom he had acquired it, but insisted he purchased it simply because he wanted to study Cypriot antiquities (Hall 1876, 109). Again, this could reflect a simple love of knowledge, or a desire to use Cypriot artefacts as a model for forgeries.

Scholars then, as now, may have considered forgers naive, but familiarity with scholarly publications on ancient inscriptions was standard for forgers. At least one scholar

remarked on the presence in Jerusalem shops of editions of inscriptions and published tables of alphabet charts ('The Moabite Question' 1876). The American philologist William Hayes Ward (1874, 105) observed that the supposed squeezes of Moabite pottery and inscriptions included dots and cross-lines used by engravers to depict edges of inscribed stones, demonstrating that the 'squeezes' were modelled directly on publications. The years when Shapira became a self-made scholar of Semitic inscriptions overlap with the emergence of his Deuteronomy manuscript. We might understand Shapira's move as reflecting preparation for forging the manuscript just as easily as reflecting preparation for deciphering it.

## Conclusion

One thing revealed by a critical survey of Shapira's activities but missed by typical scholarly discussions of the Deuteronomy affair in isolation, is the scale of fraud and deception in Shapira's professional life, running throughout his career as a merchant both broadly and deeply. Among the activities we see are selling thousands of fake objects (of whose inauthenticity he often seems to have been aware); helping to plant them east of the Jordan to be 'discovered' by Europeans; inventing false stories about them to tell customers; pretending to be a rabbi to acquire manuscripts in Yemen; smuggling manuscripts and antiquities out of the Ottoman empire—all occurring repeatedly over the course of many years. To be clear, Shapira appears to have forged very little himself: the 'Moabite pottery' was traced to Selim el-Qari and Jerusalem potters; his stone inscriptions were also traced by Clermont-Ganneau and others to Martin Boulos, a Jerusalem stonemason (Clermont-Ganneau 1883a; 1883b; 1885; Koch 1876, 70, 80, 87–90). Other than perhaps forging or doctoring a few manuscripts, Shapira's main role seems to have been con man.

Shapira's sales of authentic manuscripts and of forged antiquities went hand in hand. Most concretely, we see this in his apparent reuse of manuscript margins to forge the Deuteronomy manuscript (Clermont-Ganneau 1885, 207–25, fig. 18). Beyond this, he sometimes sold manuscripts and antiquities on the same trips to Germany and England. Fraud and deception were involved in the various stages of trafficking both. Finally, his manuscript sales helped legitimise his business. Alongside adopting the description 'bookseller and antiquarian', Shapira promoted himself as an 'Agent of the British Museum' on his business cards ('Gemengd Nieuws' 1884; 'Binnenland' 1884, 2) and apparently as 'Correspondent to the British Museum' on his shop sign (Harry 1919, 59; Vester 1950, 138).

More broadly, perhaps the most surprising thing a critical survey reveals is that Shapira's fixed source of income was not selling antiquities, despite how we think of him today. His regular business was selling books and souvenirs to pilgrims and tourists. These buyers in Jerusalem might not necessarily pay large sums of money for antiquities and manuscripts. Perhaps this is one reason that, over the course of the 1870s Shapira transitioned from targeting tourists and pilgrims in Palestine to targeting museums and libraries in Europe, who would buy larger numbers of items and pay larger sums of money.

We are fortunate to have contemporary sources that shed light on this issue, by providing the amounts for which Shapira sold some items. There is little information on the

regular books and souvenirs he sold in his shop, except for one file recording that the books, plans, and clothing provided by Ermete Pierotti in 1872 were valued at 5 francs each (M. W. Schapira, 1872–84). Based on known exchange rates, this would have been about 20–25 Turkish piasters, that is, a fifth to a quarter of a Turkish pound.<sup>5</sup> These amounts fit within the range of known dress items: 21 and 50 piasters for a male robe or female dress at Jaffa market, in 1904 and 1883 respectively (Büssow 2011, 564), with other reports of dress items in the late 1800s from that range up to 100 piasters (Schölch 1993, 98, 102). Clearly the dress items in Shapira's shop were not being marked up significantly for foreign tourists and were likely not very profitable. Johannes Frutiger gives the same impression about the photographs Shapira sold (Frutiger and Eisler 2008, 123). More valuable were his manuscripts. The records we have for some of his manuscript sales indicate that they were sold for between £6 to £20 each, and perhaps more in some cases.<sup>6</sup> While this may not seem impressive, taking inflation into account it would equate to more than £600 to 2,000 each. In addition, the cost of living would likely have been lower in Jerusalem at the time than in London. As £1 was roughly equal to 1 Turkish pound, this would be 6 to 20 Turkish pounds, or 600 to 2,000 piasters per manuscript. By comparison, the price of each manuscript ranges between the monthly salary of an ordinary government official in Palestine and the monthly salary of the mayor of Jerusalem in the early 20th century (Büssow 2011, 564). Given that Shapira sold some 300 manuscripts between 1877 and 1884, these sales could easily have grossed around 3,000 Turkish pounds (300,000 piasters)—the salary of one of these officials for 12 years, or of the governor of the district of Jerusalem for 2 years (Büssow 2011, 564).

We also have price information on some of Shapira's antiquities sales. The stone inscriptions do not seem to have been especially profitable. Shapira was able to sell Horatio Bland the porphyry stone with two-sided inscription for £5 but failed to sell the Duke of Sutherland the 'Scorpion Stone' for £200. The Moabitica were a different matter. It appears that the German government paid 18,000 thalers, equivalent to £2,700, that is, 2,700 Turkish pounds (270,000 piasters), equivalent to over £270,000 today.<sup>7</sup> This is comparable to the amount he would have made from his manuscript sales—again, an incredible amount of money for Jerusalem in the 1870s.<sup>8</sup>

While we lack specifics, the Moabitica must have been inexpensive to make; generally speaking, they were simply clay pots and figurines. It can be assumed that Shapira charged many times more than what it cost for him to acquire or make the Moabitica. Socin demonstrated how this worked for engraved gems and seals: a modern example could be purchased in Damascus in the 1870s for around 3 to 7½ piasters, or 60 centimes to 1½ francs. But an antiquities dealer in Jerusalem could offer a fake seal of King David to Clermont-Ganneau for 10 francs—marked up perhaps 10 or even 20 times (Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 18). There are indications that the Moabite pottery may have been marked up even more. Georg Gatt (1885, 72) reported that drinking and water jugs in early 1880s Gaza would cost between 2 to 3 and 10 to 12 pfennigs—that is, less than a piaster—whereas the German government paid more than 100 piasters per Moabite pot.

Shapira's overall costs for his antiquities and manuscripts—not just materials but labour, travel to different parts of the Ottoman empire, bribes for Ottoman officials for acquiring and smuggling items, etc.—are unknown, and may have been substantial.

But with the money that the German government paid for the Moabite pottery, as well as libraries in Berlin and England for his manuscripts, Shapira was able to afford a mansion outside the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Whatever his expenses, targeting European institutions clearly paid off.

Why, then, did Shapira not concentrate exclusively on antiquities? Antiquities for Shapira were a means to get rich, perhaps; but since his stock consisted mainly of forgeries, it was ultimately a risky one. The fact that the most famous seller of antiquities in his day did not make this his everyday source of income may reveal something important about the nature of the trade in the 19th century. Whether due to the nature of the supply of antiquities or the tastes of buyers, the antiquities trade was not a reliable source of income at the time. Only later, towards the very end of the Ottoman period, does this appear to have changed in the city.<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

1. The name of the street in Arabic is *Haret en-Nasara*, ‘the street/neighborhood/quarter of the Christians,’ rendered in the Late Ottoman period as *Christian Street* (less often *Street of the Christians*) in English, *Rue des Chrétiens* in French, and *Christenstrasse* or *Christengasse* in German. Traditionally, the ‘neighbourhood of the Christians’ was a small neighbourhood in the immediate vicinity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, corresponding generally to the street of this name; it was only one of many such neighbourhoods in what is now called the Christian Quarter. The familiar system of dividing the city into four larger quarters was imposed by Europeans in the 19th century and crystallised during the British Mandate (Arnon 1992), and the name *Haret en-Nasara* was expanded to cover the entire Quarter; the street’s current English name, ‘Christian Quarter Road’, reflects that change.
2. Trying to understand how many Moabitica existed, or even how many Shapira sold to the German government, is as difficult as unentangling the different stone inscriptions Shapira offered for sale. It is commonly stated that the Germans purchased 1,700 items of ‘Moabite pottery’ (Sprenger 1876, 247; Eisenberg 2001, 24; Sabo 2014). This would seem to be a round number that reflects the 1,814 stated by the Rev. J. Niel as reported by the PEF editor in 1874 (PEF 1874, 206–07). Niel describes three collections: the first with 911 items, the second with 493, and the third with 410. The 911 items correspond to the first sale made to the German government around April 1873 (Conder 1873b, 88), but it is not clear if Niel’s second and third collection were all sold to Germany. Kautzsch and Socin (1876, v, 180) identify an approximate number of 1,700, but detail this as consisting of two collections of 911 and over 700 items; they note, however, that the collection has many unnumbered items, and suggest that Niel’s numbers reflect the total sold to Berlin. Kautzsch and Socin note that the numbering system on their sources (lithographs of the Moabitica at Halle?) ends at 705b; this numbering system must be Shapira’s, as Koch (1876, 3) notes that the new material—what he calls the ‘third Jerusalem collection’—that he studied in Shapira’s shop was numbered by Shapira starting at 709. This would suggest that Shapira’s numbering system did not include the first collection of 911 items. The only other possibility is that Shapira’s 1–705b are actually the first collection of 911 items, and Shapira only sold that many to Germany and not 1,800. While European sources provide clear statements that Shapira sold the first collection of 911 items around April 1873 (e.g., Conder 1873b, 88), they do not include statements referring to the sale of subsequent material. Using German archival sources, Crüsemann (2000, 57) stated that the German government did buy two batches of Moabitica: a group of only 500, whose purchase was approved by Wilhelm I in January 1873, and a larger group (exact number unspecified by Crüsemann) in October 1873. (Perhaps there was an interval of some months between the approval of the sale



and its actual execution, during which Shapira included additional items in the transaction.) In any case, all of the principals, including Kautzsch and Socin who studied lithographs of the material at Halle, believed that around 1,700 or 1,800 items had been sold to Berlin.

3. The association of these artefacts with Shapira cannot be confirmed (contra Gibson 2003, 42–43); it is attested to date only in the present-day PEF photograph inventory, with no references given, so that the basis of this identification is now unclear (as confirmed by Felicity Cobbing, pers. comm., June 2021). Shapira, as the best-known antiquities dealer in the 19th century (and really the only one broadly known), and a notorious seller of forgeries in particular, is often assumed by scholars to be behind any forgery that can plausibly be traced to the 19th century (see Press 2021). This may be the case with the identification of these two photos.
4. The British Library website has 220 digitised manuscripts said to have been acquired from Shapira; these include the manuscripts purchased in October 1883 and January 1884 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Default.aspx>> [accessed 9 June 2021].
5. On Ottoman currency and the equivalence of the Turkish pound and British pound sterling, see Büssov (2011, 563). Many sources in this period suggest an exchange rate of 25 francs to the British pound, and therefore to the Ottoman pound (meaning 1 franc = 4 piasters); contemporary French accounts of Shapira's Deuteronomy equate the supposed £1 million asking price with 25 million francs (e.g., 'Le prétendu manuscrit original de la Bible' 1883; Stefano 1883). Two years later, Clermont-Ganneau suggested that the Turkish pound was worth about 23 francs (1885, 41). Meanwhile, Socin (in Kautzsch and Socin 1876, 18) suggested a rate of 1 franc = 5 piasters, meaning about 20 francs to the pound; while Socin was Swiss, the question of whether he meant Swiss or French francs is moot as the two were nearly identical in value. On these and other exchange rates, see Denzel (2010), who also demonstrates that (at least nominal) exchange rates were very stable throughout the second half of the 19th century. For the exchange rate of pfennigs and piasters see Anderlind (1888, 76).
6. In 1877, Shapira sold 44 Yeménite manuscripts to the Royal Library in Berlin for 10,848 marks (about £540; Paunel 1965, 374). On 22 January 1880, the Bodleian Library paid Shapira £300 for manuscripts, but how many is unknown (Madan 1905, 583). Madan identifies 10 to 12 manuscripts that might have been part of this purchase, but the list is not necessarily exhaustive. The Bodleian purchased an additional five manuscripts on 18 July 1881, with prices given for each: £7, £8, £10, £12, and £18 (Madan 1905, 589). According to the *Athenaeum*, in 1881 the British Museum purchased some number of manuscripts for over £800 ('Literary Gossip' 1881, 146); the British Library website has 39 digitised manuscripts that were purchased from Shapira that year. The British Museum paid £25 for the 4 manuscripts it acquired on 15 October 1883 (Sabo 2018, 141).
7. Crüsemann (2000, 57), using German archival sources, reports that the German government paid 8,000 thalers for the first collection of 500 items in early 1873, and 10,000 thalers for the larger second collection in October 1873. As discussed above, however, Crüsemann does not give the number of items in the second collection, and the number of items in the first collection (and relative sizes of the two collections) differs from published sources.

Contemporary sources are in general agreement with the total of 18,000 thalers (£2,700): £2,500 (Moore 1874); £2,700, or 18,000 thalers ('Scientific & Useful' 1876); 18,000 thalers ('Chronique des musées et bibliothèques' 1883, 416); 70,000 francs (about £2,800; Charles 1903, 1, quoting Clermont-Ganneau); £3,000 ('The Shapira Manuscript' 1883); 75,000 francs (c. £3,000; 'Une fabrique d'antiquités à Jérusalem' 1875, 2); 80,000 francs (c. £3,200; 'Les fragments originaux de la Bible' 1883); £3,300, or 22,000 thalers (Sprenger 1876, 247; 'The Moabite Question' 1876, 7). Conder (1873b, 88) reported that the first collection of 911 items had been purchased for over £1,000. All of these reports are in agreement, then, that Germany paid between £1 and £2 per item of Moabita. Similarly, Koch (1876, 21) noted that two German residents of Jerusalem, Hermann

- Weser and Wilhelm Duisberg, bought 3 pieces of ‘Moabite pottery’ from Shapira for 25 francs (about £1) each.
8. Many writers, including myself, have uncritically repeated the claim that Shapira asked £1 million for the Deuteronomy manuscript (Silberman 1982, 131–46; Eisenberg 2001, 25; Heide 2012, 193; Press 2014; Tigay 2016, 7, 11, 74), equivalent to more than £100 million today. This amount seems unlikely, especially given the amount for which he sold the Moabite pottery. The closest comparison might be the Mesha Stele, which Clermont-Ganneau sold to the Louvre in 1873 for 25,000 francs (£1,000); he had offered it to the British Museum for 50,000 francs (£2,000), but they were unwilling to pay more than £600 for it (Gran-Aymerich 2004, 208). It appears that the figure of £1 million originates in unsubstantiated newspaper articles. The earliest source I have seen is a *London Times* editorial from August 3, 1883 (‘London, Friday, August 3, 1883’). Neither it nor any subsequent source includes a direct quote from Shapira, or demonstrates a reliance on original reporting, calling the matter further into question. In fact, a number of provincial newspapers throughout Great Britain carried an announcement that the Press Association (the national news agency) had been ‘authoritatively informed’ that there was no basis for the claim, insisting that money would not be discussed until the authentication was complete (e.g., ‘The Alleged Discovery of Ancient MS.S.’ 1883; ‘Biblical Manuscripts’ 1883; ‘The Manuscripts of Deuteronomy’ 1883; ‘The Supposed Ancient Manuscript of Deuteronomy’ 1883). I have yet to find the announcement in the *Times* or other major London dailies, but only in the *Acton, Chiswick, & Turnham Green Gazette, Bedford Park & District Advertiser* (‘The Supposed Discovery of the MS. of Deuteronomy’ 1883) and the weekly *Literary World* (‘Literary Table Talk’ 1883, 110), and the report seems to have been quickly forgotten.
  9. If the chronological indications given by Shapira’s daughter Myriam Harry in *The Little Daughter of Jerusalem* are correct—specifically, that this occurred after a trip to London and Berlin—then the move to the mansion would probably have happened around 1877 (Harry 1919, 167, 175; contra Tigay 2016, 107, who suggests it happened around 1873). Harry’s book, however, is a fictionalised biography, written some 30–40 years after the events it describes, which took place when she was a child; as such, its value as a historical source is limited, but I mention it here because I am not aware of any other source that describes when Shapira moved into this house.
  10. This issue is the subject of research I am currently preparing.

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