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Perhaps I am not like the other Jews you have studied. I'm probably not anyone's favorite Jewish historical figure. I was born on July 22, 1626 and I was a Rabbi, like Rabbi Bloom. But unlike Rabbi Bloom, I ended up in a bit of hot water. I was only 18 years old when I became a Rabbi. I had come from Greece and my father was a poultry farmer and got to be really wealthy. I spent my youth studying Talmud in a yeshiva and I was fascinated by Jewish mysticism. I believed that I could get closer to God with mysticism and so I studied it really hard. The Jewish mysticism that I studied is called Kabbalah and you can still study it today when you are much older.

At the time that I lived, it was very popular to pray for and hope for the Messiah, a special person who would come to earth and help the Jews return to the land of Israel and live in peace. There was a group of Christians at this time who believed that this would happen in the year 1666 and there were groups of Jews who believed it would happen in 1648. As we got closer to 1648, more and more people were getting excited about the coming of the Messiah. I was 22 years old in 1648 and in Smyrna (a Greek city), I revealed to some people who shared my enthusiasms for mysticism that I was the Messiah and that I was here to overthrow the governments of all natures and restore the kingdom of Israel. One of the ways that I disclosed this was to say aloud the sacred name of God which no one except for the high priests on Yom Kippur was allowed to do.

My followers were very devoted to me and grew in number. This made the established rabbis very unhappy and nervous, and I was eventually put under a writ of *cherem*, where it was declared that I was no longer a Jew. In 1651, the government of Smyrna forced me to leave along with all of my followers. I was able to get other influential Rabbis to declare that I was the true Messiah and I moved to Salonica, another place in Greece. Here I boldly declared to everyone that I was the Messiah and put on special events to prove it to everyone. But the rabbis of Salonica got angry and forced me to leave. I lived for awhile in Cairo which is in Egypt, but moved eventually to Jerusalem as the year 1666 approached. I had a nice voice and I sang psalms and many people loved me. There was a girl who some said was destined to marry the Messiah who would soon appear, and so I married her. This gained me even more followers. Then I met Nathan of Gaza who proclaimed himself to be Elijah. The stories say that when the Messiah comes, that first Elijah will announce his coming and in 1665, Nathan of Gaza announced that the Messiah would come the following year. I returned to Smyrna where I was treated like a hero. I kicked out the old rabbis who had opposed me and I became famous all over – Italy, Scotland, Germany, the Netherlands and France.

In the beginning of 1666 I returned to Istanbul but when I got off of the ship, I was arrested and thrown into prison. This made people spread rumors of my miraculous deeds and I become even more famous. But things got really bad for me. I was finally released from prison and was taken to an Arab country where I was advised to convert to Islam because things were so dangerous for me – I had made many people angry and upset by claiming to be the Messiah. So I converted to Islam, threw away my Jewish clothing and put a Turkish turban on my head. My wife also converted and I took another wife so I could have a harem like the other Arabs. My Jewish followers were devastated. Some stayed loyal to me but most said terrible things about me. Things didn't go well for me, and eventually I died in 1676, all alone.