This article is not concerned with Jews in the Byzantine Empire in general or their standing in Byzantine society. Jewish sources, such as the texts of the Cairo Genizah, provide better and more reliable information on these topics. Indeed, I am only concerned with the portrayal of Jews in Byzantine literature, a picture which has been characterized by clichés over the centuries. It is well known that research on Byzantine history is largely done without documentary evidence, since, with rare exceptions, such as Mount Athos, Patmos, or southern Italy, Byzantine archives have not survived. As a result and in contrast with Medievalists working on the history of Western Europe, Byzantinists are far more dependent on the analysis of texts which are literary in the broadest sense of the word. Thus in my Proustian search I should like to see if it is possible to find out more, beyond the clichés, about the life of Byzantine Jews and if so, in which texts and contexts. I would therefore ask you to accompany me on a somewhat winding path through the literary genres and religious topoi of Byzantium. Normative sources, including the Codices of civil and canon law, are deliberately excluded because they form a separate subject, which has already been very competently and thoroughly explored by scholars such as Amnon Linder and Spyros Troianos. Finally, I should like to add that this article will focus primarily on the period between the end of the sixth and beginning of the thirteenth century, since the Fourth Crusade and its consequences changed the demographic and social structures of Byzantine society to such an extent that 1204 seems to me a reasonable stopping point.

In his Apologie pour l’histoire, Marc Bloch distinguishes between témoignages volontaires and involontaires (voluntary and involuntary evidence). The former are those in which an author has consciously

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portrayed an historical event or situation, and in so doing has interpreted it. The latter on the other hand are the more or less coincidental by-products of another story, facts that are only mentioned in passing. The latter are rarer than the former but certainly more historically reliable and credible. An example that comes to mind is the recently published recipe for the preparation of ink, which is preserved in a Greek manuscript (Ambros. C 222 inf.) generally dated to the eighties of the twelfth century. The unknown author points out that oak apples, which were amongst the most important ingredients, did not have to be imported from Alexandria or any distant land, but grew in the Ῥωμανία, that is on Byzantine territory, and were acquired by the Jews, from whom one could buy them. Thus a Byzantine quack, who is trying to explain how to make ink, provides us with a good example of Jewish participation in retail trade. We know that Jews were involved in silk and foreign trade from other sources: in his Book of the Eparch (spring 912), for example, Leo VI forbade the silk traders of Constantinople from selling their products to Jews or other merchants for resale outside the city. In a similar fashion, the emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII in their privilege for Venice of 992 forbade Venetian traders from transporting products belonging to Jewish, Amalfitan, or Apulian traders in their ships, which were subject to lower Byzantine custom duties.

Looking at the indices of editions of Byzantine texts of any type, one comes across the words Ἰουδαῖοι and Ἑβραῖοι relatively often. The reason is obvious, since the Bible was the most widely read and quoted corpus of literary examples for Byzantine authors, whether secular or religious. The Old Testament in particular was held in far greater esteem in Byzantium than in the West. The Byzantine calendar was not based on the incarnation but on the creation of the world, which, after initial differences in calculation, was eventually fixed in

3 J. Koder, ed., *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen* (Vienna, 1991), [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 33]: 100, § 6.16.