

IKKARÉ ha-DAI

o Kateshizmo



Por Menester de las Eskolas Yisraelitas  
en la Turkiya



del Djuez Yehezkel Gabbay

Kostantinopoli 5639  
(1879)

עיקרי הדת

או קאטשזיזמו



פור מיניסטרי די לאס איסקולאס ישראליות  
אין לה טורקיא



דיל צוזאי יחזקאל גבאי

קוסטאנטינופולי 5639

### *El Buen Dotrino*

Once children have learned to read, what will they read? In those days, there were no modern reading materials available, and the old stuff was just too uninspiring, a paramount issue Judge Gabbay addresses at the very outset:

Kon la ayuda del Dyo Alto enpesimos en trezladasyon de livros. I por prima vez izimos el trezlado del libro *Risale-i Ehlak* ke es echo en Turkuesko i todas sus avlas non son ke dotrino. *Afillu* para grandes, non kere dicho a los chikos ke manka mucho a los ijos de Yisrael i estan muhtaç a meldar livros ajenos por anbezar algo de dotrino.

With God's help, we have started to translate books. And for the first time, we have translated the book *Risalei Ehlak*, written in Turkish, whose words are pure admonishment. Even grown ups, how much more so children, all Jewish kids need foreign books to learn some admonishment.

That is when Judge Gabbay will find himself in the same predicament as Mehmet Sadık Rifat Pasha who had just written the *Risâle-i Ahlâk* to fill an identical gap in the curriculum of the Public Schools. Judge Gabbay, totally on his own, will start a brand new translation program of useful secular books, and the *Risâle* will be the first in that series. He will call it by the traditional name of *El Buen Dotrino* (לְקַח טוֹב). But as this *Buen Dotrino* had a thoroughly secular frame of reference, he will nominally judaize the text on its very last page by adding a wish for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. His main appeal though will be for more [positive] sciences and for more "proofs".

....el *terbie* del meoyo es la sensya. La sensya i el kumplimyento es la preva. En tanto solo kon meoyo non se *bitirea* el echo. Tenemos de menester i las sensyas kon sus provas. Por ke el meoyo ke non tyene sensyas ni provas semeja al ken kamina en la eskuridaç sin dinguna luz en su mano.<sup>15</sup>

....the mind's education takes place with science. Science and its achievement prove that. Being merely satisfied with the mind is not enough. We need the sciences with their proofs, as a mind devoid of the sciences and proofs resembles one who is tottering in darkness, with no light in his hands.

Science in any form holds much hope. The science teacher is on a par with one's parents!

....i mas de todo el ovligo es de enbezar sensya.<sup>16</sup>

....bushkar de enbezar todo modo de sensya ke te vyene de la mano.<sup>17</sup>

....i mas i mas el maestro de sensya ke a el le merese el onor dos tantos mas ke a padre i madre. Porque el maestro de sensya es el ke aze kumplido al *ben adam*.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *El Buen Dotrino*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

...the duty to study science supersedes everything.  
 ...try to learn as much of any science as you can.  
 ...foremost comes your science teacher who deserves twice the respect due to your parents, as he is the one who makes you an accomplished person.

Science is extremely valuable, as it teaches us those things that will make us happy. But a "little" anatomy is also a must to understand diseases and the workings of our body.

...i despues veras la dulsor de la vida ke pasas!<sup>19</sup>  
 ...las kozas ke kavzan hazinuras son muy diferentes ke para saverlas kale meldar un poko de anatomia.<sup>20</sup>

...then watch and see how happy you will be!  
 ...diseases are caused by different things. To know them you must study "a little" anatomy!

I do not wish to put words into the mouth of Judge Gabbay, but his introductory paragraph on page 3 deserves close scrutiny. He writes:

Por esto izimos esta ovra por una ayuda a los sinyores pagres de famiya a ke despues ke meldan el primo libro alfabeça enventado nuestro, ke les ambezen i este sigundo. Sea ijos, sea ijas, syendo este echo non tyene de menester enbezar *merubba*, ni letras, ni puntos otro ke derecha mente pueden meldar i entender loke kitan de la boka

That is why we have written this book as a way of helping fathers with families, so that after they have read the first syllabary authored by us, they can continue teaching them from this Second Book. Whether boys or girls, there is no need to teach them the square *merubba* letters, nor the vowel-points. They can immediately read and understand whatever comes out of their mouth.

*There is no need to teach them the square merubba letters!* What he seems to be telling us, in no unequivocal terms, is that the square letters with their cumbersome vowel-points, *i.e.* traditional Hebrew education alone, is leading nowhere! For a shortcut toward general education and enlightenment, the *Rashi* letters of Ladino are amply sufficient. As Ladino is spelled phonetically, the mastery of the alphabet in Book One will lead *ipso facto* to the ability of reading Book Two, the *Risâle*, and then Books Three, Four etc. still to appear in his new series. His willingness to postpone the acquisition of Hebrew reading skills, if not to sacrifice them altogether, for the more immediately attainable goal of proficiency in Ladino reading as a shortcut toward general education, that is what I find incredibly daring. But Judge Gabbay was animated by a sense of true mission. His convictions and incentives were such that nothing could stand in his way to concretize them.

And where would this grandiose educational program ultimately lead? Judge Gabbay discloses his clear intentions, as he says:

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

...pasando poko tyempo mos okupamos en trezladasyones de sensyas chikas por la ora. I despues mas ondas asta el *karar* ke mos engrasyo el Dyo i non seremos en dover de enbezar otra lingua por konoser alguna sensya.

...after a while, we shall be busy translating books about the "minor" sciences for the time being. Then the "deeper" sciences, as far as God's mercy will permit us, so that we shall not have to learn another language to familiarize ourselves with science.<sup>21</sup>

Echoing Rifat Pasha's expression of benevolent wishes for the success of the Sultan's efforts to improve and promote education at all levels, Judge Gabbay mentions Abdülmeçid by name in a very moving exhortation:<sup>22</sup>

El Dyo Alto i Poderozo alarge anyos de vida a nuestro Pogestador, nuestro Rey, muestra Korona, Rey de las Tyerras i Sinyor de las Mares, Rey, ijo de Rey, ijo de otro Rey, Sultan Abdul Medjid, su onra i pogestania sea de un kavo de mundo asta el otro, amen. Ke tanto gaste izo i esta azyendo por kitar la sensya i el kumplimyento al mundo. I todas las nasyones estan indo en esta idea, i mozotros tambyen penamos a adelantarnos un poko en el saver. I kale ser amigo al Rey i a la sivdad i bindizirlo kon buen korason.

May the Supreme and Powerful God grant long life to our Sovereign, our King, our Crown, King of the Continents and Lord of the Seas, King, descendant of Kings, Sultan Abdul Medjid, and may his honor and might extend to the ends of the world, Amen. He has spent vast sums and is doing so much to bring science and success to the world. As all the nations [the various *millet*s] are following his ideas, we, too, must try to improve our education. It is necessary to be the King's and the country's friend, and wholeheartedly to wish him well.

Judge Gabbay's general perception is that the other nations (the *millet*s) in the Ottoman Empire are better off, because they are ahead of the Jews in matters of education. He will express the same sentiment in the introduction to his *Ikkare ha-Dat*:<sup>23</sup>

I es por esta razon ke todas las nasyones izyeron un kateshizmo muy kurto i muy provechozo para sus ley..... Yo tambyen sovre esta idea, ize este livriko.

That is why all the nations [the *millet*s] have put out a very brief and useful catechism about their religion..... I, too, have prepared this small book with the same idea in mind.

\* \* \* \*

My initial interest in, and present involvement with Yehezkel Gabbay, the grandson, goes back to 1972. One day, as I was going through some books at the Sephardic Beth Shalom Synagogue in Cincinnati, quite coincidentally I came across the Ladino translation of the Ottoman *Ceza Kanun Namesi* published in 1860. I was so fascinated by the novelty of an Ottoman Penal Code translated into Ladino that I decided to proceed with a preliminary study

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. Here Judge Gabbay seems to be fighting the local foreign schools whose complete foreign language curriculum was dramatically modifying the traditional values of their graduates, be they Muslim, Jewish or even Christian.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ikkare ha-Dat*, p. 6.

of this translation. At that time, I had no access to the original Ottoman text to check for accuracy. Also not being versed in Law, I decided simply to study the peculiar language of this translation which was loaded with words borrowed from Turkish. A year later, I published a mimeographed edition of this Ladino text, typed in square Hebrew characters with a transliteration of the text into Latin characters, and a Ladino-English vocabulary of all Turkish and Hebrew words found in this translation.

Even though on the title-page of this Ladino book (*see* p. 16) there is no indication about its translator, the colophon (*see* p. 17) clearly mentions Yehezkel Gabbay! Besso does mention the Ladino translation of the *Kanun Name* under entry #273, but fails to indicate who the translator was, probably because he neglected to check the book from cover to cover. Had he done so, he could not have missed the statement at the end of the book, on p.55:

Trezladado i estanpago kon la ayuda del Dyo i de mis prensipales, yo el chiko de los chikos i menor de los menores Yehezkel GABBAY.

Translated and printed with the help of God and of my superiors, I, the very humble Yehezkel GABBAY.

And the colophon continues:

Kompuesto por mano de el *mesadder* de la estanpa del Sinyor Kâyul en Bey Oglu Hayyim Nissim PIPERNO.

Typeset by Hayyim Nissim PIPERNO, the *mesadder* of Mr. Kayul's press in Beyoğlu,

a clear indication that Hayyim Nissim Piperno was the *mesadder*, the typesetter of this work.

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Fifteen years later, as I was doing some research at the Library of Congress, again quite coincidentally I observed that entry #207 of the same Besso catalogue listed a *Risalei Ajlak*. By then I was quite familiar with Besso's unusual transliteration practice for Hebrew of using *j* for Hebrew ן or Ottoman چ , and that therefore the real Turkish title of the book must have been *Risâle-i Ahlâk*. And again, Besso failed to identify properly the author of this translation! His entry #207 states:

*Risalei Ajlak*, Livro segundo. Trezladasion [por] Jaim Nisim Piperno del livro turko *Risalei Ajlak*.

But nowhere does the title page of the Library of Congress copy I personally examined say that the translation was made [por] by Haim Nisim Piperno who again acted as the *mesadder*, the typesetter, just as he had been the *mesadder*, the typesetter of the *Kanun Name*.



# KANUN NAME

De PENAS



Letras de Muestro Sinyor El Rey

Sigun lo Eskrito se Deve de Afirmar



5620

(1860)

Title-page of the *Kanun Name*



# קאנאן נאמען

די פינאם



ליטראס די מואיסעסין סיניוך איל ריי ירה

סיגון לו איסקריטן סי דיבי די אפירמאר



5620

por penalita de *groshes* de kinze *beshlikes* asta vente.  
 264. Ken rovina lugar ke fue abandonado por provecho del pueblo como plasa i *meydan* i lugares de paseos. I ken rova de ditos lugares dela anchura o dela largura, despues ke le azen adovar lo ke *bozdeo*, i boltar a-tras lo ke rovo, se apreza de tres dias asta una semana, i paga de kinze *beshlikes* asta vente por penalita de *groshes*.

ASTA AKI SE KUMPLEN LOS 264 ARTIKOLOS DELA KANUN NAME

Treziadago i estanpago kon la ayuda del Dyo i de mis presipales, yo chiko de los chikos i menor de los menores.

YEHEZKEL  
 GABBAY

Kompuesto por mano de le *mesadder* de la estampa del sinyor Kayul en Bey Oglu

HAYYIM NISSIM  
 PIPERNO

Colophon of the Kanun Name

פוד פּינאַליטע די גרוש'ס די קיינזי ציטליקס אַסטה צינען.  
 264 קיין רוֹבִינע לוגאד קיי פֿוּאָי אַבאַנדאָנאַד פּוד פּרוֹבִינֶג די פּאַסאַזשן קומו פּלאַסע אַי מיידן אַי לוגאַרדיס די פּאַסאַזשן. אַי קיין רוֹבִינע די דיטוס לוגאַרדיס דעלע אַנגורע אַו דעלע לאַנגורע דיספּאַזאַס קיי לי אַיזן אַרוֹבִינע לֹו קיי צוזאַמאַן אַי צולעט אַ-טראַס לֹו קיי רוֹבִינע אַי אַפּרעזע די טרעיס דייאַס אַסטה אַונע סאַמאַנע אַי פּאַנע די קיינזי ציטליקס אַסטה צינען פּוד פּינאַליטע די גרוש'ס .

אסטה אַקי סיי קומפּלין לֹוס 264 אַרטיקולֹוס דעלע קאַנון נאַמי

טריזיאַדאַגֹו אַי אַיסטאַנפּאַלֹו קון לה אַיינִדעֹה דעל דייִן אַי די היס פּרעזיפּיאַליס. ייִן גייקֹו די לֹוס צייקֹוס אַי מינֹור די לֹוס מיינֹורדיס .

יְהֵזְקֵל  
 גַבַּי

קומפּאָזאַטֹור פּוד מאַטֹו די אַיל מַקְדֵר די לה אַיסטאַנפּאַ פּוד די קיינזיִיר קאַיִול אַזן צייִן אַונגֹו

חַיִּים נִיסִים פִּיפֵרְנוֹ  
 הַיִּין

It appears that Besso just picked the name Hayyim Nissim Piperno at the bottom of the title-page, where Piperno is again clearly identified as the *mesadder*, the typesetter, and made him the author by simply inserting his name into the first statement, where the name of Yehezkel Gabbay appears as the owner of the *estanparia*, the printing press. Besso figured that since Yehezkel Gabbay was mentioned as only the owner of the *estanparia*, Nissim Piperno, the only other name on the title-page must have been that of the missing author of the translation, even though the statement at the bottom of the title-page clearly indicates that Piperno was the *mesadder*, the typesetter, *not* the author! Had Besso only turned to page 2, and read the אך אין paragraph, he would have discovered that the author of this translation, too, was none else than Yehezkel Gabbay whose name appears there clearly spelled out in square Hebrew letters!

## Ladino, the Language



For half a millennium, our Ladino has withstood the test of survival. In retrospect, it is tempting and quite common to forget that during such a protracted period, two formidable factors were at work in the life of this language.

First, this was half a millennium spent in isolation from outside Hispanic influences, and of creeping de-hispanization. Trying to turn the clock back by insisting that the umbilical cord which once tied us to Spain is still functional is an ominous fantasy. To diffuse such unreality, there should be a constant warning sign placed before the eyes of those who overnight would love to re-hispanize Ladino.

Some of our own brethren who came to this country, and became professors of Spanish, slowly succumbed to this temptation. The name of Maír José Benardete מ'ב stands out as a prime example of this quest for a new cultural grounding, while trying to hang on to vestiges of the old. Having reached the New World at the tender age of fifteen, Benardete's discovery of Spanish culture understandably became for him an act of regeneration.

In an article he wrote in 1931,<sup>24</sup> he says:

El gudeo-español debe abandonar todo mezclamiento, sea con el francés, italiano, inglés, turco o árabe si quiere ser un lenguaje dinio de gente instruida.

<sup>24</sup> M. J. Benardete, "Nuestro lenguaze", in *El Ermandado*, (Organ of the Sephardic Brotherhood of America, Inc.) New York, September 1931, pp. 13-16, quoted in Izaak A. Langnas and Barton Shohold, *Studies in Honor of M. J. Benardete*, Las Americas Publishing Company, New York 1965, p. 478.



HISPANISMO  
DE LOS  
SEFARDIES LEVANTINOS

Para el profesor y habiente de la  
de la tradición "stambuli" que  
abarcó durante siglos los países y  
regiones del Imperio Otomano  
hacia nuestros antepasados desterrados  
de Sforad establecieron por comunidades  
en que la llama del genio español  
eternizó la ley y crutacion al pueblo  
de habla española. Sin menoscabar  
la posibilidad de cuenta de la  
necesidad de educar a los propios  
hijos de Torá y traslados  
al Ladino



¡Salud y Salud!  
Maír José B

Fifty years later, on the autographed copy of his book he sent to me, Benardete's key phrase was still *desterrados de Sefarad*, uprooted from Sefarad. And I thought that we were more from the East than from the West, and that we had returned to the East.

Second, this was also half a millennium of assiduously conscious efforts aimed at maximizing, mainly for *halakhic* and *midrashic* purposes, the interchangeability between Hebrew/Aramaic and Ladino, within the all-encompassing background of Ottoman Turkish lore and mores. The resulting extreme literalness of Ladino translations has been immediately equated with some kind of *pedagogical* concern to teach Hebrew, similar to our interlinear translations of Greek and Latin classics. Jesús Cantera, in his preface to Joseph Nehama's *Dictionnaire*,<sup>25</sup> exudes self-assurance, as he writes:

La langue reproduite est, bien sûr, le judéo-espagnol et non pas le ladino, langage archaïque et artificiel dont on s'est servi pour mettre à la portée du commun des Juifs parlant espagnol, la Bible, les prières et toutes les compositions plus ou moins rituelles. Le ladino donne la version de ces textes avec le mot à mot juxtaposé à l'hébreu sans tenir compte de la syntaxe, de l'allure de la phrase, ni de son interprétation. Les premières ébauches se succèdent, s'accumulent au cours des âges, sans s'harmoniser et forment un ensemble disparate, hétérogène, présentant souvent des mots incompréhensibles, estropiés peut-être par la transmission orale.

Is the thinking behind *toutes les compositions plus ou moins rituelles* directed at the Bible and a few prayer books with vernacular texts in them, or does the opaque *plus ou moins* extend to the vast domain of Talmudic, Midrashic and Zoharic literature? I doubt the latter is the case. And yet, for five hundred years, these *hahamim* did not sit still with their Hebrew interlinear primers. They discussed Law, they preached sermons, they were asked questions and wrote *responsa*.

As to the *mots incompréhensibles et estropiés*, we, the natives have accepted them with love and understanding. We also know that not every Frenchman is comfortable with Ronsard from cover to cover, nor does every English-speaking person have an easy time with Chaucer. Not being familiar with the Spanish scene, I should take Cantera's audacious statement to imply that in Spain Cervantes is indeed devoured by the common folk.

It is amazing to observe how this *pedagogical* explanation continues to make perfect sense to scholars.<sup>26</sup> They simply read into Ladino their own personal experience with Greek

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Nehama, *Dictionnaire du Judéo-Espagnol*, C. S. I. C., Madrid 1977, p. VIII.

<sup>26</sup> For the latest summary of these views, see Paloma Díaz-Mas, *Los Sefardíes*, Riopiedras Ediciones, Barcelona 1986, pp. 100-112. On p. 101, the author writes:

Se trata, pues, de una lengua artificial que en un principio se creó con finalidad pedagógica: el hebreo había dejado de hablarse ya en la Edad Media y la mayoría de los fieles eran incapaces de captar el sentido de los textos religiosos, por lo que se recurrió a ponerlos en palabras castellanas - respetando en todo la sintaxis hebraica - para que el texto así *ladinado* sirviese de guión a estudiantes, fieles y cantores sinagogales; a raíz de este uso, el ladino entró también en la liturgia. Pero no fue verdadera lengua de comunicación en la vida cotidiana.

and Latin classical texts. But, Ladino is also called an "artificial language", lacking the characteristics of a "true language" of communication in daily life, implying that the designation could, at best, have only a limited application, and that therefore, it should be placed in a deep freeze!

The reality is that nothing can be further from the truth. The degree of Hebrew familiarity of the Sephardic masses, or the desire to improve on it, by using the so-called interlinear translation approach, has absolutely nothing to do with the extreme literalness of Ladino texts, whose *palabra por palabra*, "word for word" approach was uniquely designed at reaching *la verdad Hebrayca*,<sup>27</sup> the truth behind the Hebrew.

No mystery this *verdad Hebrayca*. A basic familiarity with rabbinic methodology is enough to clarify what was meant by "Hebraic truth". Since every detail in Holy Writ can help buttress a new understanding of the *Halakha* or Jewish Law,<sup>28</sup> or derive a novel idea for a fresh *Midrash* or Exposition, for any ideal Ladino translation to be fully functional, it had to be a carbon copy of the Hebrew, it had to reflect the same interests, and the same concerns as the Hebrew.

A case in point is Isaiah 56:7 *וְשִׂמְחָתִים בְּבֵית הַתְּפִלָּה*, and *I shall gladden them in my house of prayer*. Both the *Ferrara Bible* and *Asa's* text render *בֵּית הַתְּפִלָּה* literally as *casa de mi orasyon/kaza de mi orasyon, the house of my prayer* which reflects the syntax of Hebrew, but is nonsensical in European languages, until the Talmud's discussion of this verse in *Berahoṭ 7a* is brought into the picture. The identical problem of *בֵּית הַתְּפִלָּה*, *the house of my prayer*, received there a totally different solution, as the word *תְּפִלָּה*, *my prayer*, was now utilized as a basis for establishing the premise that even God may be subject to the discipline of prayer! To the twin questions, does God pray, and if so, to whom are his prayers directed, the answers given are that God, indeed, prays to set an example for us humans, and that "He prays" to Himself, in an act of auto-suggestion! Thus, Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Yose:

From where do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, prays? For it is said: ....and I shall make them joyful in the house of my prayer. It is not said *תְּפִלָּתָם*, *their prayer*, but *תְּפִלָּתי*, *my prayer*. Hence, we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, prays.

<sup>27</sup> That is how the *Ferrara Bible* published in 1553 subtiles its Ladino translation of the Bible:  
*En lengua Española traduzida palabra por palabra dela verdad Hebrayca por muy  
excelentes letrados vista y examinada por el officio dela Inquisicion.*

<sup>28</sup> In *Eruvin 21b*, commenting on *קְשָׁתוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ*, *his locks are curled* (*Song of Songs 5:11*), Rav Hisda said that Rav Ukba said, "this comes to teach that from every stroke, there are mounds and mounds of *halakhoṭ* to derive".

And consistent with Talmudic thoroughness, a model text for God's prayer is even proposed. It says:

יהי רצון מלפני שיקבשו רחמי אידבקסי ויגלו רחמי על מרחמי  
ואתנהג עם בני בשרה רחמים ואקנס להם לפנים משורתהדין

*May it be My will that My mercy subdue My anger, and may My mercy prevail over My attribute of justice. That I may deal with My children with the quality of mercy to judge them with leniency!*

Now, had the Ladino rendition of ביתהפלתי been the flat *my house of prayer*, instead of *the house of my prayer*, it would have been grammatically more accurate, but in the process Ladino's ties with this beautifully constructed *Midrash-Exposition* would have been severed! For anyone who is familiar with rabbinic methodology, the extreme literalness of this Ladino translation is not to serve as "a guide to students, believers and synagogue cantors", *in lieu* of a glorified, all-purpose "pony", nor to teach Hebrew, but more important to preserve the theological integrity of this crucial *midrashic* interpretation of Scripture among people already versed in Hebrew, but wishing to use this preeminently effective tool in their discussions and expositions of Judaism conducted in a language other than Hebrew.

In the context of European languages, when a woman's husband dies, she becomes a *widow*. When children lose their parents, they turn into *orphans*. But no single word describes the status of a woman after the death of her child.

In the Semitic world, however, such a concept is available. Following the examples of Arabic تحت, Aramaic ܠܚܝܬ, and Hebrew שכל, Ladino has coined the words *dezijado/dezijada*. Understandably, Hispanists must feel very uncomfortable with the very notion of becoming *dezijado*. To them, this strange compound must sound as awkward as "*dis-childed*" in English would, which is my own English version of *dezijado*. To a Ladino speaker, however, *dezijado* presents no problem whatsoever, as the more Ladino becomes subservient to Hebrew/Aramaic, the fewer the gaps the speaker has to fill, and the more direct his touch with those life giving concepts becomes. Forms like *este el pan de la afriisyon* were never strange to us, simply because we either heard them in sermons and *meldados*, or we used analogous forms in daily conversation 365 days a year, and not on Passover night alone. Personally, I had to reach the fifth decade of my life before I discovered that in *vinyeron a-la-puerta-l-kal*,<sup>29</sup> the underlined part was a classical Hebrew type construct state.

Many a pitfall await future students of Ladino who minimize these characteristics. They may be told that Ladino is nothing but Spanish, somewhat strange and outlandish, but mostly manageable, written in the Rashi script, with occasional Hebrew/Aramaic or Turkish

<sup>29</sup> The standard form is *la puerta del kal*.

words, for which there are plenty of dictionaries around. I would distrust any simplistic advice that says: "Memorize the twenty-two letters, and in no time, will you be fluent, and ready to go...."! Because I know that the other way around, no such comfort in Spanish exists for those of us who have been Ladino speakers all our lives. To me, a good Spanish book is always unnerving to read, stylistically rough, syntactically impossible. Their subjunctive is not our subjunctive, neither is our word order and punctuation similar to their's. Whether we like it or not, a very thick hedge has grown between us all these long years.

It takes more than *pan i agua* to feel at ease in grasping the thrust of a *Me'am Lo'ez* paragraph, or the twists in a *Pele Yoes*<sup>30</sup> page. Nothing should be taken for granted. Everything has to be placed on the table for a *de novo* scrutiny and discussion. The knowledge of Spanish may, more often than not, turn into a drawback. The warning sign should read, "Spanish can be dangerous to your good understanding of Ladino"! Certainly, the *hispanization* of Ladino is the obvious temptation to avoid, before any meaningful study of this language can take place.

The genius of Atatürk, of blessed memory, can best be captured in his innovations in the area of language. Turkish, a non-Semitic language, was literally choking with its four Arabic *z*'s, three *s*'s, three *h*'s, two *t*'s, two *k*'s, etc., each one differently written, but identically pronounced. In the area of vocalization, the burden was even more crushing, with only 3 markers for a minimum of eight vowels. In one of history's supremely masterful moves, he dared cut the Gordian knot. With his decision, overnight, miracles started sprouting everywhere. Henceforth, you could not get previously illiterate old men to lay down their newspapers. In a matter of months, first graders became perfect spellers, fluent in reading and writing. The only question never heard in today's Turkey is: How do you spell this or that? You spell it the way you hear it, and you read it the way you spell it. As simple as that!

I ask myself, what sins are being atoned in this part of the world with the irrationality of spelling the *Philippines* with a *ph* and two *p*'s, while *Filipino* has an *f* and one *p*? Spanish and Italian shed off that scary *ph* a long time ago, and do not seem to be worse off for it. In English, *physics* is overburdened with a *ph* and a *y*. The beauty and poise of the Turkish word *fizik* is there for the naked eye to behold! In this country, who hasn't seen terrified people who, conditioned to expect a *ph* after every Greek *y*, also spell the English word *foam* with a *ph*, as in styrophoam?

Ladino, with its Spanish base, had a similar problem when it used the Hebrew alphabet. Two of its vowels were always open to guesswork, *i* could be *e*, and *u* could be *o*. Its consonants, though, except for *l* and *r*, reflected a simplified phonetic spelling. As Ladino

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<sup>30</sup> A romanized edition of the *Pele Yoes* to be issued by Ladino Books is in preparation.

returned to the Roman alphabet, those who insist that we must fall back into the arms of traditional Spanish spelling, or who burden our simple consonants with endless diacritical marks are not aware of the intolerable nature of their requests. We have a simple system. Why, and for whose sake should we compound it? I know of no scholarly transcription system of Ladino which does not tire and utterly irritate us, the natives.<sup>31</sup> To us, Spanish *j* in *jajam* for *haham* is uncompromisingly unpalatable. We are puzzled as to what linguists must have heard to be so off in their transcription of *bwéno*, *fwégo*, *kwál*, *mwérte* or *pwérta*. To use a common image, as the fox entered into the chicken coop, Joseph Nehama's *Dictionnaire* underwent a mutation. He and all the women he consulted in the preparation of his dictionary would be the first to agree that, through excessive hispanization, his work is indeed disfigured, turning into a *jandrázo*. Differently said, this is probably the first case in human culture when a dictionary makes the natives of its language burst into laughter almost at every line, like a comic book. For our needs, our *b*, *v* and *y* are so crystal clear, that we cannot even begin to fathom the problems Hispanists must have experienced transcribing our poor language.

Neither can we worry about recouping some imaginary flavor by resurrecting their *qu* or their harsh *c*. For centuries, we used the *p* in that slot. Today's *k* is perfectly tailored for us, as we replaced *p* with *ke*. The mere sight of a *q*, with its ubiquitous *u*, mystifies us, as does any far reaching hispanization.<sup>32</sup> This is no time for linguistic dominance.

A typical example of hasty *hispanization*, albeit of no major consequence, is פֿאַסיל *fácil* and דיִפֿיסייל *diffcil*. No big deal at that! And yet, both Judge Gabbay and Rabbi Hayyim Shaki in his *Me'am Lo'ez Shir ha-Shirim* carefully add in parentheses the Turkish (קולאי) *kolay* after פֿאַסיל, and (גִּיּוּץ) *güç* after דיִפֿיסייל, as real help for their readers, as if these two words were incomprehensible without the accompanying Turkish. To me, this obvious "need" to explain the two Ladino words *fácil* and *diffcil* is a clear indication that Spanish *fácil* and *diffcil* had indeed fallen into disuse, and forgotten; that they had been replaced for a while with Turkish *kolay* and *güç*; and that of late, the French --not the Spanish-- *facile* and *difficile* were being (re)introduced. The *stress* in these two "new" Ladino words proves my point. We stress them as in French *fásil* and *difisil*, not as in Spanish *fácil* and *diffcil*. If in speaking, I were to say *fásil*, people would just laugh at me. Ridicule is still the ultimate arbiter on the side of authenticity!

<sup>31</sup> On the grassroots level, the latest specimen of this undercurrent of unwelcome hispanization caused by fear is reflected in Elsie Menasce, *The Sephardi Culinary Tradition*, the Sephardic Cookbook Corporation Publishers, Capetown 1984. In this impeccably prepared book, "Ladino spelling has been standardized as far as possible, according to *Le Dictionnaire Judéo-Espagnol* by Joseph Néhama", p. 11. As I read some recipes, I thought for a while that *Kwazádos*, *Kwádro*s and *Gwévos* were specialities from Zimbabwe, before I realized that they were mildly distorted *mamaloshen* items!

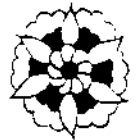
<sup>32</sup> All these minutiae are meant to draw attention to factors responsible for molding peoples' attitudes.

Along the same lines were the efforts by Joseph M. Papo who tried unsuccessfully to convince Marvin Herzog of Columbia University that in Ladino the word אמיריקה, *ameriká*, was indeed stressed on the last syllable (again probable French influence). Flying on the face of the evidence provided by speakers, Herzog's unrealistic verdict was:

this word is to be read *américa*.<sup>33</sup>

But, Herzog was wrong! In Ladino, *Ameriká* is not considered a Spanish word, and it continues to be stressed on the ultima, as people keep saying *esta en la Ameriká*, he is in America. To a finely tuned Ladino ear, *esta en la América* sounds artificial, and even somewhat pompous, not to talk about our own singsong modes in speech, which probably reflect Talmudic syntactical patterns, totally unknown in Spanish!

### Abraham b. Isaac Asa



יודיית and ארמית  
the Dilemma of *Aramaic* and *Yudayco*

That Rabbi Abraham b. Isaac Asa was the author of the Ladino translation of the Constantinople Bible, published in 1739-1744, is a well-known fact. Perhaps the time has come now for Eastern<sup>34</sup> Sepharadim to begin acknowledging their huge debt to Rabbi Asa for his many other Ladino translations which popularized key Hebrew works. In a tiny area, however, Rabbi Asa is also responsible for generating some confusion which, after two hundred and fifty years, should be cleared up.

#### *Asa's contribution*

The paradox is that for all his immense input in promoting Ladino books, Asa is nowhere to be found! There is no Abraham b. Isaac Asa entry in the Jewish Encyclopedia, the Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana, nor the more recent Encyclopaedia Judaica. Except for briefly mentioning

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<sup>33</sup> Marvin I. Herzog to Joseph M. Papo, November 4, 1977, in David N. Barocas correspondence, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>34</sup> I prefer *Eastern* to *Levantine* simply because the other branch of the Sephardic group is usually called *Western*. Also, *Levantine* at times may carry a negative connotation.

him as the translator of the *שבם מוסר*, Meyer Kayserling,<sup>35</sup> too, ignores Asa. Thus, to this day, Asa remains a non-person, an as yet to be discovered, and acknowledged figure.

In an article published in *Kirjath Sefer*,<sup>36</sup> Abraham Yaari was the first to address the mystery of Asa's reticence and apparent concealment. For reasons best known to himself, Asa shunned publicity, so to speak, *i. e.* was against having his name placed on the title-pages of the books he translated. Whether this was due to modesty or not, we don't know. Maybe Asa realized that the first and last pages of any book are the most vulnerable. And so, he preferred to reveal his name indirectly, by composing acrostic poems he inserted within the body of his translations! And that is how Yaari--based on the inevitable acrostic poems Asa carefully tucked into his books, instead of divulging his name on title-pages--pursued him into the inner sanctum of books, coming up with quite a list of Ladino books indeed translated by Asa. Yaari's list includes the following books:

-ספר צרכי צבור<sup>37</sup>  
 -בית הפלה  
 -שבם מוסר  
 -ספר בן גוריון  
 -ספר שלחן המלך  
 -ספר מנורת המאור  
 -ליטראס די ר' עקיבא (אנחיות דר' עקיבא)  
 -דינים ומסרים

which place him by far ahead of Hulli, as the supreme popularizer of Ladino books.

#### *Asa's Dilemma:*

Second Kings 18:26-28 is a well-known passage, as it contains the names of two of the languages used in biblical times. The Assyrians had besieged Jerusalem, and Rabshaké, their general, was discussing the terms of surrender with Elyakim, Shebna and Joah, the emissaries of King Hizkihayu. As a seasoned diplomat, Rabshaké was conversant with the language of his enemy. But the Jerusalemite negotiators did not want him understood by the local people who were fighting on the wall, and dying in defense of their city. The following conversation ensued between the Jerusalemites and the Assyrian general:

<sup>35</sup> Meyer Kayserling, *Bibliotheca Española-Portuguesa-Judaica*, Strasbourg 1890, p. 42. Yosef Haim Yerushalmi's *Prolegomenon* to the 1971 reprint of this book mentions Yaari's articles on page XXX.

<sup>36</sup> Abraham Yaari, אברהם בן יצחק אסא ומסעלו בספרות הספרות-יהודית, *Kirjath Sefer*, X, (1933-34), pp. 378-80, followed in XIII (1936-37), pp. 533-34.

<sup>37</sup> See also S. A. Rozanes, *Korot....*, vol. 5, pp. 357-358 and p. 384.



-Speak to your servants in *Aramaic*, for we are conversant in it, but do not speak to us in יְהוּדִית, [in the language of Judah] in front of the people who are on the wall!

But Rabshaké was insensitive to their demand. He said to them:

-Did my Lord [the king of Assyria] send me to say these things to your master and to you? Or, was it for the people sitting on the wall who will eat their dung and drink their urine with you?

And so, Rabshaké stood up and proclaimed loudly in יְהוּדִית, [in the language of Judah]:

-Hear the message of the Great King, the king of Assyria, etc...

In the *Ferrara Bible*, the same passage reads as follows:

Y dixo Eliakim hijo de Hilkiyahu y Sebna y Yoah a Rabsakeh fabla agora con tus sieruos *Armenio* que oyentes nos y no fables cō nos *Yudayco* en orejas del pueblo que sobre la cerca..... Y parose Rabsakeh y clamo cō boz grande *Yudayco*.....

which Asa recasts as:

I disho Elyakim ijo de Hilkiyahu i Shebna i Yoah a Rabshake: avla agora a tus syervos en *aramiṯ* porke entendyentes nos, i non avles kon nos en *djudezmo* en orejas del puevlo ke sovre la serka. I se paro Rabshakeh i grito kon boz grande en *djudezmo*....

As languages, אַרַמִּית - *Aramaic* and יְהוּדִית - *Judean* are not at all problematic. What the *Ferrara Bible* and Asa have done with the names of these languages is another matter!

	<u>אַרַמִּית - Aramaic</u>	<u>יְהוּדִית - Judean</u>
<i>Ferrara</i>	Armenio	Yudayco (or Judayco)
Asa	Aramiṯ	Djudezmo

Each translation was off the mark in one of the two languages. Incredibly, the *Ferrara Bible* confused *Aramaic* with *Armenian*!<sup>38</sup> Asa, on the other hand, knew very well that *Aramaic* is not *Armenian*; so he left *Aramiṯ* intact. But, apparently, he did not like *Yudayco*, as there is no language by that name. And even though in the Bible *Yudayco*, or the language of Judah, refers undoubtedly to *Hebrew*, since the word *Judah* is the basis for the word *Judaism*, Asa opted for *Djudezmo* as a compromise in his desire to preserve the connection between *Judah* and *Yudayco*. That was his mistake!.

Subsequent translators and editors,<sup>39</sup> too, while unwilling to equate יְהוּדִית, *Yudayco*, with Hebrew, did not like *Yudayco*, either. As a compromise they kept *Djudezmo* intact. By the time the missionary William Gottlieb Schauffler wrote his Hebrew-Ladino Dictionary,<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> In the *Ferrara Text*, *Aramaic* and *Armenian* are again confused in *Isaiah 36:11-13*. But in *Ezra 4:7* and *Dan. 2:4*, *Caldeo* is used. Asa has *Djudezmo* for יְהוּדִית - *Yudayco* in *Neh. 13:24* and *II Cron. 32:18*.

<sup>39</sup> Mainly the 1813 Vienna edition by Yisrael ben Hayyim, and the 1838 Izmir edition by William Gottlieb Schauffler.

<sup>40</sup> William Gottlieb Schauffler, *אוצר דברי לשון הקודש*, Constantinople 1855, p. 140, s. v. יְהוּדִית.

there was already a century old "tradition" of translating the *Yudayco* of 2 Ki 18:26-28 as *Djudezmo*. Schaffler took cognizance of this "fact" with an appropriate entry in his dictionary. Paradoxically, it was the slavishness of Ladino which perpetuated Asa's gaffe.

I say Asa's gaffe, because as a professional *enladinador*, Asa knew very well that Djudezmo can mean only one thing, *i. e.* Judaism. For him, while Ladino always described the *language* of the Sepharadim, Djudezmo clearly denoted their *religion*. It is even possible to find on the same page, in Asa's own writings, the terms *Ladino* and *Djudezmo* used side by side, and quite appropriately. Asa does precisely that in his long poem with a **double acrostic** which he wrote in conjunction with the preface of his translation of ספר צרכי צבור printed in Kostandina 5493 (Istanbul 1733).<sup>41</sup> Stanzas three to five of that poem read:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>בואין ליברו איספי לאדינו קין דיקלאראסיון<br/> דנים די דוטרינו<br/> קי מילדש די קנטינו<br/> מונז מוש קי טראסאר:</p>        | 3 | <p>Buen libro este <i>Ladino</i> kon deklarasyon,<br/> <i>Dinim</i> de dotrino,<br/> Ke meldesh de kontino,<br/> Muncho mas ke tratar.</p> |
| <p>בידה איסטוריא אי קאנטוש די פידיסיון<br/> פניד אין מימוריא<br/> דברי תורה סון גלוריא<br/> די איליאש נון אפארטאר:</p>       | 4 | <p>Vida, estorya i kuentos de perdisyon,<br/> Poner en memorya,<br/> <i>Divre Tora</i> son glorya,<br/> De eyas non apartar.</p>           |
| <p>ריגוש די ננדימו אנטיגודיר בואנה קנדיסיון<br/> אלישאר איל גיטאר<br/> אי לזה טני מאדורגאר<br/> אי פור מילדאר דיספירטאר:</p> | 5 | <p>Rijos de <i>Djudezmo</i> entender buena kondisyon,<br/> Aleshar el djugar,<br/> I la noche madrugar,<br/> I por meldar despertar.</p>   |

In plain Ladino, *rijos de Djudezmo* is an unequivocal reference to the *customs* of Judaism, not to its *language*!. With the irrefutable evidence provided by this poem from Asa's own pen, his real understanding of the word *Djudezmo* is now thrust into open daylight.

## Ladino, our Language



Hispanists have been almost unanimous in subscribing wholeheartedly to what can be called the "great divide" approach. For liturgical texts, with a tough Hebrew/Aramaic spine in them, the label *Ladino* was good enough. For the rest, with more manageable Spanish

<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Avraham Asa, ספר צרכי צבור, *Dinim* kojidos de livros de konsuelos,  
Kopyados en Ladino por entenderlos,  
Ke melden ijos, padres i aguelos,  
I afirmen komando de Dyo de los syelos,  
Yisrael eskojido de los puevlos.  
Lo ordeno por en rekordo tenerlos,  
Avraham Asa, varon menor, polvo de suelos.

Kostandina 5493, see the end of his הקדמה בלענו.

ingredients, what was more congenial than *Judeo-Spanish*, the Spanish spoken by the Jews; or *Djudezmo*, the language of the Judaism of the Sepharadim, or some other aberration?

Of course laymen are confused by this hair-splitting approach. Our fathers and our mothers never told us that there were almost two languages in our heritage, with two separate singsong modes of speech, the one (*Ladino*) based on Talmudic syntactical patterns and highly modulated, while the other was flatly austere and even monotonous. Native *Ladino* speakers are too well aware of this *singsong* feature of *Ladino*, which is probably derived from Talmudic reasoning and its syntactical patterns. When applied to Turkish, this singsong sounds very funny, indeed. As of this writing, it is even possible to identify a clear-cut age-bracket in the Jewish population which practically never spoke *Ladino*, has no accent whatsoever, and yet, even though it is able to read and write Turkish flawlessly, has preserved, in its Turkish speech patterns, this typical, syntactic singsong of *Ladino* !

When I learned the Passover Haggada in *Ladino*, memorizing its text from cover to cover, I never sensed that its phraseology was so outlandish that it required a *sui generis* label for adequate classification. No doubt, today's numerous, extraneous appellations of *Ladino* are quite confusing to us. But as scholars keep pounding on, and pushing for their streamlined dichotomies, these begin to sound, and to appear real: they must know something we don't know! As a result, the ostracism of the term *Ladino* is by now in full swing. No one dare speak of almost anything being in *Ladino*, even when, by the strictest definition, it could indeed be *Ladino*,<sup>42</sup> for fear of being denounced and shouted at!

But, God forbid, what happens if in a so-called *Judeo-Spanish* context, a clearly *Ladino* item is spotted? Well, that becomes *Ladinizing* *Judeo-Spanish*! And, God forbid, how about an obvious *Judeo-Spanish* item floating around in a *Ladino* context? Well, that obviously makes for *Judeo-Hispanizing* *Ladino*! A better exercise in futility is hard to imagine.

In any language, there are literal translations of foreign texts--religious, legal or otherwise--with some versions more literal than others, depending on the ultimate application intended. It is all a matter of degree, not substance. At times, many a slavish wording of yesteryear turns into today's masterly classic! The impact of the *King James Version of the Bible* on the English language is well known. Martin Luther's German translation of the Scriptures, in its literalness, critically shaped modern German. In the words of the publishers

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<sup>42</sup> On the cover of a recent issue of the bulletin of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York City, the *Paraphrasis Caldaica En Los Cantares de Selomoh* was featured with the comment that the *Paraphrasis* was in *Judeo-Spanish*, even though by the strictest criteria, that book was indeed written in *Ladino*!

of a recent, extremely literal Bible translation into French, the aim of such translations is not to come up with *a gloss on the Bible, but the Bible itself*.<sup>43</sup>

Also, a few extremely literal translations are so innovative and daring that they end up imposing an undue burden on the basic rules of grammar, for the sake of some lofty, vested interest, or a clearly defined point of view. Such has been Buber & Rosenzweig's<sup>44</sup> German translation of Scripture in 1930, or André Chouraqui's French translation of the Old and New Testaments. With reference to the particular expression *בֵּית הַתְּפִלָּה* of Isaiah 56:7 discussed earlier, both Luther and Buber & Rosenzweig have *in meinem Bethause* and *in meinem Haus des Gebets*<sup>45</sup> respectively, but Chouraqui does stick to the more literal *dans la maison de ma prière*. Now, beyond taking note of all such departures and variations, no outside observer will take the next, drastic step of actually creating artificial compartments<sup>46</sup> to pigeonhole the diverse aspects of the languages of these books, even coining new labels for them, or what have you.

In the case of Ladino, a calculated effort is being made to insist ferociously on the putative differences between a presumed non-language (Ladino), relegated to the realm of religious translations, and another one, robust and free from all traditional conditioning. To the exasperation of knowledgeable natives, this effort is immediately followed by a practical ban placed on almost any modern use of the term Ladino. In my view, such efforts are rooted in a blatant anti-rabbinic bias on the part of people who, while jostling for the survival of our language, are unable or unwilling to transcend beyond superficialities to appreciate that in this cross-cultural domain, the religious and the secular do mesh into a dynamic aggregate.

### *Judeo-Spanish*

As a pure invention of the scholarly world, the term Judeo-Spanish is still cajoled for its purported usefulness in ideally describing the *language (-ish)* of the Spanish Jews. Its endorsement in certain Sephardic circles is of recent vintage. No wonder then that in the total absence of any rabbinic discussant, aware of the many sources to the contrary, the proponents of Judeo-Spanish have pulled a thick blanket over the hundreds of Ladino books they have

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<sup>43</sup> André Chouraqui, *La Bible*, Desclée De Brouwer, [Paris] 1974, volume 1, p. 9: *D'où la concision et la précision d'un texte qui n'entend pas être une glose sur la Bible, mais la Bible elle-même.*

<sup>44</sup> Martin Buber und Franz Rosenzweig, *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung*, Verlag Lambert Schneider, Berlin 1930.

<sup>45</sup> I hate to think that Buber & Rosenzweig "missed" the crucial *Midrashic* exposition of this expression in *Berakhoj 7a!* But it looks that this is what actually happened.

<sup>46</sup> It would be too tedious to rehearse here all the arguments and historic precedents used by the proponents of the current, artificial compartmentalization of Ladino. Let me simply state that I can hardly remember any book published, say, in the last century that does not bear on its very title-page a clear mention of its being written in Ladino.

never read, to give full vent to their fanciful guesses. Today's *aficionados* of Judeo-Spanish are not the Jewishly knowledgeable *hahamim* of the past, of whom unfortunately not one remains, but those broken-French speakers of yesteryear who lately have awakened to the maid-talk of their childhood, and suddenly wish to brag about it. On the spur of the moment, they will whimsically drop age-old words, in favor of worthless substitutes<sup>47</sup> Or, they will have no second thoughts about switching from the traditional and deeply ingrained *el Dyo* (always with the article) to the unjewish *Dios* (without the article), spelled even *D..!* It can be asked whether those who for centuries wrote *אל דיין*, *el Dyo*, fully and unabashedly, were they less respectful of the deity? Thus in the minds of French speaking Jews, Judéo-Espagnol has become a convenient Spanish substitute for the familiar *Judéo-Allemand* or *Juif Allemand*.

The weekly *Şalom* in Istanbul has endorsed wholeheartedly the idea of *Judeo-Espanyol* which sounds absolutely atrocious, especially as it is being used increasingly in a Turkish context, something like *Judo* practiced in Spain, or Spanish *Judo!* Strictly speaking, no Turkish word has a *Judeo* component to it; or simply put, *Judeo* is incomprehensible in Turkish.<sup>48</sup> Besides, the Turkish word for Spanish is *Ispanyolca*, not *Espanyol*. But the more this hyphenated term is pushed down the throats of people, the more future scholars will write about, and swear by the "reality of its extensive use in the local press". A hyphenated appellation for one's language, what a beautiful way of expressing pride in a treasured legacy!

### *Djudezmo*

This is an equally problematic, and at times quite offensive label when used to describe not the *religion* of the Sepharadim, but the *language* of that religion! And here is why. It has often been maintained that, while the Judaism of the Ashkenazim comprised various "streams", with institutions and vested interests etc., the Sephardic Jews have resisted any such divisions.

In my view, the absence of "streams" among Sepharadim was simply due to the absence of water. Where there was enough water, mighty rivulets did surface, despite the ever present threat of **excommunication** against dissidents. If the strong arm of excommunication does not make waves and create streams, then we have to redefine what a "stream" is. As we know, sudden Westernization caused enormous upheavals which put at

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<sup>47</sup> *Şalom*, April 4, 1990, p. 9 writes: *la sinagoga fue rozada por ladrones ke avyeron un orifisyo (delik)!* What was wrong with plain, old *burako*?

<sup>48</sup> Another incomprehensible word in Turkish is *rabbi*. To a Muslim reader, *rabbi* means *my God*, as in the common exclamation *yā Rabbi*, which simply means: *O my God!* The appropriate term for *rabbi* in a Muslim cultural context is the time-honored title of *haham*. There is nothing distasteful in being called a *haham*, or in speaking of *hahamlar*, instead of the weird sounding *rabbiler*. My personal preference is for the word which stresses our quest for wisdom (*haham*), instead of the pursuit of greatness (*rabbi*).

odds authoritarian clerics against well-meaning journalists who dared criticize them. Here is what Galanté says about David Fresco, the journalist:<sup>49</sup>

Combien de fois n'a-t-il pas été excommunié et combien de fois son journal n'a-t-il pas, à la demande du grand-rabbinat, été fermé par la censure, parcequ'il demandait un peu de lumière dans les affaires communales. La *Epoca* de Salonique et la *Buena Esperanza* de Smyrne en savaient, aussi, quelque chose.

If anyone, *I should be the one* to write freely about these unpleasant incidents! Indeed, one of those authoritarian clerics, who signed David Fresco's excommunication order, was haribbi Nissim Moshe (H)Amon, my beloved great-grandfather on my father's maternal side, who at that time was *Av Bet-Din* and *Maré de-Atra* of Kuzguncuk, my hometown. Here is journalist David Fresco's excommunication order in Ladino, as copied by Galanté<sup>50</sup> with the names of my great -grandfather and the other members of the Religious Council:

### כוללות עיר קושטא יע"א

מיג'לים רוחני

מאנדאמיינטן

גונוטרנס מיג'לים רוחני אי עומומי הח'מ סינדן נתכרר לנא שה'ר דוד פ'ריסקו רידאקטור דיל ג'ודנאל טיליגראפ'ן פ'ואי מבזה בפרסום את מ'ע הרב הגדול משה הלוי קאייטאקאם איפ'ינדי נר"ן על מבוכה הזאת נועדנן ונוסדנן יחד במשב אחד אי דיספואים די טראאיר אלום עדים בפנינו אי דילאנטרי די ה"ר דוד הנ"ז אי פ'ואירון מעידים על נפשם ועל יהדותם שהנה אמת נכון הדבר קי ה"ר דוד הנ"ז פ'ואי מבזה להרב עליון נר"ן קי אנסי על פי שורת הדין הגסור איל ה"ר דוד הנ"ז איסטה אין חרם אי אין נידוי אי איסטה מפורש ומובדל מעדת ישראל פ'ין קי ריסיב'י סן פינה לו קי לה לוי קונדינה ולשומעם ינעם ועליהם תבוא ברכת טוב הכ"ד החותמים ביום תשעה ועשרים לח' אייר מהאי שתא הח'ר וארכעים ושבעה ליצירה פה העירה קושטא יע"א והכל שריד ובריר וקים.

הצעיר רפאל חזקיה	הצעיר יאושע	הצעיר חיים	נסים משה
שלמה פ'ריסקו הי"ו	צונצין ס'ט	יצחק מנשה הי"ן	המון ס'ט
חיים מרדכי צני ס'ט	הצעיר סוכן טוב די טולידו	הצעיר יעקב קאלכה הי"ן	
הצעיר מירקאדן משה הלוי	הצעיר יאודה אשכנוי הי"ן	הצעיר שלום הכהן הי"ן	
הצעיר רפאל אבולאפ'ייה	הצעיר בכור ציבה	הצעיר חיים נשיא הי"ן	

<sup>49</sup> Abraham Galanté, *La presse judéo-espagnole mondiale*, Fratelli Haim, Istanbul 1935, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Abraham Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul*, Imprimerie Hüsnütabiât, Istanbul 1941, vol. I, p. 262. As a staunch critic of the same abuses, Galanté himself had to flee to Cairo where he established the bi-monthly *La Vara*. In Galanté's own words:

*La Vara* était un organe révolutionnaire qui critiquait les agissements des dirigeants des communautés juives de l'ancien empire ottoman.