INTRODUCTION

When the last boat carrying Sephardim left for the safe ports of the Ottoman Empire, no one thought that almost five centuries would pass before the world would one day discover these very special Jews. Welcomed by the Ottoman rulers as bearers of a valuable cultural heritage, these Eastern Sephardim breathed again, and even bloomed in the lands of Islām. All along, their fate has been intimately woven with that of the Ottoman Turks. With them, they rose in the glory of history. With them, too, they experienced stagnation and the agony of fateful events. And when regeneration came in our days, it has stirred many a heart to solemnize the historic reality of this survival during half a millennium of felicitous coexistence.

When the last boat bursting with Sephardim was approaching the secure havens of the Ottoman Empire, no one imagined that the books in their luggage and the language on their lips would start a new love affair of shaping each other along previously unchartered avenues of innovative creativity. Their books and their language, that is all they had for spiritual survival. From Bible to Ethical Literature, the full array of Jewish religious writings was now to be dissected and studied exclusively in terms of Hebrew/Aramaic models and constructs, so perfectly analyzed, so masterfully fine-tuned that increasingly a one-to-one correspondence between Hebrew/Aramaic and Ladino became the new norm in daily usage.

As the centuries passed, Ottoman lore and mores began playing a discernible role in the shaping and enrichment of Ladino. Up to the time of the first Alliance schools, and their emerging French clout in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, Turkish was the only living model whence Ladino drew its stimulus for growth. Of the hundreds of brand new images which reverberate a glowing Turkish cast, none in my view better typifies this process than what we did with the Turkish word hanum "lady". In combination with the Ladino diminutive suffix of endearment -ika, the uniquely original image of the hanumika was coined. A hanumika was a Sephardic woman, pretty but also graceful, vivacious but also refined, who exuded happiness and kibarlik.¹ For us, as a group, to borrow from Turkish an ordinary word, and then to build on it the idealized prototype of our reveries is a precious comment on the level of our lexical dependency, but also, and more important, of the new social values developed by our forebears.

¹ Equally complimentary for men was the title Chibi, shortened from Turkish Celebi.
Mehmet Sadik Rifat Pasha
(1807-1856)
The purpose of this bilingual publication is to focus on Ladino’s status during the pre-Alliance period, by bringing together the Risâle-i Ahlâk, which is a text from the pen of an Ottoman writer and the Buen Dotrino, a Ladino translation, or better a free interpretation, of that text. The Ottoman writer of the original book is Mehmet Sadik Rifat Pasha, a Tanzimat figure, whose heart ached at the widespread ignorance in his time, and who wished to enlighten the people by appealing to their ability to learn and to improve their lot. The Ladino translator is Judge Yehezkel Gabbay, probably a younger personal friend of Rifat Pasha’s, who nurtured similar concerns with respect to his own community.

Mehmet Sadik Rifat Pasha
(1807-1856)

Mehmet Sadik Rifat Pasha was a prominent political figure of the Tanzimat period. His active career as a statesman and diplomat covered the second half of the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), and almost the entire reign of Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861). Even though he came from a wealthy family, his meteoric rise in the administrative hierarchy of the Ottoman Empire was due to his solid education and his native intelligence. By the time he was twenty-four, he had been appointed an assistant in charge of correspondence at the Grand Vizier’s Office.² Five years later, he was put in total charge of that Office with the title of Amedî. The following year (1837), at the age of thirty, he was named Ottoman ambassador to Vienna, Austria. In 1841, he was appointed for a while Foreign Minister (Hârciye Nâzîri), then back to Vienna as ambassador plenipotentiary. In those years of great change and thorough reorganization, he assumed the presidency of the High Judicial Council (Meclis-i Vâlây-ı Ahkâm-ı Adliyye), the posts of Foreign Minister, Finance Minister (Mâliye Nâzîri), moving in and out of these key positions three and even four times. Were it not for his untimely death at the age of 49, he is believed to have been a likely candidate for the post of Prime Minister (Sadrazam). At the time of his death he was a member of the Tanzimat Council (Meclis-i Tanzimat).

Among the books he has written, which I have not personally read nor seen, are a History of the War with Russia (Rusya Muharebesi Tarihi), a pamphlet about the Situation in Europe (Avrupa Ahvâline Dâir Risâle) and a book on Travels in Italy (Italya Seyahatnâmesi). His son posthumously published a collection of his writings entitled Metrûkât-ı Âsâr-ı Rifât Paşa. He also wrote a book on morals and good manners entitled Risâle-i Ahlâk destined for young people of school age. Judging by the numerous printings this book went through

² A more detailed biography of Rifat Pasha in Turkish is reproduced after the Turkish Önsöz of this book.
(1847, 1858, 1866, 1869, 1888 and maybe more), it can be assumed that it was widely used as a textbook in a number of elementary schools (*mekâtib-i sâbîn*).

*Risâle-i Aklâk*

**The Introduction.**

In a two and a half page introduction which contains only two extremely long and convoluted sentences, Rifat Pasha sets out to explain the purpose of his book. He would like children to be taught to cherish and practice desirable virtues, and avoid debasing vices. He also lavishes praise on the Sultan (Abdülmecid) without mentioning him by name for his encouragement in this project. The Sultan embodies the morals of the Prophet, as well as traditional values and humility. Being also well-versed in composition and rhetoric, the Sultan personally proofread the whole book from beginning to end, making valuable corrections and improvements. As the benevolent ruler of all his citizens, he favors the preparation of teaching materials geared at facilitating and improving the education of the masses. His actions and his daily prayers reflect his good intentions. He is a refuge for those who, being engulfed in an endless ocean, thank him for his just rule which provides safety and security, a testimony to his royal attribute of friendship which has become notorious throughout the world.

Stylistically this introduction is extremely flowery (*tumuraklî*). In it, the author takes delight in displaying his thorough familiarity with the full range of Arabic and Persian idioms. Of real Turkish vocabulary, there are barely twenty or so words, mostly verbs, to be found at the end of each subordinate clause.

**The Risâle itself**

The body of the *risâle* starts with a four page preamble stressing the need for, and the benefits of early education, and concludes with an exhortation to comply with the wishes of the Sultan who is a prime promoter of education. This is followed by thirty pages of text written in simpler Ottoman Turkish. They deal with close to forty topics, ranging from the duty to acknowledge God as the Creator and Bestower of bounties, to the necessity of cultivating lasting friendships, based on mutual respect and the forgiveness of personal shortcomings. The notion of elaborating on key topics such as *pride, anger, mercy, virtue, cleanliness* etc., without a single reference to traditional Muslim sources, is quite novel. The most Rifat Pasha

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3 In addition to being an enlightened monarch, trained in the Eastern as well as the Western arts and music, Abdülmecid was a well-known calligrapher. The *Dolmabahçe* and *Ortaköy* mosques in Istanbul, built during his reign, are embellished with samples of his most exquisite pieces of Ottoman penmanship. *See* Sevket Rado, *Turk Hattatları*, Yayıncılık Ticaret Limited Şti., Istanbul 1972, p. 210.
will say is that such and such a virtue is commendable dince ve akıla, based "on religion and individual rationality". In writing this classic textbook, he seems to have taken as his model the many secular Livres de Morale published in France with which most educated people of his time were quite familiar. His approach is mainly utilitarian and hortatory. Absent from the risâle are any promises of reward and punishment in the afterlife. The stress is on the Sultan's benevolence, and hopes for success in improving education and morality as the two main pillars for the effectuation of the great Tanzimat agenda.

Yehezkel Gabbay⁴
(1825-1898)

It would be fascinating to have a more extensive biography of Judge Yehezkel Gabbay than the few bits of information reported by M. Franco⁵ who seems primarily interested in him as the founder of Jewish Journalism in Turkey.


Abraham Galanté, too, knows him mainly as a journalist, who later on got into trouble with the religious establishment for an article he published on freemasonry. Here is Galante's brief assessment:⁶

Le vrai journalisme judéo-espagnoi commence en 1860, avec la publication du Journal Israélite par Yéhazkel Gabbai. Ce journal fut mis à l'index parce que son directeur Gabbai avait publié un article sur la franc-maçonnerie. La mesure prise contre ce journal eut pour corollaire la fermeture de l'école de Péri Pacha, fondée en 1854, car d'après les rabbins ignorants de cette époque-là, école et journal étaient deux facteurs destructeurs du Judaisme.

In his own work as a historian, Franco acknowledges his indebtedness to Gabbay's Djurnal, without which, he asserts, he would have been unable to write the history of the Jews under Sultan Abdülahiz. But he also deprecates the fact that as of his writing in 1897, it was already very hard to find a complete set of the Djurnal:

⁴ On the basis of this noun's pattern, the spelling Gabbay (ג'באי) is preferable to Gabbai.
⁶ Abraham Galanté, La presse judéo-espagnoile mondiale, Fratelli Haim, Istanbul 1935, p. 3. I do not have enough information to evaluate the merits of the freemasonry charge levelled against Judge Gabbay.
Judge Yehezkel Gabbay
(1825-1898)
Il n'existe actuellement qu'une seule collection de ce journal: elle appartient à M. Abraham Agiman, ancien directeur de la banque Camondo, à Constantinople.

To what extent today, one hundred years later, a complete set of the Djurnal is still available, to evaluate the history of that period, remains an open question. At any rate, what seems certain is that in 1860 Yehezkel Gabbay was indeed the founder and editor of the weekly Djurnal Yisraeli, which later appeared up to three times a week. In 1871, its name was changed to El Nasional, and in 1872 it was renamed El Telegrafo, which under the direction of Yehezkel Gabbay's son Isaac continued to appear until 1930, the year Isaac Gabbay died.

Franco also tells us⁷ that in 1869, Yehezkel Gabbay was named to a post at the Ministry of Education. Thus far, I have been unable to ascertain his having been President of the Supreme Court, but this is possible. I am still trying to locate his Organic Statue of the Jewish Nation in Turkey, written in Turkish which later on is supposed to have been incorporated into the Ottoman Civil Code.⁸

A more balanced evaluation of this colorful personality, with such variegated interests, must start by linking him with the other powerful character in his lineage, that of his grandfather, Yehezkel Gabbay Baghdadi⁹ (d. 1826), after whom he was named, even though according to the dates found in the history books, the younger Yehezkel barely sat at his grandfather's lap. We also would love to know which son of grandfather Gabbay was the father of Judge Yehezkel.¹⁰

Unquestionably, young Yehezkel's inheritance comprised the twin factors of trauma and deep frustration. The trauma was in the stories he heard about his grandfather's removal from the apex of power and his ultimate demise, which must have haunted him all his life for some explanation where none may be found. Hence his frustration, constantly aggravated by his awareness of belonging to a family transplanted from Baghdad, and in need of proving its adjustment and reliable rootedness in the "exclusive" ambiance of the Istanbul Jewish community. After all, at home he must have been surrounded by non-Ladino speaking Arab Jews from Baghdad who were still trying to make some forays in very rough terrain. Of course his grandfather was a maverick banker, audacious and imaginative. But his inevitable

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⁷ M. Franco, op. cit., p. 239.
⁸ See the article on Ezekiel Gabbai in The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 5, also written by M. Franco. The Encyclopaedia Judaica Castellana and the Encyclopaedia Judaica simply reproduce the information given in The Jewish Encyclopedia.
⁹ Salomon A. Rozanes, Korot ha-Yehudim be-Turkiyya uve-Arsou ha-Kedem, Mosad ha-Rav Kook, Yerushalayim 1945, vol. 6 (pp. 70-76). See my English translation in the Appendix, p. 53.
¹⁰ Avraham Ben-Yaakov, Yehude Bavel, Ben-Zvi Institute, Yerushalayim 1965, p. 103, note 11 reports that Shalom was the name of the son who went into exile and prison in Antalya with his father, but was subsequently spared the death sentence. This son may have been Judge Yehezkel's father, but this is mere conjecture.
Abonamyento al anyo en Kosta(ndina) 100 pishin. Sivdadas de afuera pagaràn por el postaje. Avizo, prima vez por sira 2 gr(oshes).... sigunda e iendelantre (a) un grosh po.....to en prima padjina 4 grosh' por sira pishin.

Los mano eskritos no se dan atras.

Se abonan en Kosta(ndina) en la estanparia del Djurnal Yisraelit Galata Han Selanikli numero 31. La redaksyon no resive dinguna karta sin ser frankadja de la posta. Ni dingun publikamyento sin ser afirmado.

Se vende tane paras 30

tados de sus ambres e governados. En mezmo yempo Kuviarjeron sus kannes del friyo kon los vistidos de los soldados, ma ke a este koresponyente le parese ke kon aviar ansi unas muntiras se inchen los sintidos de los Europeos.

-Nonzotros tenemos avizado el akosamyento y los sakatiles le risuyo el vapor Arkadi. Agora vinimos de mendar la korespondensia sigiente datada de Kandyia 9 Djunyo.

En la noche del 4 koryente el vapor Ottoman Izzeddin encontro en las mares de Asfakya, al vapor Elenoz Arkadi el kual se topava azyendo su echo de dezbarmanyento. El Arkadi vyendo de enfronte al vapor Izzeddin ke veye a su enkuentro, desho su gancho en fondo de mar e fuyo. Izzeddin, ke su kaminos esbyen premuroso, lo akoso e en su kaminos dos otros vapores turkos fueron kontra del Arkadi el kual fue ovligado de resfuirse a un kanton de la izla Chirigoti. Después de aver resivido algunos golpes de tiro e le kavaron la muerte de 3 personas e romperle algunos pedasos, los 2 vapores leieron ensima de guardar a Arkadi asta ke Izzeddin vaya al Sud por demandar lo ke tyene de rirjar kon esta kasa importante.

El Arkadi, myntrias ke el estava guardrado de los dos vapores inimigos, topo el punto por resfuirse de eyos en pasando entre los dos.

Esie echo no seria tanto gloryojo por los capitanes otomanos.

Al dia después, el Viche Amiral Ibrahim Pasha salvo en mar kon idea sigun dizen por apanyar el Arkadi, ma ke ya avia fuyido. Oy ....
excesses cost him his life. The grandson now emerged from the ashes as another extrovert, bent on the *reconquista* of the hearts and minds of those clannish Istanbulis. With his bursting leadership qualities, young Yehezkel Gabbay transcended his childhood frustrations by reaching levels of motivation whose dynamism could translate dreams into realities:

- If there is a need for a newspaper, European style, to enlighten the community, he will establish that newspaper, calling it *El Djurnal Yisraelit*, and running it successfully.

- If there is a need to have a Ladino version of the Ottoman Penal Code just issued in 1860, he, the judge, will not only translate it into Ladino, but also undertake to shape the language and its legal terminology, as reflected in the *Kanun Name de Penas*.

- If there is need for a printing press, he will get himself a new printing press, and use it for the widest dissemination of ideas.

- If there is a need for what he calls a *catechism* to encapsulate the minimum basic knowledge every Jew should have about his religion, similar to what the other *millets* had already done, he will take time out of his busy life to write such a *catechism* which he will call *Ikkare ha-Dat*, or the *Principles of Religion*.

- If the local *Talmud Tora* is doing a rather poor job in teaching elementary reading, he will sit down and write the best syllabary he can think of. Indeed, the יִפְסֵךְ יַפְסֵךְ paragraph on page 2, written by a certain Yaakov Avigdor, unravels the enigma as to why this *Buen Dotrino* bears on its title-page the strange rubric *LIVRO SEGUNDO*, Second Book, which obviously is no translation for *Risâle-i Ahlâk*. Avigdor informs us that Yehezkel Gabbay had previously written a syllabary called *Abechedyaro* (*Alpha Beta*), intended to teach the Rashi script for speedy Ladino reading. In Gabbay’s mind at least, the syllabary was the First Book of a series intended to launch a new educational program of reading materials for youngsters. And so, the *Risâle* was the Second Book in that series. Henry V. Besso, in his *Bibliography of Ladino Books in the Library of Congress* published in 1963, lists the *Risâle* under entry #207. Had Besso only turned to page 3 of the book he was cataloguing, and looked at what was printed under *Livro Segundo*, he would not have missed the real title of this translation which is *El Buen Dotrino*.

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12 Yehezkel Gabbay, *Ikkare ha-Dat*, Constantinople 5639 (1879), soon to be re-issued by *Ladino Books*.

13 Thus far, I have been unable to come across any other books translated by Yehezkel Gabbay as part of this ambitious translation plan. In 1879 (5739), he did publish a *Jewish Catechism* entitled יִפְסֵךְ יַפְסֵךְ, but the absence of any reference to previous publications leads me to believe that Yehezkel Gabbay was probably somewhat discouraged, but also maybe completely absorbed by his newspaper and his other duties as judge.

14 I hope that based on this clear evidence, Libraries which followed Besso will now re-catalogue this book to reflect the right author and the more accurate title.