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Languages of Virtue and the Virtues of Language

Sephardic and Ashkenazic Engagements in the Nineteenth Century

For Chava Turniansky

As the nineteenth century unfolded, the interaction among Jewish centers experienced a noticeable contraction, despite significant progress in communication and transportation. This trend was particularly evident in the realm of rabbinic literature. It seemed as though the explosive growth of the Jewish population during the nineteenth century had led to the formation of large and increasingly insular Jewries. One gets the impression that it became a rarity for a Lithuanian rabbi to take note of a Hungarian colleague, no matter how distinguished, and vice versa.[1] This phenomenon was not confined to relations among Ashkenazic centers; even more the flow of rabbinic literature between Ashkenazim and Sephardim diminished, especially compared to earlier centuries.[2] Only later, the encounters in the new centers in the Land of Israel toward the last third of the nineteenth century began to somewhat counter this trend.[3]

If there was a genre of rabbinic literature that did breach the divide, it was musar literature. The following exploration delves into the reciprocal interaction between Ashkenazic and Sephardic piety and spirituality focusing primarily but

1 Of course, there will be exceptions: the Lithuanian Yisra'el of Shklov's *Pe'at ha-Šulḥan* (Safed, 1836) was cited by the Hungarian Hillel Lichtenstein in an 1845 letter, see Lichtenstein (2005:54). And when Moše Šĕmu'el Glasner's *Dor Rĕvi'i* (Cluj-Kolozsvár, 1921) was published, Lithuanian yeshivot were astonished to find that a Hungarian rabbi possessed the analytic thinking that had long been considered the exclusive domain of Litvaks. See Glasner (1997:44–45); and Sorek (2024:271, especially note 143).

2 Again, there were exceptions. Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, *Šem ha-Gĕdolim* (Livorno, 1774), a bio-bibliographical work, gained early popularity among Ashkenazic scholars; as did the multi-volume reference work of responsa literature *Sĕde Ḥemed* (Warsaw, 1890; Brooklyn, 1949–1953) by Ḥayyim Ḥizqiyya Medini (Jerusalem 1834–Hebron 1904). In general, see Zimmels (1958); and for the early modern period, when there was considerable interaction with Sephardi rabbinic literature, Berkovitz (2019).

3 Kaniel (1973:289–300).

Note: I would like to express my gratitude to David M. Bunis and Aron Rodrigue for their helpful comments, and especially to Katja Šmid, whose critique, enthusiasm, and patience were crucial in shaping the final form of this study.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111575452-004

not exclusively on two such exemplary texts, namely *Pele Yoʿeṣ* (פלא יועץ) of Eliʿezer Papo (1824) and *ʿEt La-ʿasot* (עת לעשות) of Hillel Lichtenstein (1870).[4] It will examine the spread and reception of these works, with emphasis on the adaptations in the diverse Jewish vernaculars, navigating through the evolving linguistic landscapes of the past century and a half. While piety was communicated between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in the Diaspora through textual exchanges, interactions in the Holy Land took on a more personal dimension. The study's final section explores the reciprocal influence of scholars from both communities, where musar and practice was enriched by the infusion of kabbalah, Messianic fervor, and the steadfast rejection of foreign cultural influences. Ashkenazim and Sephardim joined together in combating the introduction of secular schooling that threatened to displace Jewish languages, Yiddish and Ladino alike.

Published in Constantinople in 1824, *Pele Yoʿeṣ* was composed in Hebrew by Eliʿezer Ben Yiṣḥaq Papo (1785–1828), the rabbi of Silistra, a small Bulgarian community. It encapsulated over two hundred topics organized according to the order of the Hebrew alphabet. While predominantly providing ethical and moral guidance in the tradition of a musar text, *Pele Yoʿeṣ* also offered advice on broader issues facing Jews in the Diaspora.

For instance, in the entry entitled *goy*, *Pele Yoʿeṣ* urged Jews to exhibit modesty and exercise caution in their interactions with non-Jews amidst the frequently hostile conditions of exile. It implored them to avoid provoking gentiles, emphasizing the need to suffer offenses submissively:

> One must be careful not to provoke even a young gentile, for their anger is eternal [. . .]. And even if a gentile strikes him, insults him, or robs him, he should bow his head and endure it to atone for his sins, for the Lord commanded him to bear the curse. In that very moment, he should bless his misfortune with great joy and say, *Blessed be He who did not make me a gentile*.[5]

Several entries also delve into contemporary challenges posed by acculturation and assimilation. The item *galut* declares that residing within the realm of Islam is preferable to Christian lands, as the latter, marked by the loss of coercive Jewish autonomy, posed greater risks to the preservation of the traditional way of life.

> It is not good for a man to dwell in the cities of Italy, Edom [Christendom], and the like, for due to their freedoms, no one can control the transgressors, and the laws of Israel have no authority to judge between man and his fellow. Instead, everything is judged by the laws of the country, and the hand of a wise person has no power to punish [. . .]. At the very least, he

4 In transcribing the title, I have preferred modern Hebrew, in order not to have to choose between the vocalizations of different Yiddish dialects.

5 Papo (1824:34a–34b).

> should uproot his offspring and take to the cities of Turkey [. . .] for there is evil in the cities of Edom where they teach their children external wisdom [. . .].[6]

The appeal of the book stemmed from its combination of timeless moral and ethical counsel mingled with self-assured advice on how to navigate contemporary challenges to tradition, creating a compelling blend that resonated with readers, especially, as we shall see, the beleaguered Orthodox Jews of the Kingdom of Hungary.

1 *Pele Yoʿeṣ* in Hungary

Although *Pele Yoʿeṣ* eventually became a best-selling work of musar, it took several decades before it achieved popularity. Even Judah (Yĕhuda) Alkalay (1798–1878), a disciple of Eliʿezer Papo, first encountered the book only in 1843, nearly two decades after its initial publication. At the time Alkalay, who later gained renown as a precursor of Zionism, was the *šĕliaḥ ṣibbur*, prayer reader of the Sephardic community in Semlin (Zemun), the southernmost Jewish settlement in Hungary, situated across the river from Belgrade. "Just as I am writing these lines," he announces in middle of *Minḥat Yĕhuda*, a booklet lauding the efforts of Moses Montefiore and Adolphe Cremieux in thwarting the Damascus blood libel, "there has come into my possession the book *Pele Yoʿeṣ*, composed by the diadem upon our heads, my teacher and mentor, our teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Eliʿezer Papo, of blessed memory."[7] Alkalay's reference to Papo as "my teacher and mentor" was no mere rhetorical flourish; both were born in Sarajevo, and Papo likely instructed the younger man before they moved elsewhere.

It would be nearly another two decades before *Pele Yoʿeṣ* gained wider popularity. Only in 1860 did a second edition appear, published by Moše David Alkalay (1834–1901) in Bucharest with the blessing of Yĕ'uda Papo, the author's son.[8] Alkalay asserted his claim to the Hebrew book over the next ten years, but also reserved the

6 Papo (1824:31b–32b).

7 Alkalay (1843:15a). Thus he is described in the *haskamot*, commendations, of *Minḥat Yĕhuda* as prayer leader of the Sephardic community. It was Samuel Aszod who served as rabbi to both Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities in Semlin. Semlin/Zemun is often anachronistically assigned to Serbia, not to Hungary.

8 The 1860 exemplars I have seen do not provide the place of publication nor the printer. Roest (1875, vol. 2:920) is the first to note both: Bucureşti, Imprimeria Jurnalului Naţionalulu. See the announcement of Moše David Alkalay that the book is available in Bucharest, Belgrade and Jerusalem, *Ha-Maggid*, 5 September 1860, 140. It has been suggested that yet another edition was issued in Vienna/Pressburg that same year, but this seems to be based on the similarity of the typeface to the 1865 edition.

rights to a vernacular (*la'az*) version.[9] A year earlier, together with his father, David Moše Alkalay, he had translated Ibn Verga's *Ševeṭ Yĕhuda* into Ladino, and more significantly, another work of Papo, *Bet Tĕfilla*, a siddur accompanied with musar on prayer, in 1860, the very year that Alkalay had published *Pele Yo'eṣ*. Clearly then, Alkalay was seriously contemplating a Ladino edition of *Pele Yo'eṣ* to be translated by father and son.[10] It was not to be. For while *Tissa 'Awon*, yet another Alkalay translation of Papo's work appeared in 1863,[11] the cooperation between the Papo heirs and the translators was terminated, and from here on *Pele Yo'eṣ* would no longer be published in the Sephardic milieu of the Balkans, but rather in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Less than five years later, disregarding Alkalay's prerogative, another publisher issued a third Hebrew edition of *Pele Yo'eṣ* in 1865 in Pressburg.[12] The city was the heart of Hungarian Orthodoxy and had long served as the seat of Rabbi Moses Sofer, the world renowned Ḥatam Sofer (1762–1839), along with his equally famous yeshiva. With its publication, endorsements, and dissemination, *Pele Yo'eṣ* would henceforth be embraced and closely associated with this Orthodox center.

Yĕ'uda Papo, writing from Jerusalem, issued his own "warning" in the preface to the book: "I have sold exclusive rights of *Pele Yo'eṣ*, the inheritance from my father, to Josef Schlesinger of Vienna for a period of five years."[13] Schlesinger was married to the step-daughter of the Ḥatam Sofer, and had inherited the rights to publish the responsa of his "step-father-in-law". The publication and sale of these six volumes, spanning more than two decades from 1841 to 1864, solidified Josef Schlesinger's Buchhandlung as a thriving publisher of Judaica, initially based in Pressburg and later, from 1860 on, in Vienna. This publishing enterprise remained active in both Vienna and Budapest until the outbreak of World War II, thereafter relocating to Tel Aviv in 1939.

9 Papo (1860), title page and the printer's preface.

10 Šmid (2023b) notes that in *Bo'u Ḥešbon* (Belgrade, 1868), Alkalay provides a Ladino translation of a short passage from *Pele Yo'eṣ*. I thank her for sharing her forthcoming study. See also Šĕlomo Ibn Verga, *Ševeṭ Yĕhuda u-Vinyamin [. . .] trezladado en ladino [. . .] 'al yĕde David Ben Moše Alkalay u-vno Moše Ben David Alkalay* in Alkalay (1859); Eli'ezer Papo, *Bet Tĕfilla [. . .] trezladimos el musar en ladino [. . .] 'al yĕde David Ben Moše Alkalay u-vni Moše Ben David Alkalay*; see Alkalay (1860). This time it was another son of Papo, Mĕnaḥem based in Bucharest who endorsed the book with a preface composed in 1856.

11 *Bet Tĕfilla* along with *Šiyyat Ḥemda* was published under the title *Tissa 'Awon [. . .] lo trushimos ala estanpa [. . .] David Moše Alkalay u-vno Moše Ben David Alkalay*; see Alkalay (1863).

12 Although the publisher was located in Vienna, the printing was carried out in Pressburg by H. Sieber's Erben and thus both cities appear on the title page.

13 Papo (1865), preface, *azhara,* a warning.

Schlesinger sought the support of his brother-in-law, Šim'on Sofer (1820–1883), the esteemed rabbi of Cracow, to endorse the book and lend weight to the copyright. Being the younger son of the renowned Ḥatam Sofer, he had worked closely with Schlesinger in preparing his father's responsa for publication. Sofer's effusive praise for *Pele Yo'eṣ* was boundless.

> There's no need to extol the composition further, for its very name speaks volumes about it, and true to its name, it stands as a marvel. Serving as both a guide in celestial and earthly affairs, it holds a place of endearment above and enchantment below, captivating hearts with its eloquence and fostering bonds of love that inspire devotion to the Divine. Rarely has such a profusion of spices been witnessed for so long, and those who partake of it will discover solace and rejuvenation for their souls, as it brims with wisdom and moral instruction, resonating harmoniously and leading many to turn away from their transgressions.[14]

In 1876, the Schlesinger press released a fourth Hebrew edition in Vienna which mirrored the previous ones, featuring Yĕ'uda Papo's cautionary note and Sofer's encomium. Subsequently, it reprinted the work in Vienna in 1900, and multiple times later in Tel Aviv during the 1950s and 1960s under the auspices of the now-renamed Sinai Publishers.

2 Translating *Pele Yo'eṣ*

Arguably, the true measure of *Pele Yo'eṣ*'s success lay in its vernacular translations, which enabled it to reach a wider reading public than the Hebrew version—"women and untutored men like women," as the received formula had it. Predictably, the first translation of the work was rendered into Ladino, and was published in Vienna in 1870–1872.

As already noted, the translation was not carried out by the Alkalays. Contrary to expectations, it was also not published by Schlesinger despite the fact that the house had already released several Ladino books by that time and would do so in the future. And neither was the Alkalay press involved although by 1871 it had transferred its publishing activities to Vienna/Pressburg.[15] Instead, it was a relatively obscure Viennese firm, Jacob Schlossberg, that took on the task of producing

14 Papo (1865), preface, "Miḳtav".

15 Variously Adolph and Berthold Alkalay published numerous books in Vienna and Pressburg, some Ladino school textbooks, but also a number of Hebrew books of the Sofer family, such as Moše Sofer, *Sefer Torat Moše; Sefer Zikkaron*; Avraham Šĕmu'el Binyamin Sofer, *Tĕšuvot Kĕtav Sofer* as well as others belonging to the Pressburg Orthodox circle such as Yĕhuda Aszod, Yĕḥezqel Feiwel Plaut, etc. But the press also issued scholarly publications by Moses Bloch, David Kaufmann, Wilhelm Bacher and other members of the faculty of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary. On the

the Ladino edition. The translator behind this endeavor was none other than Yĕ'uda Papo, who noted in his preface that already his father had expressed the desire to have the book translated into the vernacular to reach a broader audience.[16] And if we are to trust an attribution of a Ladino manuscript of *Pele Yo'eṣ*, it is quite possible that Eli'ezer Papo himself had begun this undertaking.[17] However, judging from the significant amount of time that passed before a second edition appeared in Salonika in 1899–1900, it seems that the Ladino translation achieved only modest success, in particular when measured against the number of Yiddish and Jüdisch-Deutsch versions that appeared in rapid order before the end of the century.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, two distinct Ashkenazic translation projects were undertaken: one by Yiṣḥaq (Itshe) Hamburger in Cracow, Galicia, the other by Yĕhuda (Julius) Krausz, in time the rabbi of Jankovatz/Jánoshalma, later of Lakenbach/Lakompak, Hungary. Both ran through a number of editions before the end of the century.[18]

These two translations were geared at different audiences: eastern Yiddish speakers primarily in Galicia, and a public in western Hungary, the so called Oberland, that had all but abandoned Western Yiddish, with their Jüdisch-Deutsch tending strongly to German. While the title page of Hamburger's book proclaimed that it was translated into a generic *ivri taytsh*, in his two endorsements Šim'on Sofer, the rabbi of Cracow, clarified that the language was *lašon Aškĕnazi ha-hamoni* and then later specified as *lašon Aškenazi ha-hamoni bi-mdinat Polin,* that is Polish Yiddish.[19] This no doubt prompted Krausz to undertake his own version. "I saw that many musar books that were translated were all written in Polish Yiddish that many do not understand and complain about. Therefore, it was my intention to publish a musar book in our commonly used language, *unser gebräuchlicher Sprache*." This seems to be a translation of the familiar traditional formula of the

earlier educational and publishing activities of the Alkalay family, see Bunis (2002:155–212); and Šmid (2023a:213–234).

16 *Pele Yo'eṣ [. . .] fue adjuntado en lashon hakodesh [. . .] arav [. . .] Eliezer Papo; i hue trezladado en ladino por mano de su ijo [. . .] arav Yeuda Eliezer Papo*; see Papo (1870–1872, vol. 1:3). For a comparison of a corresponding passage in the Hebrew and Ladino versions, see Bunis (1975:22–24). On the liberties Yĕ'uda Papo took in his Ladino translation, see Lehmann (2005:52–61, 193–195).

17 The National Library of Israel, MS Yah. Heb. 103 is a Ladino manuscript of *Pele Yo'eṣ* that has a note asserting that it is in the hand of Eli'ezer Papo.

18 Hamburger's editions had various names: *Qiṣṣur Pele Yo'eṣ*, see Hamburger (1874); *Siaḥ Yiṣḥaq wĕ-hu min Pele Yo'eṣ*, see Hamburger (1876, 1882); *Pele Yo'eṣ*, see Hamburger (1896); *Pele Yo'eṣ*, see Hamburger (1898). Krausz's translations always appeared as *Pele Yo'eṣ*; see Krausz (1886–1887, 1894, 1900). Krausz's version was translated by Lazar Kohn into "Yiddish as we speak it"; see Kohn (1991, 2009, 2015).

19 See the two approbations in Hamburger (1876, 1882).

variant language that Jews speak: *ha-lashon ha-murgal be-fi hamon* as R. Moše Pollak puts it in his endorsement.[20] As the century turned, by his third edition, Krausz recognized that many potential readers found Jüdisch-Deutsch increasingly daunting. To facilitate comprehension, he included Hebrew-letter equivalents for Latin vowels, including those with umlauts.[21] Given the linguistic proximity to German, why did he continue to resort to Hebrew fonts, thereby limiting the audience for his translations? "In response to many inquiries as to why I do not publish my books in German script, I hereby state that I follow the guidance of the Ḥatam Sofer [. . .] who wrote expressly in his testament: *And the daughters should occupy themselves with books of Aškěnaz published in our fonts*."[22] Krausz's response highlighted a significant linguistic shift that had taken place among the Orthodox communities in western Hungary by the beginning of the twentieth century. As Germanization of their language advanced, it was primarily the Hebrew script that endured as a remnant of the once-distinct Judeo-German language.[23] Notably, Krausz omitted mention of a passage from the Ḥatam Sofer's testament that emphasized the importance of preserving a uniquely Jewish language: "Be careful not to change your Jewish name, language, and dress, heaven forbid, and the sign is [the verse] "and Jacob arrived intact (*ShaLeM*)."[24]

During Sofer's era, Western Yiddish, though in decline, still lingered on. However, a generation later, the Orthodox in Pressburg acknowledged that "in our

20 Krausz (1886, vol. 1), preface and approbations. For the book and a brief biography of Krausz, see Komoroczy (2011a:188–189 and 2014:76–87). The date of the book's publication should be corrected in the bibliography: the second volume appeared in 1887.

21 Krausz (1900). He also provided a key to the simplest abbreviations and acronyms that belied the ignorance of his target audience.

22 Krausz (1904), introduction. This injunction of the Ḥatam Sofer led some to believe that he meant Yiddish books, while others asked why then did he insist on Hebrew fonts—have any books in Yiddish been printed otherwise? Clearly it was a concession to German, but at least it should be couched in "our fonts." One wonders if this was possibly an oblique critical comment on Orthodox works that began to appear in German at the time. We recall that Samson Raphael Hirsch faced criticism within his own family for publishing his *Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum* in German fonts during the very year Sofer composed his will; see "Editor's Notes," in Elias (1995:339). On the retention of Hebrew fonts and Jüdisch-Deutsch, see Lowenstein (1979); Berger (2009); and Komoroczy (2014).

23 See the section on press and periodicals in Komoroczy (2011a:293–324) where many if not most of the pre-World War I newspapers are described as German with Hebrew characters, for example, the *Allgemeine jüdische Zeitung* that appeared in Budapest from 1887 to 1919, and only from 1915 did "the language become more Yiddish." (Hence, my transcription of the title implies the language was German, rather than Yiddish.)

24 Cf. Hebrew š*em* 'name,' l*ašon* 'language,' m*albuš* 'dress.' English translation by Weiss (2010a:196). The document was written in stages. This first part on 24 November 1836.

time and in our city, most men and women do not understand Torah and musar in this language. And if they do understand, they will not heed its voice."[25] The later decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the growing Germanization of the language. Its distinguishing features now mainly resided in minor lexical nuances (excluding, of course, words of Hebrew origin), and a distinct script, which, with minimal effort at transcription, could be easily understood by German speakers.[26]

3 Yiddish and Jüdisch-Deutsch Rival Translations

In the introduction to his translation, *Qiṣṣur Pele Yoʿeṣ* (Lemberg, 1874), Hamburger opened his remarks by stating the rationale behind his translation. Since *Pele Yoʿeṣ* was originally published in Hebrew and acknowledging that many of the devout lacked the language, the decision to translate it into Yiddish was made with the intention of benefiting the wider public and safeguarding them from the damnations of hell. (Throughout Hamburger's presentation, echoes of hell reverberate, interwoven with the motif of repentance, openly acknowledging that his past transgressions propelled him to a personal quest for redemption.)[27] The translation, he argued, aligned closely with the original intent of Eliʿezer Papo himself. "From the outset, he had aimed to compose this book in a language accessible to all. However, being a Sephardi from Turkey, his native language was not widely understood, which led him to write the book in Hebrew." In an era where the practice of Judaism was regrettably on the decline, it had become increasingly imperative to engage with the broader populace.

Hamburger's editions had various names: *Qiṣṣur Pele Yoʿeṣ* (Lemberg, 1874); *Siaḥ Yiṣḥaq wĕ-hu min Pele Yoʿeṣ* (Przmesyl, 1876; Cracow, 1882); *Pele Yoʿeṣ,* 2 vols. (Cracow, 1896); and *Pele Yoʿeṣ,* 2 vols. (Vilna, 1898). The nomenclature hinted at the nature of the various editions—a shortened version and one augmented by Hamburger's selections. He declared that translating the entire work would have been too time-consuming and expensive, parts that were less relevant now were excised; instead, material was added: the Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, the essence of repentance of Rabbenu Jonah, and in consideration of the intended audience, the laws of *nidda*.

By contrast, Krausz's translation, which appeared in rapid succession in 1886–1887, 1894 and 1900 under the title *Pele Yoʿeṣ,* claimed to be loyal to the

25 Sofer (1865:2). See Silber (1992:39).

26 Shpirn (1926).

27 "Hamburger, Yiṣḥaq" in Wunder (1978–2005, 1982, vol. 2:681–682).

source. He explained that he had embarked on the project, but soon, not unlike Hamburger, found that it proved more difficult and time-consuming than he had originally envisioned and he sought to abort it. However, friends prevailed upon him to resume the important task. But like Hamburger, he felt the need to add some edifying material. "I have translated this much esteemed musar book word for word with annotations," he declared on the title page, "and have appended stories from the Aggadah and Midrash and other holy books under the title *Tomer Dĕvora*." This section he dedicated to the memory of his mother, evoking her name.[28]

However, Krausz's revisions extended beyond merely inserting the running commentary of *Tomer Dĕvora* beneath *Pele Yo'eṣ*. Where Hamburger chose to eliminate altogether the previously mentioned entries—*goy* and *galut*—Krausz took the liberty to enact significant changes. He tactfully excised the potentially uncomfortable sections on *goy*, particularly those concerning the passive endurance of gentile abuse, replacing them with a succinct assertion: "Overall, in the present era, there is little necessity to elaborate on this matter, as societal norms will surely dictate proper behavior."

Regarding *galut*, Krausz sidestepped *Pele Yo'eṣ* entirely, substituting instead a discourse on religious freedom, its advantages, and perils. He cautioned against the allure of assimilation, rejecting the notion that it was a prerequisite for genuine patriotism or a remedy for antisemitic sentiments. Even in conversion, Krausz argued, a baptized Jew could not escape his fate. Indeed, he viewed antisemitism as a divine wake-up call, a necessary jolt to shock Jews to abandon their erroneous ways and turn them back to the authentic path. Compelled to justify his departure from the original text, Krausz concluded, "We here pursued a different line of thought than the author, who discussed the distinctions between Turkey and other nations. However, the essence remains unchanged, albeit presented in a more contemporary fashion."

Both Hamburger and Krausz's publications garnered commendations, once again highlighting the involvement of the Sofer family and Hungarian Orthodox rabbis in both endeavors. Rabbi Šim'on Sofer of Cracow, who had previously penned a glowing endorsement for the Hebrew *Pele Yo'eṣ* in 1865, provided two additional, distinct testimonials, one for each of Hamburger's editions in 1874 and the two volume 1876–1882 edition.[29] Hamburger also expressed profound gratitude

28 Krausz (1886, vol. 1). All three editions appeared under the same press.

29 These endorsements were somewhat more toned down. That they lacked the fervor of the 1865 edition may be attributed to the fact that he was frequenting the baths at Marienbad at the time. Evidence of his more relaxed mood may be found in the expression he mischievously selected to signify the gematria of that year: totaling 5535 (1875), the phrase was derived from the Sabbath prayer, *wĕ-yanuḥu vah Yisra'el*, meaning "then Israel took a break."

for the support of the rabbi's nephew, the likewise named Šim'on Sofer, rabbi of Erlau/Eger/Eiger, who had facilitated the printing through a timely loan.[30]

Similarly, Krausz was reassured by the rabbi of Pressburg, Simḥa Bunem Sofer, the younger Šim'on Sofer's brother, that his translation did not need an endorsement, given the esteemed status of the text. This sentiment found resonance with Rabbi Zusman Sofer of Halas, also hailing from Pressburg, but unrelated to the other Sofer family, who pledged to "disseminate the book throughout my region."[31]

However, the most significant endorsement of both the book and its translation arrived in the form of a letter addressed to Krausz in 1885, written by a rabbi who would play a pivotal role in the history of the interaction between Sephardic and Ashkenazic musar—the ultra-Orthodox firebrand, Hillel Lichtenstein (1814–1891). The letter from this favored disciple of the Ḥatam Sofer stands as compelling evidence of the profound significance Hungarian Orthodoxy attributed to *Pele Yo'eṣ*.

> A few years ago, I had the idea to translate it, and I approached my friend Joseph Güns [Schlesinger], the publisher in Vienna who had acquired the rights from the heirs of *Pele Yo'eṣ*, to obtain permission to publish it in *lĕšon Aškĕnaz*. He granted me written permission, but unfortunately, the project did not come to fruition. Therefore, to forestall any objections, I hereby transfer the rights I hold to him [Krausz]. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to bring this blessing into our homes, to study it daily for at least half an hour, and on the holy Sabbath, for most of the day.[32]

30 Hamburger (1882, vol. 2), preface. The rabbi of Erlau also bought Krausz's translation; see Krausz (1886), list of subscribers.

31 Krausz (1886). On the dissemination of the book in western Hungary we have the testimony of the historian Jacob Katz (1904–1998). In 2002, a collection of essays appeared on Zionism among Sephardic Jews, and on the heels of an essay by David M. Bunis on Rabbi Judah Alkalay, came a short note by my mentor. It was a lecture Katz delivered in July, 1997, several months before he passed away, published posthumously. He had written some four decades earlier on Alkalay as a forerunner of Zionism and began here with a personal memoir concerning Alkalay's teacher, Rabbi Eli'ezer Papo (the text mistakenly has Kafaḥ) and *Pele Yo'eṣ*. "I remember that in our rural Hungary, it was one of the most widespread books"; Katz (2002:213). And indeed, his mother's uncle, R. Jacob Snijders, the rabbi of Raab/Györ, after whom he was named, appears on the list of subscribers to Judah Krausz's translation of *Pele Yo'eṣ*; see Krausz (1886).

32 Letter of Hillel Lichtenstein to Judah Krausz, Kolomea, 4 October 1885 in Krausz (1886), part 1, preface. Lichtenstein (1954: § 83:98) reiterated his advice in a letter to the rabbi of Jóka the following year: "One should devote himself [. . .] to read *Ṣĕ'ena u-R'ena, Mĕnorat ha-Ma'or, Qav ha-Yašar, Ševeṭ Musar, Pele Yo'eṣ, Naḥalat Ṣĕvi* [. . .]."

4 An Ultra-Orthodox Best-Seller

Hillel Lichtenstein (1814–1891) was revered by many as a *qadoš*, a holy man, a saint, and a leading figure in Hungarian ultra-Orthodox circles. Renowned for his extreme piety and ascetic temperament, he was wont to say, "the *Ševeṭ Musar* made me a Jew."[33] A fire-and- brimstone preacher, Lichtenstein's impassioned oratory ignited religious fervor among the masses, particularly captivating female audiences. In 1865, Lichtenstein was the architect of the ultra-Orthodox manifesto known as the *Pěsaq Bet Din* of Michalowce, which aimed to reject any deviation from traditional synagogue practices and customs.[34] In particular it targeted sermons delivered in German, a language that had increasingly displaced vestiges of western Yiddish in Hungary. His staunch opposition to linguistic acculturation, imbuing Yiddish with religious sanctity, established him as an early advocate of Yiddishism.[35]

The decree was met with fierce resistance from many mainstream Orthodox authorities in Hungary who had by then resigned themselves to the linguistic changes and deeply resented the implication that there was a legal halakhic basis to the strictures as implied by the presumptuous term *pěsaq din*.[36]

In 1867, Lichtenstein departed Hungary for a post in Kolomea, Galicia. Removed from the turbulence of the cultural and religious Kulturkampf that was reaching its tipping point in Hungary, he finally found time to write down and publish his thoughts. He dashed off six volumes within the span of as many years: four volumes in Hebrew, *Maskil El Dal* (Ungvár–Lemberg, 1867–1871), and two in Yiddish/Jüdisch-Deutsch, *'Et La-'asot* (Lemberg, 1870–1872), the former for scholars, the latter for untutored men and women. We can speculate that his preoccupation with his own compositions was what had hindered Lichtenstein from translating *Pele Yo'eṣ*.

Organized in systematic fashion, chapters and subchapters, *'Et La-'asot* employed a question-and-answer format that had earlier characterized the quasi "responsa" of *Maskil El Dal*. While the bulk of the work addressed traditional concerns, Lichtenstein also expounded his conservative worldview. He advocated a militant form of Orthodoxy, an unyielding traditionalism that adamantly opposed secular educa-

33 Katz (1998:61). *Ševeṭ Musar* (Constantinople, 1712) is a musar work composed in Hebrew by Eliyya Ha-Kohen (1640–1729), a Sephardic rabbi in Izmir. It was translated into Yiddish (1732), Ladino (1748) and other languages.

34 See the fine English translation by Weiss (2010b).

35 On specifically Hungarian ultra-Orthodox Yiddishist ideology, see Weinreich (2008, vol. 1:283); Timm (2011:422); Noble (1943:17, note 13). Noble's continuing interest in the Yiddishist ideology of Hungarian ultra-Orthodoxy is underscored by Katz (1997). See also Silber (2003, vol. 1:225–254). This is a slightly expanded version of the same article by Silber (1994:84–105).

36 See Katz (1998) and Silber (1992).

tion and acculturation in its most elementary forms. Jews should resist the allure of emancipation and maintain their distinct identity as a "tolerated" alien minority, and "Fatherland" should be reserved only for the Holy Land.[37]

It was no ordinary book. Of all his compositions, Lichtenstein viewed it as his most important work, holding it in the highest regard as a "holy book", attributing to it a sacredness and power, relating to it almost as if it possessed human qualities. Composing it had been a labor of love and piety; tears had mingled with ink as he put pen to paper. In his testament, he dictated that the unadorned inscription of his tombstone should simply read, "Rabbi Hillel the son of Liba, the author of the holy book *'Et La-'asot*."[38]

'Et La-'asot gained unusual renown, or rather notoriety, in non-Jewish society as well. Ranting and cursing fanatical rabbis had long become the butt of the most popular satirical weekly in Hungary, *Borsszem Janko*; "Reb Hillel" had become a synonym for benighted Orthodoxy.[39] But what was most unusual, even unique in the annals of musar literature, was that long passages from *'Et La-'asot* were read at the Hungarian Parliament in German by Aladár Molnár, and appear in the protocols of the 12 March 1880 session. It was presented as a representative example of the most backward form of Judaism, staunchly resisting cultural and linguistic assimilation into the surrounding society, disloyal to the Hungarian nation. Although tinged with sarcasm, Molnár's presentation captures the spirit of the book and the citations are largely authentic. Lichtenstein's understanding of the nature of Jewish language, its willful distortion of proper German, its lexical choices that set it apart, are faithfully presented to a scandalized Parliament. Remarkably, the text in Jüdisch-Deutsch required only transcription and minor adjustments to render it into intelligible, albeit somewhat awkward German. To add a flavor of authenticity, Molnár read a few lines of the Pěsaq Din of Michalowce—apparently in Hebrew, for the agitated MPs shouted, "Let's hear it in Magyar!"—and the protocols reproduced it in the original Hebrew script without alteration.[40]

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37 One of the first to point out these passages was Ha-Kohen Weingarten (1945:121–122).

38 Silber (2008a).

39 Menahem Mendel Cziczessbeisser was one of the recurring characters of the weekly. And in a letter to his illustrator, Adolf Ágai, the editor, gave extensive instructions accompanied with a detailed sketch about how to render a caricature of Lichtenstein's ally, Haim Sofer. See Adolf Ágai's letter to Csukássi. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Kézirattár, manuscript 4321.121/1976.

40 Molnár's speech was delivered in the context of debates over the Jewish school fund. See the 223 Session on 12 March 1880 in *Az 1878–81. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 11:54–58. It was not the only time Lichtenstein's name came up in Parliament. See the speeches of Ottó Herman on 23 January 1883 and Ferenc Chorin on 28 January 1883. I first drew attention to these speeches in Silber (2008a). See also Komoróczy (2011b:119), who seems to have discovered the speech independently.

It was not MP Molnár who had transcribed this work, but an anonymous author six years earlier. The sixteen page, *Stichproben aus dem Buche eines Heiligen* had first appeared in the spring of 1874 and was briefly reviewed in the Jewish and non-Jewish press.

> The book, from which a flower picking is offered here, has remained completely alien to the actual reading public, despite its large readership [. . .]. The author is much better known than his book. For he is the "Reb Hillel" with whom the daily press only recently occupied itself a lot [. . .] delivered sermons in the synagogues of the Orthodox which were very popular. This fact is interesting insofar as it proves that the author is not alone with his most peculiar views, but also has numerous like-minded people in our country [. . .].[41]

After this brief introduction, the author presents extensive citations from the book, noting that "In order to make the following quotations generally understandable, this Jargon had to be stripped of its purity in places and brought closer to the usual written language." Nothing is known of the author.[42] Although Molnár does not mention the pamphlet, it is clear that this was the source from which he cited liberally. The parliamentary speech brought renewed attention to *'Et La-'asot* in the Jewish press, where it was discussed extensively.[43]

A compelling testament to the early success of *'Et La-'asot* amongst the Jewish reading public appeared the same year as the *Stichproben*, in none other than the introduction Hamburger wrote to his 1874 translation of *Pele Yo'eṣ*. There was a persistent misconception, he wrote, that musar literature was solely suitable for women or the less educated, rather than those who possessed mature understanding. Just as prayer is an obligation for all, so too should the study of musar be, guiding the way to repentance to spare Israel from the horrors of hell, God forbid!

> It is incumbent upon each individual to devote themselves daily to the study of a prescribed lesson from musar literature. Just as water quenches fire, musar possesses the power to extinguish the flames of our desires [. . .]. Hence, acquire a diverse array of musar books and commit yourself to daily study, with a particular focus on works like *'Et La-'asot* and *Pele Yo'eṣ*. They have undeniably resonated with this generation through the invaluable lessons they impart daily.[44]

41 Anonymous (1874:3).

42 Anonymous (1874:4). The publication lacks a date, but it can be ascertained from the reviews and advertisements in the press. The earliest appears in *Die Presse* XXVII/117, 29 April 1874, 8.

43 See the *Neuzeit* XX/12 (19 March 1880), 93–96; *Ungarische Israelit* VII/12 (19 March 1880) and in subsequent issues until the summer.

44 Hamburger (1874: *pětiḥa*, 3–15, here 7).

By juxtaposing *Pele Yoʿeṣ* and *ʿEt La-ʿasot,* Hamburger had highlighted the interplay between Sephardic and Ashkenazic musar and piety in Ashkenazic Europe. But was there a similar reciprocity on the part of the Sephardic world?

ʿEt La-ʿasot went through numerous editions.[45] But by the twentieth century it encountered the familiar problem of how to remain accessible to an audience in a transformed linguistic landscape. For ultra-Orthodox Yiddish speakers, the Jüdisch-Deutsch language of *ʿEt La-ʿasot* had become all but incomprehensible. Several initiatives were launched in the final decades of the twentieth century, both in Israel and the United States, aimed at transforming the work into contemporary Yiddish, "the language which is commonly used among us—*ha-lašon ha-murgal benenu.*"[46] In recent years, an ambitious effort culminated in the creation of a handsome edition that translated both volumes of *ʿEt La-ʿasot* into Hebrew, complemented by an extensive introduction and commentary. The presence of Hebrew vocalization marks suggests a deliberate effort to make the work available to a wide readership. The 2017 edition bore the endorsement of numerous esteemed authorities, including Hungarian, Polish, and Lithuanian rabbis, as well as several Hassidic rebbes. That the approbation of the head of the Sephardic yeshiva of Porat Yosef in Jerusalem, R. Moše Ṣadqa, also graced the work, indicated that the gift of *Pele Yoʿeṣ* to Ashkenazic piety had finally been reciprocated by making *ʿEt La-ʿasot* accessible to a Sephardic audience.

5 Mr. Mani and The Hebrew Heart

While Lichtenstein's engagement with Sephardic musar remained on paper, his close collaborator and son-in-law, Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (Pressburg 1837–Jerusalem 1922) would have intimate personal encounters with the Sephardic spiritual world in the Holy Land. No less an agitator than his father-in-law, Schlesinger actually achieved fame earlier than his father-in-law with his Hebrew bestseller *Lev haʿIvri* (1864–1866), which created an international sensation as far off as Czarist Russia, was republished numerous times, and is in print to this day.[47] He anticipated many of Lichtenstein's arguments and was an active participant behind the

45 Lemberg (1870–1872); Lemberg (1873–1878); Lemberg (1881–1890); Szatmár (1909) and Seini (1928); Brooklyn (1961).

46 Lichtenstein (1962). Only a few booklets appeared. Additional Yiddish editions appeared in Brooklyn (1969) with the Satmar rebbe's approbation and in New York (1983).

47 "We have not seen nor found any book among the books published in our days that has been received by the Jewish masses with greater honor and immense joy, than *Lev haʿIvri*," wrote the Russian maskil Eliʿezer Ṣĕvi Zweifel; see Zweifel (1873, vol. 4:33). I owe this source to Motti Zalkin.

scenes of the 1865 Pěsaq Din of Michalowce. While he, too, composed works in Jüdisch-Deutsch, none had the resonance of Lichtenstein's *'Et La-'asot.*[48]

Soon after he settled in Jerusalem in 1870, he began to worship with the "Sephardi Hassidim." This was Bet El, the kabbalistic yeshiva, where the liturgy was conducted according to the mystical intentions, *kawwanot,* of Šalom Šar'abi (1720–1777).[49] Several years earlier, upon moving to Kolomea in Galicia, he had embraced *nusaḥ Sěfard* signalling his discontent with his native Ashkenazic rite, and seeking a more kabbalistic-infused spiritual prayer. Embracing the devotions of Bet El would have symbolized an advancement to a higher plane in his spiritual quest. Until then, his exposure to kabbalistic teachings must have been minimal, since from the last third of the eighteenth century there had been a precipitous decline in the status of the kabbalah in central Europe.[50] None other than Hillel Lichtenstein, his father-in-law, bemoaned this state of affairs in an 1845 letter, noting that in the past there had been a broad consensus that "the essence of Torah is the study of the *nistar*, the concealed, and it should not be neglected in any way [. . .] but now in our time, one who engages in it is more or less mocked and ridiculed in the eyes of scholars who are called the great of Israel."[51] It was not until the turn of the century that Ashkenazim in Jerusalem started to participate in Sephardic Kabbalistic circles in growing numbers. However, when Schlesinger first arrived, such engagement was rather uncommon.

The Bet El kabbalist who became his lifelong mentor and close friend was Aharon Eliyyahu Rafa'el Ḥayyim Moše Perera (d. 16 September 1887).[52] Born and raised in Salonika, he had arrived in Jerusalem in 1848, and soon joined the inner circle of Bet El.[53] He composed several works primarily in Hebrew, but also a few

48 Silber (2008b). Schlesinger's *El ha-Adarim ha-Šeni*: *Der tsveyter oyfruf on yidishe kinder* (1869) is analyzed by Katz (1997).

49 The Sephardic kabbalistic institutions of late nineteenth-century Jerusalem were visited and mentioned by Yě'uda Papo in the second volume of his Ladino translation of *Pele Yo'eṣ*; see Papo (1872:105–111, 163). For a romanization of the text and for his other passages on Jerusalem see Bunis (2023:132–133). I thank David M. Bunis for bringing this source to my attention.

50 See Kahana and Silber (2010:378–381); and Silber (2018:775–779).

51 1845 letter to Šĕraga Feiwel Plaut in *Těšuvot Bet Hillel he-Ḥadaš.* Similar sentiments were expressed by Ṣĕvi Elimeleḵ Shapira, rabbi of Dinow and Munkács, in his commentary "Ma'ayan Ganim," on Yosef Ya'aveṣ, *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, see Shapira (1848:4b, ch. 1 "Ziqna wĕ-seva").

52 The Lelov Rebbe, presumably David Ṣĕvi Šĕlomo Biederman (1844–1918), was Perera's disciple whose manuscript of Šar'abi's kabbalistic intentions he possessed. See Šar'abi (2014). Another Ashkenazi whose thinking was later guided by Bet El was the Jerusalem zealot, Yĕšaya Ašer Zelig Margulies, who was also clearly influenced by Schlesinger's *Lev ha-'Ivri*; see Giller (2008:92–93); and Meir (2016).

53 Perera is one of seven kabbalists who signed an appeal to charity on behalf of Bet El. Two of the seven would head the yeshiva in coming years: from 1881–1883, Šalom Moše Ḥay Gagin

popular ones in Ladino.[54] His 1873 booklet, *Ki mi-Ṣiyyon teṣe Tora u-dvar ha-Šem mi-Yrušalayim,* presented a blend of kabbalah, musar, fervent praise for Jerusalem, and an impassioned plea to seek safe haven in the Holy Land, as a means to escape the growing religious and cultural peril faced by the traditionally observant in the Diaspora. These concerns had much in common with Schlesinger's worldview and Perera even entitled a section of his book as a letter greeting "Kolel ha-'Ivrim" echoing the title of Schlesinger's utopian tract published earlier that year. Moreover, in 1875 he gave a warm endorsement to the Pěsaq Bet Din of Michalowce in Schlesinger's controversial *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš,* defended him when that book was excommunicated and consigned to the flames, and supported his Ḥevrat Yiššuv Ereṣ ha-Qědoša, Society for Jewish Settlement of the Holy Land.[55]

It was Schlesinger who was chosen to deliver the eulogy at Perera's funeral in the fall of 1887 "before a congregation of Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Mughrabim [. . .] in the holy tongue so that every son of Ever could understand." Hebrew had of course been the medium of intercommunal written communication throughout the centuries, but now in Palestine it acquired an additional oral and more personal dimension. It would not displace Ladino, Judeo-Arabic and Yiddish as the quotidian spoken language for decades to come, nor did it put an end to vernacular publications. But clearly, the emergence of spoken Hebrew presented an opportunity for a more intimate interaction among the diverse communities. This development coincided with a period when the issue of language rose to prominence in the Old Yishuv, as we will see further.

The extensive eulogy not only paid homage to Perera, but was also a discourse on musar and a warning against the looming threat that the French Alliance Israélite Universelle-sponsored school posed to the integrity of the Jewish character of Jerusalem society. It was an issue that was of great concern to Perera, who had

(1833–1883), and from 1883–1903, Sason Běḳar Moše; see Anonymous (1872b). He also appears among the ten kabbalists of Bet El who endorsed the testament of the wealthy Parisian Nissim Shamama; see Ashkenazi (1874:18b). His growing prominence by the time of his death is attested by being the third among the thirty or so Sephardic scholars who in 1887 signed "An excommunication against the opening of an Alliance school in Jerusalem" (in Hebrew). For the manuscript original see National Library of Israel, MS Meir Benayahu TEU 20.2; for the printed version, Ben-Ya'aqov (1951:70–72).

54 See Halevy (1975:passim).

55 Perera (1873:42a); and Schlesinger (1873). Both were published by the Goscinny press. On the Pěsaq Bet Din and defense of *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš,* more below. The 1875 society is delineated in *Běševaḥ yiššuv ha-areṣ,* edited by Ha-Kohen Weingarten (1987), a facsimile edition of a volume containing the statutes of the society and letters of rabbis throughout East Central Europe endorsing to a greater or lesser degree its program. I addressed this briefly in Silber (2008:128, 139).

expressed his apprehensions to Schlesinger on the very eve of his passing. Linking musar with the preservation of tradition had become commonplace.

Schlesinger characterized Perera as that rare pious mystic who was also publicly engaged, studying the mysteries of Kabbala, but also reaching out to the masses, preaching in Ladino.

> He did not let midnight pass in sleep. Like a lion, he rose at the stroke of midnight, hastened to the Bet Midraš of Bet El to rouse and inspire his companions. Even in his youth, he had led many from the path of sin. In Salonika, he dedicated himself to the public, with thousands flocking to hear his teachings after prayers each day. Here, too, in Jerusalem, he instructed the masses in the Torah at the Yeshiva [. . .]. And although he prayed with Lurianic intentions and devoted himself to worship at midnight, nevertheless, he also mixed with simple people teaching them Torah and piety.[56]

Schlesinger painted an intimate portrayal of their relationship, and did not hesitate to evoke the poignant verse uttered by David in his eulogy of Jonathan: "Your love was wonderful to me, more than the love of women" (2Sam 1:26). And as a mark of this sentiment, Schlesinger stipulated in his testament his desire to be interred "not next to a *mĕmunne* [a Kolel, or Jewish community, administrator], rabbi, or religious judge, but rather among the humble," preferably alongside his beloved mentor, Perera.

The interaction between these two scholars proved fruitful, enriching Schlesinger's spiritual world by inducting him into the most esoteric realms of the kabbala ("every day we would study *'Eṣ Ḥayyim* and the *Eight Gates* of the Ari"), while also introducing Perera to an Orthodox sensibility to the looming religious and cultural crisis, not just within the Diaspora, but also in the Holy Land itself.[57]

Schlesinger's ties to Sephardi kabbalists were by no means limited to Aharon Perera. He enjoyed close relations with his son Yiṣḥaq Moše, who was closer to him in age, and had been the one to invite him to deliver his father's eulogy. The younger Perera enjoyed an analogous status to his father within Bet El in the following generation. He published a number of popular works in Ladino.[58] A glimpse into his deeply-held pious convictions is revealed through his remarkable testa-

56 Děruš še-daraš mo"h ha-'Ivri," דרוש שדרש מו״ח העיברי, "the sermon preached by the Hebrew," in Perera (1888:47a–49b). The plene spelling of 'Ivri was an acronym of his name that Schlesinger had adopted, namely 'Aqiva Yosef Ben R. Yĕḥi'el. The abbreviation מו״ח is clearly a typo and מו״ר is meant, namely *morenu harav*, our master, the rabbi. Perera, himself, describes his activities in Salonika in Perera (1873:43a).

57 Schlesinger (1900:2a).

58 For example, *Tefila del Kotel Ma'aravi* (Jerusalem, 1886); listed by Halevy (1975:201, no. 569).

ment, in which he solemnly charged his descendants, under the most severe oaths, including the dire threat of excommunication, to never depart the Holy Land.[59]

Schlesinger also created strong bonds outside Jerusalem, especially Hebron. In time, Schlesinger would be bound by marriage to the Ashkenazic rabbi, Šim'on Měnašše Chaikin, but he seemed to be even closer to the Sephardi rabbi, Eliyya Ben Sulayman Mani (1818–1899), an important halakhist hailing from Baghdad who had established a circle of kabbalists in Hebron.[60] At different junctures, both Schlesinger and Mani endured the cruel personal assaults that punctuated the life in the Old Yishuv, and each offered the other support during difficult times.[61]

But their relationship had an interesting additional dimension. "My main ally with whom I entered into a covenant, a warm bond, was the Ḥaḵam, the Gaon, the Kabbalist, our teacher Eliyya Mani, the Sephardi, Rabbi of the Holy City Hebron. Together we endeavored devoutly to do whatever was in our power to advance the settlement of the Land."[62] Both were involved in projects to purchase land in the 1870s and 1880s, but one in particular stood out, the bid to buy Ṣa'anan (צאנן), near Hebron.

In late May 1875, Mani dispatched a letter to Moses Montefiore in anticipation of his arrival in Jerusalem at the end of July. He apprised Montefiore of the opportunity presented by Ṣa'anan, a village mentioned in the Bible (Josh 15:37), where a parcel of land the size of 4,000 dunams was offered for sale by the financially-strapped Ottoman authorities. None other than Judah Alkalay seconded Mani in a postscript saying that the plot was worth a hundred times the going price.[63] Alkalay had finally made *aliyah* to Palestine the previous year and recently had spent several weeks in Hebron in the company of Mani. In the beginning of June

59 This document appears facing the frontispiece of Perera (1996). The author ascribes the family's subsequent misfortunes to their failure to heed the testament. Like his father, Yiṣḥaq Moše appears among a group of Bet El kabbalists in the similarly-entitled appeal *Ma Nora ha-Maqom ha-Ze* (Jerusalem, 1917). See Gaon (1938, vol. 1:558).

60 Gaon (1938, vol. 1:438–440, 444); Giller (2010b and 2010c).

61 See Chaikin's appeal to Schlesinger to defend Mani from his enemies in Hebron in Pinto (1879:45–47) and Chaikin's reassurance to Schlesinger that he has nothing against Franco, Mani's rival, in *Dim'at 'Ašuqim* (Jerusalem, 1879). Halevy (1975:passim) catalogues the pamphlets pro and con of the controversies surrounding both men.

62 Schlesinger (1900:13b), "Hitnaṣṣělut."

63 Anonymous (1875), Hebrew section, Lit. B. Mani and Alkalay's letters are among the few published in the original Hebrew. Alkalay had arrived in the Holy Land in 1874; he died in obscurity in Jerusalem in 1878; see Loebel (1989:43). As far as can be ascertained, Schlesinger did not have any contact with him, although he does acknowledge his work *Šělom Yěrušalayim* (Ofen [Buda], 1840), but misattributing it to "the kabbalist Eliyyahu," that is Guttmacher; Schlesinger (1898:48b). While he referred several times to Kalischer and Gutmacher in his writings, he never mentioned Alkalay, possibly because of his close ties to the French Alliance Israélite Universelle.

he published a letter in the Hebrew weekly *Ḥavaṣelet*, explaining that a few days earlier the rabbi had been informed about the forthcoming sale. Mani was encouraged to write to Montefiore, and Alkalay had appended his postscript.[64]

Several months were to pass before Schlesinger embarked surreptitiously with a group of his supporters to Hebron. During the summer, he had found himself embroiled in a heated controversy sparked by his recently published book, *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš*. The book was condemned and ordered burned, Schlesinger was physically threatened. One can only surmise that this may have been the reason why he delayed his trip to Hebron. While most of his company stayed behind to pray at the Cave of the Patriarchs, he set out for Ṣa'anan with Sulayman Menaḥem Mani (1850–1924), the son of the rabbi and later his successor to the post, as well as the wealthy David Gutmann who had recently arrived from Hungary.[65]

Between Hebron and Beit Guvrin they came upon a lush valley and mountains that reminded Schlesinger of the richness of the Maramaros region in Hungary where simple Jews lived and toiled in harmony with nature. Awestruck by the beauty of the land, Schlesinger underwent an ecstatic spiritual experience. "I prayed with intentions (*kawwanot*) so fervent that even on Yom Kippur, I had not prayed with such intensity. Tears flowed freely as I beheld the magnitude of our loss."[66] Ṣa'anan was no ordinary village. Later Schlesinger would note, "A great salvation hangs upon it, but for now I cannot go into details."[67] Presumably the place held Messianic associations. Spirits soaring high, the trio returned to Jerusalem. Elated, Schlesinger burst into song on the way, composing a poem with the first letter of each line forming an acrostic, Ṣa'anan: "You are the one who knows the hidden and the mysteries."[68]

It is striking that the expedition to Ṣa'anan is narrated in a section of *Šimru Mišpaṭ* (1900) written in Jüdisch-Deutsch, prefaced with an "apology" for resorting to an unrefined language like that of a "peasant in the Land of Israel" (*ayn poyer fun Ertsisroel*).[69] This choice, however, was a deliberate tactic aimed at reaching a wider

64 Alkalay published his letter in *Ḥavaṣelet* V/31, 4 June 1875, 250.

65 What follows is based upon Schlesinger (1900:13b–14b). A Hebrew translation appears in Shaharai (1942:68–71) without noting the original language. See also Amit (1977:80–84). Gutmann's participation helps place the journey to Tzaanan (Ṣa'anan) after September 1875, the month he departed Hungary. See his notice in the Budapest Orthodox Jüdisch-Deutsch weekly *Sheves Achim* V/49, 7 September 1875, 1. He will be Schlesinger's constant companion in various schemes to purchase land, ultimately realizing success with Petah Tikva.

66 Schlesinger (1900:14a). See also Silber (2008c:128, 139).

67 Cited from a manuscript by the editor of *Šĕ'elot u-Tšuvot Rabbi 'Aqiva Yosef, Yore De'a*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 2016), vol. 2 § 43:66, note 1.

68 Schlesinger (1914:43b–44a).

69 Schlesinger (1914), introduction in Jüdisch-Deutsch.

Jewish readership. Schlesinger wrote his more important works in Hebrew after his aliyah to Palestine, aimed at an educated, literate audience benefitting from Hebrew's status as a lingua franca accessible to Jews across the Diaspora and especially the various different communities in Palestine. Nevertheless, on occasion he ventured once again into publishing in Jüdisch-Deutsch. Between 1878 and 1883 he released sporadically *'Ammud ha-Yir'a* in Jerusalem, reviving the Hebrew–Jüdisch-Deutsch monthly he had previously published in Hungary a decade earlier.[70]

Interestingly, his teachings also found expression not only in the Jüdisch-Deutsch of his native Hungary, but also for the first time in Polish Yiddish. Noaḥ Ḥayyim Lewin (1834–1916), a prolific author who compiled numerous Hebrew and Yiddish works over five decades, published a Yiddish booklet titled *'Am Sĕgulla* in 1889. It must have enjoyed great popularity, since it was subsequently republished in 1898, 1902, and 1909, all in Warsaw. Lewin introduced the work, dedicated to elucidating the significance of the thirteen principles for morality and piety by highlighting the negligence of the rabbinic and lay authorities in tending to the spiritual welfare of common folk, leaving them vulnerable to pernicious and heretical texts in Hebrew and "Jargon." The main content of the booklet, he wrote, was authored by an anonymous "holy man," described as "a great scholar and devout Jew," who composed the text in Ivri-Taytsh (Yiddish) for the benefit of all, including women and children. While the third and fourth editions mirrored the first two, they now acknowledged Schlesinger's authorship in the subtitle, "from the author of *Lev ha-'Ivri*." Apparently, the two had arrived at some sort of arrangement. The titlepage now also added "the necessity for every household to possess this book to ensure its spiritual health and a steadfastness to Judaism." Some thirty years ago, I was told that Haredi circles weighed reissuing the book in a more up to date Yiddish.

6 Mobilizing Sephardim for the Culture and Language Wars

The significance that Schlesinger attributed to language cannot be overstated; it infused every aspect of his writing. The notion of a unique Jewish tongue, whether Yiddish, Ladino or Judeo-Arabic, one that distinguished Jews from others, formed the cornerstone of Schlesinger's worldview. Indeed, he argued, language served as the very bedrock of Jewish identity, not only preceding in time the reception of

70 About Schlesinger and *'Ammud ha-Yir'a* see the article by Binyamin Hunyadi in this volume.

Torah at Sinai, but also acting as its necessary precondition. This, however, was not a widely accepted notion. The importance and significance of language had to be emphasized repeatedly in face of prevailing beliefs that frequently downplayed its value. Such indeed was the view of one of the foremost Orthodox authorities in Hungary, Moše Schick, the Maharam Schick, who dismissively declared: "Someone who speaks French or German should not be labeled a Frenchman or a German; the noun is defined by the essence, and quintessentially he remains *a Jewish man, the son of Ya'ir, son of Šimi*. A man like this cannot be called a *lo'azi*."[71] But this was precisely what Schlesinger advocated, ideas that, coincidentally or perhaps not, also dominated the emphasis of Hungarian nationalism on language as the determining factor of national identity. Language played a more fundamental role in defining Jewish identity for Schlesinger than even religious observance, hence his sharp critique of the unquestionably devout modern Orthodox who had forsaken Yiddish in favor of German. At Perera's funeral he warned: "Do not be indifferent saying, 'What's the big deal? It is merely language' [. . .] No! matters of life and death hang on the power of the tongue!"[72]

In Hungary, as early as 1863 in several Yiddish and Hebrew pamphlets and elaborated more expansively in his 1864 international best seller *Lev ha-'Ivri*, Schlesinger condemned German, while passionately championing Yiddish as not only a "sacred tongue," but also as a "national or at least a semi-national language." These claims were roundly ridiculed not only by progressive Neologues and Reformers, but also many Orthodox.[73] But the most important statement issued against linguistic acculturation appeared the following year, the 1865 Pěsaq Bet Din of Michalowce. As noted, its formulation as a *pěsaq din* suggested it carried the weight of a legally-binding ruling. Formulated primarily by Hillel Lichtenstein, yet undoubtedly with the input of his son-in-law Schlesinger, it echoed many of the ideas put forth in *Lev ha-'Ivri*. To this very day it is invoked as a sort of manifesto of ultra-Orthodoxy, in particular by its Hungarian variant. While its nine points denounced several innovations in the synagogue, its main focus was a critique of sermons delivered in "the language of the nations", arguing that they turned the synagogue into a place of heresy. The preacher must deliver sermons in "the Jewish language that is spoken by observant Jews in this country." As one critic noted, "the greatest emphasis is laid on the sanctification of Jargon in the entire document."[74]

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71 Moše Schick to Hillel Lichtenstein, 2 Av 1865, *Liqquṭe šĕ'elot u-tšuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, 74 § 11 bottom of the second column cited by Silber (1992:72).

72 Cf. Prov 18:21. Schlesinger's statement appears in Perera (1888:48b). He employs the phrase elsewhere as well, see for instance, Schlesinger (1901:viii).

73 Silber (2003:225–254).

74 *Ben Chananja* 8 (1866), 457–458.

Although eventually it gathered seventy signatures, the Pěsaq Bet Din encountered widespread rejection by the vast majority of Orthodox rabbis within Hungary and was all but disregarded with apathy beyond the country's borders. Aside from two Hassidic rebbes in Galicia, Ḥayyim Halberstamm of Sanz and Yiṣḥaq Ayzik Eichenstein of Zhidachow, who had considerable following in Hungary and had been asked to append their endorsements, no other traditional religious authority in Eastern Europe or elsewhere followed suit.[75] That is, until Schlesinger arrived in Palestine, as we shall see.

While language remained a source of contention in Palestine, the synagogue with German sermons clearly no longer had a significant role to play. Instead, the focus shifted to secular schools. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, repeated efforts to introduce secular education in Jerusalem and the other "holy cities" were met with fierce resistance, often physically violent. A small yet influential faction in the Old Yishuv dictated the tone by furiously campaigning against such initiatives, excommunicating any who would support the establishment of these schools.[76] By the time Schlesinger had arrived in Jerusalem, three such anathemas had been issued against *shkoles* in the previous decade and a half.

Schlesinger now assumed a familiar role akin to his involvement in the Hungarian Kulturkampf a decade earlier: tracking down unpublished documents, and compiling anthologies of source materials. In 1863 he had unearthed the long-forgotten testament of the Ḥatam Sofer, publishing it with his own commentary under the title *Naʿar ʿIvri*, expanding it the following year into the more comprehensive *Lev ha-ʿIvri*. In 1866 he published a second volume of *Lev ha-ʿIvri*, collecting passages that condemned alien wisdom and acculturation from dozens of early modern rabbinic texts. And now, barely two years after he had settled in Jerusalem in 1870, he threw himself once again into feverish literary activity.

In the late spring of 1872 the historian Heinrich Graetz, accompanied by two businessmen, visited the Holy Land. What they saw and heard from informants appalled them. In May, a *Denkschrift*, a private memorandum was composed outlining a series of reforms relating to the dismal conditions they encountered—among others, widespread poverty, administrative inefficiency and financial corruption, early marriages that were unhealthy both physically and morally, ineffectual response to missionary activity, and a dismayingly low level of education.[77] True, the Lämel school founded by Ludwig August Frankl on behalf of a Viennese phi-

75 Katz (1998); Weiss (2010b); and Silber (1992).

76 See for instance Ben-Ghedalia (2010).

77 It was first published only forty-five years later: "Denkschrift über die Zustände der jüdischen Gemeinden in Palästina und besonders in Jerusalem," in Meisl (1917:142–151). Some suggest that the author might not have been Graetz. See note 81 below.

lanthropist in 1856 and the Doresh Zion school established by Joseph Blumenthal in 1866 were still functioning. While the former also taught some secular studies and the latter only religious, initially both set out to introduce foreign languages in their curricula. Blumenthal even sought to banish Jewish languages altogether, whether Yiddish, Ladino or Judeo-Arabic. "Ashkenazic children will study Bible, Mishnah and Gemara in pure German, not in the confused language incomprehensible to all, while Sephardi children will study the same but only in pure and clean Arabic or Spanish."[78] By 1872, however, Ashkenazic children had been withdrawn and in both schools instruction was conducted in the "spaniolischen" idiom, that is Ladino.[79]

More consequential was the involvement of Esriel Hildesheimer, the rector of the Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, who reacted to Graetz's memorandum with one of his own. During the close to two decades he spent in Hungary as its leading modern Orthodox rabbi—he established a combined gymnasium and yeshiva in Eisenstadt—he had been intensely involved in affairs of the Holy Land. Although he had long opposed Graetz on religious grounds, he accepted the veracity of the report and circulated his internal memorandum among a small select circle. The situation was even more dire than *Denkschrift* had laid out, he wrote. "Only a small part of the dreadful conditions were enumerated." A most elemental remedy would be to create modern educational institutions "even in the Orient [. . .] indeed more so if the youth are not to be sent either to the schools of the Alliance or of Ludwig August Frankl." He knew of course that such schools had encountered fierce opposition, even the Blumenthal school managed by the pious Isaac Prager (Oplatka).[80] Ignoring some of the negative responses his memorandum received, Hildesheimer proceeded by calling upon the public to establish "a well ordered orphanage that would become a nursery of spiritual culture and moral elevation for Palestine, where the wards would be thoroughly and methodically instructed in Jewish teachings as well as necessary secular studies."[81]

78 Joseph Blumenthal corresponding from Paris in *Ha-Lĕvanon* 23, 1 December 1865, 359.

79 "Denkschrift," 147 in Meisl (1917).

80 Hildesheimer (1965:85–95). Oplatka, a Bohemian Ashkenazi who assimilated into Sephardic society in Jerusalem, was an ancestor of the author A. B. Yehoshua.

81 The "Aufruf" was signed not only by Hildesheimer, but also by the Berlin merchant Moses Gottschalk Lewy, who had accompanied Graetz to Jerusalem and, according to some, was the author of the *Denkschrift*. "Die Gründung eines Waisenhauses in Jerusalem," *Der Israelit* 30, 24 July 1872, 645–646. Hildesheimer had also briefed Moses Schick, the rabbi of Huszt and the preeminent halakhic authority in Hungary, about his intentions. Schick angrily objected, arguing that while there might be justifications for teaching secular subjects in the Diaspora, none existed in the Holy Land. See his *Responsa Maharam Schick*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* § 311 dated 7 July 1872.

Schlesinger swiftly responded to Hildesheimer's initiative by gathering the excommunications from 1856, 1862, and 1865, which had not been previously published, issuing them in an inflammatory pamphlet, *Qol Nehi mi-Ṣiyyon,* in late autumn 1872. He introduced the documents with an extensive preface and concluded with a full-throated condemnation of the neo-Orthodox paladin whom the Hungarian ultra-Orthodox had long denounced as an arch-heretic.[82] Hillel Lichtenstein who did not pass up the opportunity to join in the fray, sent to Jerusalem two separate letters, charging Hildesheimer as an *'oḵer Yisra'el*, inciter against Jews. He cited Haim Sofer, the rabbi of Munkács, who vented his rage with colorful hyperboles against "the evil Hildesheimer, the horse and chariot of the Evil Inclination, his power and success are unnatural, the Guardian Angel of Esau rides upon him! Of all the sinners who emerged in the last century, none worked to undermine religion and faith to the extent that he did!"[83]

To enhance the authority of the documents reproduced in *Qol Nehi mi-Ṣiyyon*, Schlesinger listed the names of the signatories, albeit only of those who by then had passed away. A month later, a dense four-page broadside *Lahaṭ ha-Ḥerev* appeared. This time, several hundred living individuals reaffirmed the earlier prohibitions against schools where reading or writing in foreign languages would be taught.[84]

Of particular note was the failure of the Ashkenazic establishment to persuade the lay and religious leadership of the Sephardic Kolel to participate in these condemnations. This was a sore point that was not overlooked, but neither was it emphasized. The prevailing sentiment was that the Sephardim, lacking firsthand experience with the cultural and religious devastation endured by the Ashkenazim in the Diaspora, were naive regarding the gravity of the threat posed by the proposed schools. Resigned to the unwillingness of the Sephardim to be swayed, the Ashkenazic establishment adopted a laissez-faire approach, reluctantly acknowledging the less stringent views of their Sephardic counterparts on secular education and linguistic acculturation, which they, of course, deemed an impotent religious response. They contented themselves with asserting that the choices and actions of the Sephardim held no relevance and lacked authority for Ashkenazim.

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82 Schlesinger (1872). It was published 8 November 1872; see Halevy (1975:80–81, no. 181).

83 Lichtenstein (1890:2a, 8a). The pamphlet reprinted a published letter of 23 December 1872, now lost, and a second letter, dated 12 March 1873, originally published as a four-page broadside, *Ṣiyyon al yarpu yadeḵa,* presumably issued in Kolomea, Galicia. It carries the National Library of Israel signature: R2° 75A 1154.

84 Lichtenstein (1872/1873). The first and last date of the signatures was 4 and 31 December 1872. Schlesinger's name does not appear among the signatories, perhaps a clue that indeed he was behind the publication. Surprisingly, Halevy (1975) does not list it.

Sephardic honor was somewhat redeemed in the eyes of the zealots by the few individual scholars who endorsed the condemnations while expressing hope that their community leadership would eventually align with the Ashkenazic Kolels. Here, Schlesinger, especially his personal connections, played a crucial role.[85] In collecting documents for *Qol Nehi mi-Ṣiyyon*, he had unearthed not only the three previous excommunications produced by the Ashkenazic Kolels, but also a rare individual statement from an esteemed Sephardi scholar, who added his weight to the 1856 censure and lamented the Sephardic Kolel's decision to remain aloof from the controversy.

> And would that it be, that the Sephardim also do so and then all the Kolels in Jerusalem would be in agreement, and the Name of Heaven would also be sanctified by the Sephardim. But what can we do, for they have not yet been tested, nor withstood the trial, thus have not comprehended its future consequences. Although I've heard that they have made some adjustments and taken precautions, my mind is not at ease, as I fear these measures will prove ineffective. Thus, on this matter, I align with the Ashkenazic rabbis [. . .].[86]

This stance, which diverged sharply from the views held by the lay and rabbinic leadership of the Sephardic Kolel, was articulated not by a marginal scholar, but by a major figure in the Old Yishuv, Rafa'el Yĕdidya Abulafia (1806–1871), the leading kabbalist of Jerusalem who served as the seventh head of Bet El.[87] This was a real coup for Schlesinger. It is reasonable to assume that he obtained the document due to his connections with the kabbalist yeshiva, likely through the mediation of Perera.

The following year, among the hundreds of signatories listed in *Lahaṭ ha-Ḥerev*, there was only one sole Sephardi endorsing the excommunication, echoing concerns similar to that of Abulafia.

> Truly, all their [=the Ashkenazim's] words ring true and just, for they rightly perceive the ultimate consequence of this path is death. May our esteemed brethren, the scholars and leaders of Sephardic Jewry across all lands of the living, also take a stand against this peril, to purge the land of idols and eradicate this evil from the Holy Land.[88]

It comes as no surprise that this solitary opinion belonged to none other than Eliyya Sulayman Mani of Hebron, "my main ally," as Schlesinger declared, "with whom I entered into a covenant," for a long time the sole Sephardic communal rabbi of

85 In particular his ties to the Baharan family who were most active in opposing Frankl's initiative in 1856. Later, David Baharan became Schlesinger's son-in-law and collaborator.

86 Schlesinger (1872:4a).

87 Giller (2010a).

88 Anonymous (1872a:3).

stature who in the coming years would come out against the schools. Unlike many Ashkenazim who were content to adopt an indifferent attitude toward Sephardic laxity, Schlesinger was deeply troubled by what he perceived was an accepted double standard and invested much in combating it. "Therefore, to prevent two teachings (*Torahs*) in this matter, by creating a distinction between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, we copy the endorsement of Sephardic scholars who have undersigned in matters of *truth of Jacob*. And your sign is *Jacob came Šalem*, the word being an acronym for *šem* (name), *lašon* (language), *malbuš* (dress)."[89] *Šalem* was Schlesinger's shorthand slogan for resisting even the most basic forms of assimilation, particularly linguistic acculturation. In his campaign to preserve Yiddish at all costs, he now celebrated those Sephardim and Mizrahim who took a similar stance to safeguard Ladino and Judeo-Arabic.

7 *Ma'ase Avot—Ma'ase Sěfarad*

In 1901, Schlesinger published *Ma'ase Avot*, the ultimate anthology of documents condemning modern schools, creating a canon of resistance. Over the next century, it went through several reprints and editions, and has proved a boon to historians.[90] The book was divided into three sections: the first was dedicated to reproducing the endorsements of the 1865 Pěsaq Bet Din of Michalowce by local authorities that he had published earlier in 1875 in his controversial *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš*. The second was devoted to various excommunications in the Holy Land, some of which we have already encountered. And the third included various letters and incidents documenting the resistance to the schools, in various communities in the Diaspora as well. Most striking is the notable presence of Sephardic and Mizrachi objections in all three sections.

The significance of the Sephardic involvement in the fight against secular schools gained greater salience as the Alliance and other philanthropic agencies began to make headway in disseminating their vision of modern education among Middle Eastern and North African communities during the last decades of the century.

One of the earliest clashes took place in Istanbul, and Schlesinger honors this episode with the rubric, "The first who sacrificed their lives to sanctity the Name."

89 Schlesinger (1901:59a).

90 1961 Jerusalem: n.p.; 1976 Jerusalem: n.p.; 1980 Jerusalem: Měḳon Or Yisra'el; 1986 Union City, NJ: Gross. All are reprints of the 1901 edition and from 1977 on, have an appended section, "Yalquṭ Miḳtavim."

Briefly, he recounts the struggles of Rabbi Yiṣḥaq ʻAqrish (Acrische) who played a key role in opposing the school supported by the affluent Abraham de Camondo (initially an Austrian knight and later an Italian count) during the 1850s. The character of the school, especially its attitude toward Ladino, can be gauged from a circular issued by the Ḥaḳam Bashi himself in 1856, coinciding with the conflict over the Lämel school in Jerusalem that very year.[91]

> Article 7. As the language spoken by the Israelites of the Levant is not a proper language and cannot be useful to the youth, we order the creation of free schools for the poor, where they will be taught the Turkish, Greek, French, and Italian languages, according to the localities. Everywhere, Turkish is compulsory, as it is the language of the country and benefits the nation the most. In these schools, arithmetic, geography, and all necessary knowledge to form virtuous individuals will also be taught.[92]

Over the next few years, the Istanbul community was rocked by recurring clashes over the school and its curriculum. "Eighty scholars agreed that no one is permitted to send his son or daughter to the school where they study non-Jewish languages [. . .] excepting the language of Ishmael," wrote ʻAqrish. When the controversy reached its climax, Schlesinger related, ʻAqrish confronted Camondo at his house and "with shofar blasts, excommunicated him." He was promptly clamped into irons and sent off to prison. Tens of thousands filled the streets in protest, pleading with the Sultan for the rabbi's release, which he granted. Boosted onto shoulders, the rabbi was triumphantly carried home. Such egregious zealotry won the admiration of Schlesinger who had himself employed "holy insolence, *ḥuṣpa di-qĕduša*" as a proper tactic on more than one occasion. The travails of ʻAqrish persisted, leading him to depart for the Holy Land. In 1874 he arrived in Jerusalem and published his book of responsa, *Qiryat Arbaʻ*, that recounted his campaigns against schools that taught foreign languages as well as his opposition to Freemasonry. He made his home in Hebron, where he eventually passed away.[93] Schlesinger concluded the account of this zealot whom he had dubbed a pioneering martyr with the words, "Thus I have heard from trusted people, and from his own holy lips." It is reasonable to deduce that his encounter with ʻAqrish occurred within Eliyya Sulayman Mani's circle of Sephardic scholars in Hebron.

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91 Schlesinger (1901:100–101). On this episode see the rambling narrative of ʻAqrish (1876: § 13, but also § 14–16, 185b–194b) and the excerpts selected by Asaf (1948[2], vol. 4:212–220); Rodrigue (1990a:41); Rodrigue (1990b:52–53); Harel (2002:40); Franco (1897:164–165); Halevy (1975:117–118, no. 281), who refers to a detailed article by Kantorowitz (1911:58–59).

92 Dated 7 March 1856, it was published as "Circulaire du Hacham-Baschi de Constantinople," *Univers Israélite* XI (1855–1856), 342–345. See Rodrigue (1990a:41, 182, note 72).

93 For the date of his arrival in Jerusalem, see ʻAqrish (1876:192b). He appears as a member of the Bet Din of Hasköy in Istanbul as late as January 1873. See *El Tiempo*, 29 January 1873, 2.

As chronicler of episodes that might otherwise have been lost to oblivion, Schlesinger diligently gathered materials for a documentary history, aiming to preserve a record, particularly concerning Sephardic and Oriental Jewry's resistance to secular studies and the erasure of Jewish languages. Learning that Abdallah Somekh (1813–1889), the distinguished rabbi of Baghdad had successfully thwarted the establishment of a girls' school by the Alliance, he solicited "a copy of the protest along with all the names of the signatories." Under the title "Ma'ase Sĕfarad", Schlesinger prefaced the 1886 document with its two hundred and fifty signatures, by noting that while Baghdad as well as Aleppo had waged successful campaigns of resistance against the Alliance, Tunis and Algiers had not been as fortunate and had fallen into its insidious net.[94]

But perhaps his greatest coup in enlisting Sephardim for his cause were the new endorsements he garnered for the 1865 Pĕsaq Din Michalowce. These appeared in the introduction to his controversial *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš* published ten years later, in 1875. We recall that the nine-point Pĕsaq Din of Mihalowce had focused on German sermons in the synagogue, but now Schlesinger revealed that there was a secret tenth paragraph that could only be divulged in the Holy Land.

> (Ten: Another point, weightier than all others combined, an invitation to sin, the very source of all evil. The rabbis refrained from revealing it due to the government's edict: It is prohibited to learn or teach one's son any studies apart from Torah or a trade unrelated to external wisdom; no writing and language of the Chaldeans. And already there has been a ruling by the great Gaon Rabbi Akiva Eger stating that this matter falls into the category of "be killed, rather than transgress"[95] [. . .] and whoever is incapable to resist, is obligated to depart from his country to save himself and his offspring [. . .]).[96]

Nine out of the fifteen new endorsements of the Pĕsaq Bet Din of Michalowce are by Sephardim: the very first, preceding Meir Auerbach, the head of the Ashkenazic rabbinic court, is the Rishon leZion, the Ḥaḵam Bashi, Avraham Aškĕnazi; third, David Ben Šim'on, head of the Mughrabi *bet din*, along with two of its members; fourth, Ya'aqov Ša'ul Elyashar (Eliachar), the head of the Sephardic rabbinic court and future Rishon leZion, along with two of its members, Raḥamim Yosef Franco, the future rabbi of Hebron, and Šalom Moše Ḥay Gagin, the future head of Bet El (1881–1883); fifth, Aharon 'Azri'el (1871–1881), at the time the head of Bet El, and

94 See Schlesinger (1901:77–81) for the protest of Baghdad Jewry against the Alliance. For a summary of Schlesinger's letter see Sassoon (1932, vol. 1:405, MS 587 F). A facsimile of Schlesinger's letter itself is reproduced at the end of "Yalquṭ Miḵtavim" appended to the 1976 reprint edition of *Ma'aseh Avot*; see Schlesinger (1976).

95 Cf. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 74a–b.

96 Schlesinger (1875:7a–7b). While *Ma'ase Avot* preserves the parenthesis; a new edition of *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš* does not bother to do so, see Schlesinger (2005).

two of its senior members; sixth, yet another Sephardic *bet din*; seventh, Eliyya Sulayman Mani of Hebron and members of his court; tenth, the Sephardic *bet din* of Safed (apparently Mughrabi scholars); eleventh, Aharon Moše Perera of Bet El; twelth, Sason Běḵar Moše, yet another future head of Bet El (1883–1903); fourteenth, the rabbinic court and lay leadership of the Sephardim of Tiberias.

I bring the roster to highlight that the opposition to acculturation was by no means limited to marginal figures, as is argued at times, but rather the most eminent Sephardic rabbis. The prominent presence of the kabbalists of Bet El, collectively and individually, is striking, but so is that of outstanding scholars serving in rabbinical posts such as Aškěnazi, Elyashar and Mani.

The Ḥaḵam Bashi echoes Schlesinger's mantra *Šalem*, on the importance of preserving distinguishing names, language and dress; in a likewise fashion, Elyashar mentions "the Israelite tongue which all in the Diaspora have adopted since our exile from our Land"; Mani denounces those "who have changed their language and customs in the ways of the Gentiles"; the Safed Sephardim rail against the innovations, noting that "our pure nation was praised for not changing its language"; Perera, in a long historical view, traces how only the Jews, of all ancient peoples, managed to survive the challenge of assimilation over the millennia by rejecting any changes and adhering to the customs and language of their ancestors.

Yet what is striking is that, although language change is often denounced as it is in the first nine points of the Pěsaq Din, there is no mention of the additional tenth paragraph and schooling. One can only surmise that when Schlesinger first solicited endorsements, he had not yet added the tenth point. Not all of the *haskamot* carry dates, but most that do were composed several years earlier, in 1871 or 1872. But the impression is created that they all endorse the tenth point as well; that it is "prohibited to learn or teach one's son any studies, apart from Torah or a trade unrelated to external wisdom; no writing and language of the Chaldeans." Schlesinger probably did not feel any compunction in creating this sleight of hand, consoling himself that his confreres would doubtless have approved.

My purpose in this section was not to provide a broad history of the encounter of Sephardim with acculturation; there are several excellent studies on the topic.[97] Rather I aimed to highlight the activities of Schlesinger in trying to align Sephardim with more intransigent Ashkenazic worldviews. In this, Schlesinger played a key role. He recognized the importance of print media in preserving a record of both the present and the past, hence his efforts to solicit and publish current opinions, as well as recover and collect unpublished texts in order to create a documentary

97 Kaniel (2000); Harel (2002); and in general the fruitful exchange between Brown (2001); Zohar (2002); and Brown (2002, 2006).

history. *Ma'ase Avot* was the crowning achievement of thirty years of an assiduous effort to establish a canon of resistance, in particular to linguistic acculturation, extolling the virtues of Jewish languages, both Yiddish and Ladino.

While Schlesinger cast his net wide, there was at least one document that inexplicably had eluded him, one that would have provided an excellent complement to his 1901 *Ma'ase Avot,* decisively removing any doubts as to the capacity of Sephardim to adopt a rigid non-compromising attitude toward modern schooling. That this document was rescued from certain oblivion only five decades later, demonstrates the importance of Schlesinger's work in preserving the historical record.

In 1887, the Sephardic rabbinic establishment of Jerusalem proclaimed one of the sharpest bans ever cast against a European-oriented school, an institution that they had endorsed despite Ashkenazic objections just nine years earlier. Now disillusioned, they declared that sending a child to the school was "as if one would sacrifice his son to idolatry." It recalled that "the divine kabbalist, the pious rabbi, the late Yĕdidya Rafa'el Abulafia and the divine kabbalist, his honor our teacher the rabbi Rabbi Eliyyahu Mani prohibited establishing such a school in the Holy Land." Under no circumstances was a child permitted to attend such a school even if it would appear not be harmful to religion. To naively believe that, would be utter nonsense! Any who would violate the ban, would "not only be excluded from the Jewish collective, but his son would not be circumcised, nor would he be buried in a Jewish cemetery."

More than thirty scholars signed the ban. The first to sign was Ya'aqov Ša'ul Elyashar, at the time head of the Sephardic bet din of Jerusalem who would soon succeed as Rishon leZion,[98] while the third signatory was none other than Aharon Moše Perera, at the time at death's door. (Apprehensive over the schools, his last words to Schlesinger were, "Listen R. Akiva, this is the Lord's war against Amalek generation after generation! We must fight!"). Then followed Sason Bĕḵar Moše, the head of Bet El, and his successor Masoud ha-Kohen Alhadad, as well as twenty-eight more rabbis.[99] And among them, alongside Abulafia, Perera and Mani,

98 Neither Elmaleh (1970) nor Efrati (1975) refer to this document, which stands in stark contrast to the moderate image of Elyashar presented by both. This moderation found expression in an unusual plea Elyashar published in 1897, urging an end to the religious schism within Hungarian Jewry. One of his respondents, Moše Šĕmu'el Glasner, rabbi of Klausenburg/Kolozsvár/Cluj, wrote: "Had you known the high walls that separate Neologues and Orthodox, you would not have written as you did," and went on to justify the necessity of maintaining this sharp separation (Glasner 1983, vol. 2:responsum § 86; Sorek 2024:140–141). Elyashar's letter was addressed to R. Zusman Sofer, dated 17 Shevat 5657, and appeared only in Magyar translation in the Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* on 7 February 1897, 3.

99 Ben-Ya'aqov (1951). The manuscript itself is in the National Library of Israel, in the Meir Benayahu collection, MS TEU 20.2. It seems that at the time, the young Benayahu, one of the most prolific

Schlesinger's usual suspects, was the signature, of Eli'ezer Papo, the grandson of the author of *Pele Yo'eṣ*.[100]

8 Conclusion: Languages of Virtue and Virtues of Language

The translation of *Pele Yo'eṣ* revealed an unusual engagement of Ashkenazim with Sephardic rabbinic culture. Although initially composed in Hebrew, the musar teachings of *Pele Yo'eṣ* found their broad popular appeal through translations into Ladino and Yiddish. Within the genre of musar literature, it was these translations that effectively realized their potential as languages of virtue.

Pele Yo'eṣ was embraced by the most intransigent elements of Orthodoxy in Hungary, men such as Hillel Lichtenstein, because they recognized that, alongside the traditional themes of musar, the work also echoed their concerns over the erosion of tradition. They initiated measures such as the Pěsaq Din of Michalowce, placing particular importance on resisting even the most basic forms of acculturation, lauding the virtues of language by imbuing Yiddish with holiness and for some, like Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, no less importantly national significance. However, there was growing recognition that state intervention in Jewish life, especially compulsory secular education, would inevitably bring about a linguistic transformation that would be difficult to resist. *Pele Yo'eṣ* had exhorted Jews to abandon Europe for

historians of Sephardic Jewry, excavated the manuscript from his father's extensive collection and in his capacity as the editor of *Yĕrušalayim*, passed it on to Ben-Ya'aqov. But scarcely two years earlier, he seems to have been unaware of its existence. Benayahu had then objected in an addendum to Gelber (1949:95–108, 199–219), claiming that there was in fact one prominent Sephardi who in 1856 joined the Ashkenazim banning the school, namely the head of Bet El, Yĕdidya Rafa'el Abulafia. Benayahu based himself on an 1882 broadside ban (at the time he was not sure of its date) that cited both Abulafia and Mani's objections. He did not know that Schlesinger had published earlier not only the opinions of both in *Qol Nehi mi-Ṣiyyon* and *Laḥaṭ ha-Ḥerev* (1872), but also that this 1882 ban appeared once again in *Ma'ase Avot* (1901). He was also unaware of the statements in *Bet Yosef Ḥadaš*, Schlesinger (1876:69–70).

100 One might wonder whether this was Eli'ezer Ben Yĕhuda Papo or Eli'ezer Ben Šem Ṭov Papo (Sarajevo, ?–Jerusalem, 1898), the subject of Šmid (2012). If we accept that Eli'ezer Ben Šem Ṭov Papo was still serving on the bet din of Sarajevo until 1884, then we can state that the Eli'ezer Papo who appears on the earlier 1882 ban was indeed the grandson of the author of *Pele Yo'eṣ*. However, the fact that Eli'ezer Ben Šem Ṭov had published a book in Jerusalem in 1884 might suggest that he had arrived earlier. See Šmid (2012:40, 50). I thank Katja Šmid for clarifying this point. As for the 1887 text, we find Papo among some of the same scholars who signed in 1882 and assume that the same Papo signed both bans.

the Ottoman Empire, where the state did not intervene in shaping Jewish culture, and Schlesinger, increasingly despairing for the future of Jews in the Diaspora, fled to seek a safe haven in the Land of Israel.

To his chagrin, Schlesinger found that the pristine Jewish society he had envisioned untainted by foreign culture was threatened not by the state, but by various Jewish philanthropic undertakings that strove to reform education and eliminate the "corrupt" Jewish languages, Ladino and Yiddish. While there had been earlier initiatives to found new schools that had elicited stout resistance and the casting of bans, what was exceptionally galling was that the latest assault was led by his archenemy and nemesis from Hungary, the modern Orthodox Rabbi Dr. Esriel Hildesheimer.

Schlesinger brought his experience as one of the most active Orthodox agitators in the Diaspora to bear on countering these initiatives. His earlier experience publishing the best-selling *Lev ha-ʿIvri* had taught him to value the printed word; as an amateur historian he learned to prize the historical record and make it known. Now, in the campaign against the new schools, he uncovered, collected, archived, edited, anthologized, and published materials that might otherwise have been lost. A specific aspect of his campaign over the years emphasizing the virtues of language, was geared toward mobilizing Sephardim who were often viewed as exempt from this struggle.

Schlesinger was also aware of the looming presence of the French Alliance Israélite Universelle with its *mission civilisatrice* to the Jews of the Orient, bent on educating Jewish children into little Frenchmen. In his activities as a reactionary agitator, he meant to create quite consciously a counter narrative of sorts to the bulldozing success of the Alliance Israelite in transforming Jewish education and culture. Already, a decade earlier in 1863, he had proposed establishing an opposing organization of his own creation, the Alliance of the Hebrews, or Kolel ʿIvrim. Unlike the assimilating "Israelites", the "Hebrews" would loyally cling to every element of the culture no matter how minor. Confronted by the challenges posed by Hildesheimer and the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), in 1873 Schlesinger published in response his exceptional vision of an authentic, untainted Hebrew utopia, *Sefer Ḥevra Maḥazire ʿAṭara lĕ-Yošna ʿim Kolel ʿIvrim,* that is, "Society for Restoring the Crown to its Pristine Glory, with the Alliance of the Hebrews." He did not shirk away from educational changes geared toward a Jewish society that was to return to the land and become engaged not only in study but also in productive occupations.

He aimed to reclaim an authenticity rooted in a distant pre-exilic past, untainted by the cultural compromises of the Diaspora. In linguistic terms, the virtues of language entailed reviving spoken Hebrew, which would also function to unify the diverse Jewish communities. However, it was clear that in the immediate future

"Jewish languages" would still be retained, and educational instruction would take place in Ladino and Yiddish. In an unusually daring section of his tract devoted to women and the education of girls entitled *Bet Ya'aqov*, he wrote:

> They shall be taught to translate prayer in the holy tongue into their Jewish languages. Likewise, they shall be taught to speak and write in the holy tongue, so that the daughters of Israel who graduate may go forth and speak the Hebrew language, thus enabling every man *to be a ruler in his household, to speak the language of his people*.[101]

Thus, in his ultra-Orthodox utopia, he envisioned the return to the Holy Land not only as a refuge from the assault on Jewish culture in the Diaspora—offering sanctuary for Yiddish and Ladino—but also as providing a transcendent opportunity for cultural rebirth. He believed that a return to the Homeland would foster a reconnection with a more authentic past, reviving a pristine and untainted Jewish tongue, one whose sanctity would be restored to be sure, but enhanced as well.

After all, what was Schlesinger's ultra-Orthodox utopia—like his earlier works—if not a vision cast in the register and language of virtue, dedicated to celebrating the inherent virtues of language itself?

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