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Judeo-Spanish and the Synagogue in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire

> [. . .] una fermosa diferencia de tierras e de gentes; e esto es lo que se sigue en el dicho de Aristótiles, que dice: diversas entre sí en muchedunbre e grandesa e fermosura
> Alonso de Cartagena, 1434.

> [. . .] in Salonika, where everyone speaks the language of his people, when they came from the expulsions each language founded a congregation of its own and no one switches from one congregation to the other. And each congregation supports the poor of its language, each is inscribed separately in the king's register, and each seems to be a town unto itself
> R. Yosef B. David Ibn Lev (*Responsa*, part 2, no. 72)

In one of the frequently retold stories in the *Šivḥe ha-Ari*[1] we read about the ARI [Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (b. 1534–d. at age 38)], who notices a manuscript in the hands of his neighbor at the synagogue and asks him about it. The neighbor replies that he is one of the *anusim*, he cannot read [Hebrew characters] and, as he saw that everybody had a book, so he took one with him. The ARI asked if he would exchange it for a prayer book. The *converso* replied that he would prefer a reduction in duties. These were levied upon him by Luria's uncle, the tariffs collector for foreign imports. The ARI eventually gets hold of the manuscript and he studies it and becomes the *ARI ha-qadosh* [the Holy ARI]. The story provokes questions about Jewish languages in contact in the early modern Ottoman Empire, the types of evidence for their use in society and their functions and cultural significance. These shall engage the following lines.

1 The Ari and Languages

So much has been said about the ARI and the *Šivḥe ha-Ari* that we are apt to overlook that which is in front of us. Indeed, there are various motifs here[2] which emphasize the ambiguities of representation and the problems of the common

1 I use a "Ladino" version edited by Benayahu (1966:266–267). See also Benayahu (1967:153).

2 That there are implications below the surface was intuited in another field by David Tamar, who believed that the main message of this story is his lack of a teacher in Kabbalah; see Tamar (1979). See also Alexander (1986).

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tendency towards wholesale dismissal of such stories. Various motifs in the story need identification to grasp that they are part of a thematic cluster whose broader implications are not accessible on the surface. Firstly, we encounter the motif of the presence of anusim/judeoconversos in Cairo synagogues. There are, of course, earlier precedents of evidence for conversos' contacts with Jews in synagogues and elsewhere. Numerous peninsular Inquisition testimonies about the presence of conversos at synagogues have been preserved: Baer (1929–1936) on the Crown of Aragon and the Kingdom of Castile, Gómez Menor (1973a, 1973b) on Toledo, Muñoz Solla (2001) on Caracena, are only some relevant examples. In early sixteenth-century Cairo, we have the documented and recently studied case of Abraham, better known as the Jew of Illescas, a *converso* who, after arriving in Cairo at some point before 1514 (i.e., before the Ottoman era), is prompted by local Jews from Spain to go to the synagogue (Gutwirth 2014).[3] In our anecdote we have the other half of the story: what happens when they are inside the synagogue.

There are other motifs that need identification in order to understand the *Šivḥe ha-Ari*'s Ladino/Hebrew story. The "good bargain" is a stock motif of folklore known since the Grimms (007). 'Fortunate exchanges,' 'trading up,' are some more recent reformulations.[4] But the acute interest in "bargains" has also a historical,

3 This humble textile worker cannot be described as part of a—hypothetical or imaginary—highly assimilated, economic elite of Sephardim and former anusim of the Ottoman Empire whose connection to the Jewish majority there is tenuous. Contemporary archival documents analyzed in Gutwirth (2014) show his connection to the Ottoman Jewish majority in detail. The Safed Rabbinic scholar, Yissaḵar Ibn Susan was the author of a biblical translation and was interested in Jewish biblical translations in his surroundings in the sixteenth century Ottoman Empire. He testifies in the Hebrew Introduction to his *Šarḥ* that "[. . .] and behold our brothers and Rabbis the Sephardim May the Rock [. . .] protect them whose teachers were acustomed to teach the Bible according to the explanation of the words [. . .] in their language which is called Ladino [. . .] and from the conversos and their descendants there came out many enlightened and intelligent commentators of the Bible in their language." This sixteenth century Safed scholar expresses a clear stance about the conversos and Ladino in the early modern Ottoman Empire. He adduces the Ladino translations as legitimizing his own translation project, i.e., the *Šarḥ* (Sassoon 1932:66). It is curious that the hordes of publications on the Ladino Ferrara and Constantinople bibles do not refer prominently to this text which had been edited from MS by David S. Sasoon [from his collection] as early as the 1930s. It is cited appositely in A. David's study of Ottoman conversos which does not in any way see them as having a tenuous connection to the Ottoman Jewish majority. Quite the contrary. The Safed Rabbi seems to admire his Sephardic "brethren" and the conversos. See Abraham David (1991:183–204, especially 192) (Hebrew) and the large bibliography on former conversos and their connections to the Ottoman Jewish majority in the footnotes.

4 They deal—it has recently been argued—with deceptive bargains: "The moral, economic, and social problems encapsulated in the tale's stable core of 'deceptive bargains' are differently elaborated in its varying outcomes and evaluations of the trading protagonist's character. These evoke contrasting moralities of gifts and bargains" (Grodzins Gold 2004:244).

sixteenth-century background. It must be remembered that the age of the ARI is also the age of the intense European investments (Davies 1991:passim) in printings, readings, translations and reprints of Christopher Columbus' letters with their stories—e.g., in the Fourth Letter—about barter. Of course, in our story the subject is not gold but books.

Another motif related to books is that of the member of the synagogal congregation, who—rather than concentrating on his own prayer book—is looking at the books held by his neighbors at synagogue. This particular motif in the Hebrew/Ladino *Šivḥe ha-Ari* story would be familiar to readers of Alami's *Iggeret* [Epistle]. Without going into the question of veracity of contemporary testimonies, in our story there seems to be an echo of pre-exilic motifs. In Alami's *Iggeret ha-musar* (1415?) we find this preoccupation with the reading matter of one's neighbor at the synagogue. In Alami's text, the rich come into the synagogue and they make a show of reading philosophy books. That is, they expect their neighbors at the synagogue to be curious and notice what they are reading. They are rebuked. Given Alami's stance on the study of philosophy this cannot be regarded as a marginal gloss (Gutwirth 1978). In the *Encomia,* the converso comes into the synagogue with a book he does not understand and the ARI is also curious about the reading matter of his neighbor at the synagogue but he does not rebuke him. Evidently the converso does not understand because the book is not in Christian Spanish and is in Hebrew characters.[5]

As early modern Judeo-Spanish can be studied only by reference to texts rather than field work among living informants, books/texts acquire a central role in the reconstruction of the language and its place. This involves their materiality to some extent. Basic to the diegesis of this anecdote about Hispanophones is the question of languages at the Ottoman synagogue and the presence of different MSS and books, that is to say different cultures and languages in one place. The story is placed at a Cairo synagogue in the aftermath of the expulsions. The synagogue is represented as a location for contacts between Hispanophone Jews and conversos. Some of the conversos are so imbued with, and marked by, their past experience as Christians

5 [In fact the converso says of himself (here in Hispanized Romanization from the Hebrew-letter Judeo-Spanish text in Benayahu 1966:266, based on manuscript versions from the early eighteenth century): "<Desventurado yo que_me demanda Su_Merced que_le aclare lo_que está escrito en este livro. Yo_so un hamor de Bar Natán que me ató la caveza noche de pésah, que_no conozco la figura de_la álef de que manera es>, que yo so de_los anusim <de España> [. . .] No_se cualo es <el derecho i cualo es el revés>."

'Unlucky me that your mercy asks me to explain what is written in this book. I am like the ass of [*Avot dĕ-Rabbi*] *Natan* [8:8] who tied my head on the night of Passover, because I do not know what the form of the Hebrew letter *alef* is, because I am of the conversos <of Spain> [. . .] I do not know <what the right is and what its opposite is>'—Editor's Note].

and users of Ibero-Romance that they cannot make out the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The presence of the ARI in Ottoman Cairo, his or his family's commercial activities mirrored here, are not a product of folklore which could be dismissed by biographers in search for data. Apart from numerous other testimonies, known since Ernest James Worman[6] (who was interested in Geniza Hebrew-character letters some time before Mann), began the tradition of studies on the topic of Luria documents, one should mention the two letters from the Gorodesky collection (David 2013). The question of Luria's uncle Mordĕḵay Frances aside,[7] the tale does reflect a certain reality although it may not be the elementary data of merchandise or chronology sought by so many of its readers.

2 Books and Languages

As seen, books are the material traces of languages and the attitudes towards them. The presence of different types of MSS and printed books in early modern Cairo may be reconstructed—amongst other possibilities—patiently, item by item. Indeed, recently some attention has been paid to the subject of the provenance of strictly specific items in the Hebrew characters common to Judeo-Spanish and Hebrew, such as Hebrew incunabula and illuminated MSS from Spain which were once held in Cairene or other Egyptian collections (Gutwirth 2010). Another study focused on the contents of the padding of a sixteenth century Cairene Hebrew MS binding. It contained fragments of Hebrew MSS in both Ashkenazic and Sephardic script as well as a MS fragment in Spanish in Latin characters, now finally and successfully identified (Gutwirth 2012). Another type of evidence comes from the examination of a collection such as the Synagogal Cairo Geniza. To be sure, as is well known, Goitein (1961) and his school did not—as far as one can tell—discover, edit and study MSS in Judeo-Spanish *aljamía* nor did they discover or edit or study Geniza MSS in Spanish in Latin characters. Nevertheless, and despite the facts, Goitein's

6 That he was interested in correspondence, i.e., letters, is clear from his article: Worman (1907). On him, see Worman (1909:281–282); and Worman (1910).

7 Within the inner logic of the story, the converso may be illiterate and nameless but he is no fool. He is probably involved in international commerce if he pays customs duties. He knows he is sitting next to the nephew of the duties collector, one of the highest offices of Egyptian Jewry. On these tax-collectors see for example Shtober (1989). Many of them were from Hispano-Jewish families. The two systems are similar. Fiscal Jewish institutions bearing a Judeo-Spanish name are not uncommon in the Ottoman Empire. For the history and antecedents in Christian Spain see for example the case of Abraham Senneor in Gutwirth (1989:169–229).

trips to Cambridge may be seen as valuable. He noticed the difference between the Hebrew hands of the Geniza MSS in Hebrew characters (approximately) before and after the expulsions (Goitein 1961). He did not specify [by mention of precise call marks] which MSS showed these characteristics but any familiarity with the MS fragments would confirm this intuition to some extent. So that there is a material culture frame, a historical frame, for the ARI's idea, as recorded in Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'ar ha-kawwanot* section on *tĕfillin*, that the differences, the various types of Hebrew script (Ashkenazic, Sefardic, etc.) have each their own mystical significance (Scholem 1972:256). That is to say that, in a time of influx of exiles, a time when the Hebrew hands do indeed become more diverse—as can be seen in the Ottoman strata of the MSS from the synagogal Geniza of Cairo including its Judeo-Spanish MSS—there is a pluralist interpretation of this real historical phenomenon in mystical terms, in highly favorable, approving mystical terms rather than in terms of "crisis" or "reeducation" of *mĕgorašim*, the exiles from Spain. One strand which might be noticed is related to a category which was generally favored in the post-war era, in the 1940s, when migrations were the norm: that of integration. So was the category of re-education. Sephardic and converso historiography has not been immune to such considerations. This is implied in questions such as: did the Spaniards succeed in integrating the conversos in the post 1391 period? or: how did the rabbis in the sixteenth century deal with the problem of the exiles who spoke in Judeo-Spanish? how was the problem of ingathering of Hispanophone exiles in the Ottoman empire resolved? It is against this particular background of partial anachronism and anatopism that some of the primary sources may deserve to be reset and foregrounded. I am thinking of those texts which do not see the diversity of languages—such as Judeo-Spanish—as a problem of integration and erasure of cultural difference. Indeed they may be understood as pluralist celebrations of difference.

3 Books, Scripts and Historical Contexts

Where did these different, diverse material remains [in, for example, the Cairo Synagogal store-room] come from? Of course, the notion that all Spanish Jews brought all their books with them has no basis. Nevertheless, we do have a contract of 31 July 1492, the date of the Abravanel family's embarkation from Sagunto, where it is stipulated—obviously at the request of the Jewish travelers and not the Christian captain of the ship—that they should be able to carry 150 *quintales* of Jewish books exempt of duties (Hinojosa 1983).

The immense amount of Hebrew character MSS identifiable as being in Sephardic hands in the synagogal Cairo Geniza has not been sufficiently studied to allow us to invent narrow dates. The presence of Sephardic exiles, travelers, conversos, Karaites, etc. in pre-1492 Cairo has been studied (Gutwirth 1997). It means that no matter how often it has been repeated for over a century, there is no basis in the evidence for the assertion that Ottoman Judeo-Spanish is the direct result of only and purely the travels that resulted from the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. There was travel to Egypt and the Holy Land before 1492. Hispano-Hebraic letters of recommendation to travelers have been studied as testimonies to a late medieval mentality rather than a post-exilic one (Gutwirth 1985a, 1985b).

The existence of a Hispanic vernacular amongst the Jews living in medieval Spain where Ibero-Romance languages were the medium of daily communication is usually seen as "natural" and barely requiring explanation. The acceptance, survival, continuity and even flourishing of it in the Ottoman Empire, where the media of communication were so vastly different, might seem a little less odd and less mysterious if we attempt to reconstruct a historical context for the Judeo-Spanish of the early modern Ottoman Empire. A broader context needs to take into account such cases of presence of Hispanic languages in the Ottoman Empire as may be discovered in the evidence.

The Spanish language is obviously present in such cases as, say, the Seville-born traveler, Pedro Tafur's conversations with Ḥayyim from Seville, the sultan's Cairene judeoconverso dragoman, in the 1430s, about sixty years before the expulsion. In between the lines, one discerns the delight of both, Tafur and the ninety-year-old judeoconverso dragoman in each other's company, conversation and common language in such pointedly non-Iberian surroundings (Gutwirth 1997). This leads to the further question of a historical, non-Jewish frame for the use of Judeo-Spanish by Jews of the area. As far as I am aware it has not been noticed—in this context—that Spanish songs and music were present in the 1430s in Constantinople/Byzantium at the court of John Paleologus VIII, who ruled from 1425–1438, i.e., before the Ottoman invasion and before the expulsions. In addition, it may be remembered that the *Legatio babylonica* has been analyzed from a Jewish history perspective. Attention has been drawn to the envoy of Spain in Cairo, Petrus Martyr ca. 1501, who did not communicate in Hebrew or Arabic in the pre-Ottoman early years of the sixteenth century (Gutwirth 1991, 1993). Petrus Martyr, on arrival at Alexandria in December 1501, was in contact with the Hispanophone Felipe de Paredes, the Catalan consul in Alexandria (García y García 1947:74; Álvarez-Moreno 2013:72). On the 26 January 1502, Petrus Martyr left Alexandria for Cairo escorted by all the Spanish merchants he found in Alexandria. Indeed, in order to set the tone or ambience for the meeting with the Sultan he tried to group as many of them as he could and as he had mentioned in his letter to the Sultan. We have no reason to

suppose that the Spanish envoy spoke to these Spanish merchants of Alexandria in any language other than Spanish. In Cairo, he was in constant contact with—and depended strongly on—Tangaribardino [Taghri Berdi B. 'Abd Allah],[8] who spoke for him to the Sultan. This individual, according to Martyr, came down to the ship in Cairo to speak to him and told him that he was the son of Luis Prat [not "de Prato"[9]] of Montblanch, near Valencia, in today's province of Tarragona, who had been ship-wrecked and imprisoned for three years and converted outwardly because of hunger and thirst. He claimed to pray to Jesus every day. Studies relying only on Arabic and Italian sources have led to confusion. But, after reading Merida and the archival documents of the Aragonese chancellery[10] it becomes more credible that he was indeed a *marrano* from Montblanch, a town with a documented Jewish population.[11] What needs to be kept in mind is the delicate nature of these particular diplomatic messages of 1502, after the conquest of the Muslim kingdom of Granada, and therefore of the translator's full comprehension of subtle differences and shades of meaning in Spanish. Nor is there any reason to believe, as some do, that Petrus Martyr, after all his years in Spain, at the Spanish court, involved in language education, an associate of—indeed, edited by—Nebrixa, could really be fooled by someone trying to "pass" for Spanish. The assertions that the dragoman "spoke Ladino" in 1501 or that Martyr was an "Aragonese envoy" need not be discussed. This son of the judeoconverso Luis Prat is believed to be the individual who was already active in Egypt before the expulsions, at the time of Meshulam da Volterra[12] in 1481 and of Breydenbach (when he is called defender of the Jews of Cairo) in 1484. Martyr was lodged at this converso's house during his stay in Cairo. Martyr focuses on the Cairene's language and makes a point of drawing attention to—and affirming explicitly that—the son of the judeoconverso Luis Prat still knows the language of the fatherland (García y García 1947:02; Álvarez-Moreno 2013:86). There was no lack of Hispanophones in Alexandria and Cairo ca. 1501–02 and even earlier. This might help partly in understanding the survival of Judeo-Spanish.

The story of Abraham of Illescas (1484–1514) mentioned above is a story of language as well. It is clear from his narrative that (before the Ottomans) he was able to communicate with other Jewish Hispanophones in Cairo. Not only this, but he was obviously able to use and communicate in the technical language of his particular, specialized branch of the textile world. It is against such backgrounds that it becomes

8 García y García (1947:88); and Wansbrough (1963:notes 1, 2 and passim).

9 Cf. Wansborough (1963:notes 1, 2 and passim); Álvarez-Moreno (2013:76, 77); and García y García (1947:92).

10 Álvarez-Moreno (2013).

11 Bofarull (1896); Baer (1929); Secall (1981); Riera (1987); and Lourie (1989).

12 Jütte (2012:117, note 5).

relevant to note how many lexical items from this particular, technical, semantic area were preserved in Ottoman Judeo-Spanish.

4 A Manuscript and Language

Relevant to understanding the status and function of Judeo-Spanish in the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period is some comprehension of the existing evidence no matter how infrequently mentioned and how neglected. According to Gershon Weiss (1977; see also Morell 1989) the synagogal Cairo Geniza MS fragment CUL T-S G1.52 was written in Spain approximately in the fifteenth century. The manuscript, written in Hebrew, includes one Judeo-Spanish sentence. Weiss, the disciple of Goitein, believed that Teicher was a specialist in Judeo-Spanish and therefore he had to ask Teicher at Cambridge to help with the (eight) Judeo-Spanish words in the Geniza fragment. Teicher translated from Judeo-Spanish:

> [. . .] Thus I told her in these words: "*I undertake the abstinence (Nezirut) of Samson the son (of Manoah), the husband of Delilah, with all its conditions, not to leave her alone during the Sabbath* (Signed) Shem Tov al-Hati")
>
> [. . .] yo recibo nezirut shimshon [. . .] con todos sus tenaim de non desharla [. . .]

Weiss' (or Teicher's?) conjecture of a fifteenth century Spanish provenance is improbable. Goitein very prudently claims "I have not seen the manuscript of this document therefore I cannot say anything about its time."[13] A re-examination of the Cairo Geniza MS leads to the impression of a later, possibly sixteenth century, Egyptian origin. It would not be the only case of such abstinence oaths in Judeo-Spanish in sixteenth century Cairo.[14] On the other hand, Weiss' general understanding or reformulation of the place of Judeo-Spanish *aljamía* in a *ma'ase-bet-din* [a deposition, not a responsum] is useful. The beth din ['rabbinical court']:

> [. . .] intended to put down on paper the disputants' arguments as genuinely and as naturally as possible. This was done in order to retain unmistakably the spirit of the proceedings

13 Goitein (1988, vol. 5:536–537).

14 [It is also found in the responsa of rabbis of other cities, including those who had been born in Spain; e.g., in the *Responsa* of R. Levi Ben (or Ibn) Ḥabib (Venice, no. 56), who had been born in Zamora around 1480, we find (here in Hispanized Romanization from the Hebrew-letter text): 'He [the father of a young Torah student] said in anger in the La'az (Romance) language: 'I undertake the abstinence of Samson not to send my son to study with this rabbi'.
Amar bĕ-ḳa'as bi-lšon la'az: "yo recibo neziru[t]' shimshón ke non envíe mi fijo a meldar col [!] *este hajam"*—Editor's Note].

> and to some extent the original intonation, and to avoid the ambiguity of various shades of meaning through a translation. And since it was evident that one might fail in that respect when two different languages were involved, Spanish for the spoken testimony and Hebrew for the instrument of record, it was felt that the essence of the crucial point would be best preserved if recorded in the language in which it was uttered, as our case indicates (Weiss 1977:102).

5 Different Languages and History

As has been seen, it is helpful to attempt to understand the history of ideas and mind sets behind material culture. The relation or link between history and material culture reconstructed above, on the one hand, and the history of attitudes, ideas, on the other, reappears in a specific case—that of illuminations or lighting. The question of light and shade in houses of worship has been noted in other cultures but it could be shown to be significant in the case of Hispano-Jewish culture—and its Judeo-Spanish speakers—as well. A deep investment was made in creative interpretations and narrative frames around the question of light and darkness in the Iberian synagogue. The evidence for material culture relates to mainly three methods: oil, candles and windows. The question of windows and their meaning is prominent in early modern Ottoman synagogues particularly in the sixteenth century.

Thus, the theme of the symbolism of twelve synagogal windows has been amply researched, particularly as regards the readings of the famous thirteenth century Castilian Zoharic passage in pericope Pĕqude, which states that the synagogue below is like the synagogue above; that the synagogue above has windows like the synagogue below; in the synagogue above there are twelve windows. It was noted from the age of Scholem and his followers (also Zimmels and others) to the latest studies by Halamish.[15] We notice that it is in the post-expulsions Ottoman Empire that in Ottoman Jerusalem, Joseph Caro in the *Šulḥan ʿAruḵ* (90:4) adds that ideally, there should be at least twelve windows in the synagogue. Early in the seventeenth century R. Ḥayyim Vital in *Sefer Ha-ḥezyonot* asserted that:

> There are many differences between the (various) prayer books, between the Sefardi rite, the Catalonian rite, the Ashkenazi rite, and the like. Concerning this matter, my master (the ARI) of blessed memory told me that there are twelve windows in heaven corresponding to the twelve tribes, and that the prayer of each tribe ascends through its own special gate. This is

15 The crucial point is the transformation of the old motif of heavenly windows into an acknowledgment and reflection of diversity in Jewish populations; see Scholem (1934:305–323); and Halamish (1999:147–151).

> the secret of the twelve gates mentioned at the end of (the book of) Ezekiel (*Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot, 'Inyan Nusaḥ ha-Tĕfilla*).[16]

Here again, the difference in cultures is not interpreted in terms of a crisis or the difficulties of integration or a troubling predicament of ingathering of different cultures or a problem of "reeducation." Indeed, the idea and practice of diversity is seen as such a positive phenomenon that it is exalted and elevated to a mystical plane where the very heavens exhibit a variety which mirrors the variety of cultures in these early modern Ottoman geographic areas.

In this particular setting of Ottoman Cairo as a haven for the *mĕgorašim*, the exiles from Spain, writing down such rationales about Judeo-Spanish in juridical contexts serves to produce a new ideology of Judeo-Spanish which ennobles linguistic difference. It need hardly be pointed out that there are other possible ideological reactions. Not all ideologies are receptive to bilingualism or polyglossia. Not all of them see languages as equal in stature or validity. It may suffice to recall Todorov's (1985) highly influential elaboration of the idea that the equivalence of languages (in bilingualism) is a *leurre*, a decoy, mirage or trick of the light: "[. . .] je me demande si le bilinguisme fondé sur la neutralité et la parfaite reversibilité des deux langues n'est pas un leurre or tout au moins une exception [. . .]".

6 Amatus Lusitanus on Diversity

This welcoming of difference—in a Judeo-Spanish frame—is not by any means restricted to mysticism. It may be grasped by attending to other fields. The dedication of the judeoconverso Amatus Lusitanus' *Seventh Century* is addressed to Gĕdalya Yaḥya and signed in Salonika, in August 1561. It was composed in his Jewish, Salonikan phase. The Dedication to a prominent, leading member of the Salonika Sephardic community is highly resonant. Recent research amongst the seven hundred [or more] essays or cures of his *Centuries* shows that, far from being tenuous, his relations with Jews of all classes, and particularly with the Jewish majority of Ottoman Salonika in the 1560s, were most intense. He begins by asserting that, upon arriving in Salonika, he had thought of discontinuing his magnum opus because of tedium. He contrasts this with the variety and abundance of its population. He links sixteenth-century Salonika with ancient Greece and asserts that it suffers from diseases as did its ancient counterpart. The Salonikan experience is thus presented—not in terms of crisis management, "integration" or reedu-

16 Ḥayyim Vital (1988, vol. 8:328); and Zimmels (1976:116).

cation, but, rather, it is presented from the perspective of the return *ad fontes*, the fifteenth/sixteenth centuries' revival of interest in the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome, for example, whose texts Amatus had been citing throughout the previous six hundred cures. He asserts that the complexity of its illnesses has given rise to its extraordinary physicians. The illnesses are compared to other difficulties or challenges which give rise to greater skill. To this effect he adduces the analogy of birds in areas with less light, which are prized above others. He draws on the Latin poetry of Virgil and of Marcus Manilius, the first century poet, to prove his point. Physicians in Greece have to be illustrious, as was the case with their predecessor, Hippocrates. He decided to dedicate the volume of the cures to Gĕdalya Yaḥya [the Sephardic personality of Salonika] because he is a sage and a marvelous orator [in Judeo-Spanish?] endowed with acute intelligence. In addition, Yaḥya is renowned for his hospitality to all persecuted/itinerant no matter what their religious confession. In this, he emulates his father, Moses Yaḥya, who, in the recent plague (1559?), spent thousands of ducats to help cure the poor and bury them. Of interest is his assertion that he hopes that Gĕdalya will find, in the cures, reasons for laughter and weeping, corresponding to the human condition. To find reasons for laughter and weeping has been the motivation for creativity in fields other than clinical medicine. One need simply recall the two masks which are the icon of the theatre (Gutwirth 2006). Given the generic frame, a Dedication bearing marks of the panegyric, we must assume a decorum (in its Renaissance sense), namely that the text mirrors not only Amatus' predilection for interesting variety, but also that of Ibn Yaḥya of Salonika. To state the obvious: a former judeoconverso with documented intense and intimate ties to the Sephardic community in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century articulates in writing—like Šem Ṭov de Carrión before him—his rebellion against tedium and monotony and his pursuit of diversity.

Scripts, windows, prayers, law, medicine are possibly unexpected neighbors in the corpus of independent testimonies and evidence assembled here. Nevertheless, they have several factors in common: all the elaborations are from the sixteenth century, they occur amongst Sephardic Jews [users of Judeo-Spanish] in the area of the Ottoman Empire, and they have a tendency to accept and even ennoble differences and diversities.

7 Ibn Zimra's Views

The above-mentioned Luria—issue of a marriage between Sephardi and Ashkenazi—and his relative pluralism could be explained by his own family history; by the cosmopolitan attitudes expected from a merchant involved in international

trade with a base in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, but also by the influence of his Cairene teacher, Rabbi David Abi Ibn Zimra, who was in Egypt ca. 1513–1553 (Zimmels 1932). In the field of law and tribunals in the sixteenth century, the Radbaz asserts:

> I have seen Scribes/notaries who being wise in their own eyes would either add, subtract or interpret of their own accord. I have seen it many times in instances where women testified and where they gave their testimony in the vernacular in Spanish[17] [. . .] and often the translation of that testimony changed the complexion of the whole case. Be thou among the careful ones [. . .] (Goldman 1970:11).

Understanding a language; being familiar with the original [Judeo-Spanish] language, is here presented not as needing remedial "reeducation", not as a difference or deviation from one putatively normal or normative, default language but as being careful, as adding authenticity and precision to testimony, that is to legal proceedings.[18] Perhaps the gender factor should also be taken into account. The statement reveals the legal dimension of Judeo-Spanish which, again, is clear in pre-expulsion texts. R. Isaac Bar Sheshet (d. 1408) certainly and repeatedly uses technical legal terms in the *romance* such as for example /luesmo/ and cites a *romance* legal document in Hebrew characters.[19] But today we are aware of the precise socio-economic and professional/technical milieu where his *romance* terms come from (Gutwirth 2015:338–368). The legal domain, by its very nature, exhibits linguistic porosity. The fourteenth-century *Responsa* of Yĕhuda Ben Ha-Roš (d. 1349) contain the *romance* item *peskiza* (S. *pesquisa* 'investigation') (see no. 58, f. 10b in the collection

17 [I.e., *"U-v-laʿaz la-loʿazim"* 'and in Romance to the Romance speakers' (*Responsa of Radbaz*, Livorno, 1652, nos. 56 (13a); 155 (58a)). From the Middle Ages and into the modern era when writing in Hebrew the Sephardic rabbis have called their primarily Hispanic-based everyday language *laʿaz*, whatever the specific linguistic composition of the particular text; for a transcription and analysis of the highly Hebraized and Ottomanized language, nevertheless referred to as *laʿaz*, used by Izmir Chief Rabbi Avraham Palacci in the introduction to his musar work *Wĕ-hoḳiaḥ Avraham* (Izmir, 1877:426–442) see Bunis (2021:426–442). In any case, the beginning of the testimony cited in English by Goldman (1970:11) and the actual Hebrew testimony of Radbaz do not seem to match; Radbaz states 155 (58a) that in the case in hand the interpretation of the scribe was erroneous due to his lack of competence in Laʿaz—Editor's Note].

18 On what might seemingly be a related issue, that of the halakhic need to establish a norm for the spellings of personal names and place names and river names in highly infrequent—rather than the daily case of the use of Judeo-Spanish—documents such as marriage and divorce contracts (the other spellings being incorrect or unacceptable), see the recent discussion in Bunis (2018–19); Gutwirth (2019:197–225). Some of these ideas on vernacular or non-Hebrew languages can be traced back to the Mishnah [Soṭa 7:1 *bĕ-ḳol lašon*].

19 For the deliberations of Bar Sheshet and his contemporaries on the reading of Esther in *romance* during Purim see Bunis (2004:126–132).

edited by Rosenberg, 1846). It appears that these items have not been noticed since Steinschneider.[20] What may need emphasis—because it has been neglected—is that this legal aspect of the Jewish vernacular, prominent in Ottoman Jewish writings selected above, was not limited to only one urban beth-din. It was an important argument in one of the main themes of the broader field of sixteenth century language and society: the tensions and debate between vernacular/national languages and Latin. In reconstructing the historical context of Judeo-Spanish as a legal language, it is necessary to attend to the historical Spanish background and, in the case of Spanish, I would argue that the foundational statement of Nebrixa in favor of the vernacular, *la lengua compañera del imperio* [language is (has always been) the partner of empire], implies something about those who have the power to lay down the law.[21] In addition, we may recall the Alphonsine projects of creating legal texts/codes—not in Latin but—in the vernacular: *Setenario, Fuero Real, Espéculo*. Their relevance to the sixteenth century may be understood by noticing the material culture aspect: their dissemination through the new printing press. We may mention the incunable of the *Partidas* of 24 December 1491, or that of Seville a month later or, in the sixteenth century, Venice 1501, Burgos 1528 or the 1555 edition. They thus became cheaper and more numerous in the sixteenth century.[22] The rise in intensity of legal texts in the vernacular Judeo-Spanish, then, does not occur—as frequently thought—in a vacuum, it is not without a historical context.

So that there is a certain historical, sixteenth century background to the Hispano-Jewish exiles' legal trend of admiring the Judeo-Spanish vernacular, i.e., the original, genuine language. While transcriptions into Latin characters of the numerous resulting Judeo-Spanish responsa texts were an activity that could arguably be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, it was probably Kurt Levy who became a "forefather" or model for studying these legal texts in Judeo-Spanish in 1929, in an article published in Hamburg (Levy 1929). He was mostly preoccupied with transcriptions rather than explaining historical or cultural implications. Reconstruct-

20 For references to Ibero-Romance elements in the writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra, Maimonides and other medieval Spanish Jews see Bunis (2015:65–66, 74).

21 Asensio, who sees Valla as precedent, notes the presence of the law in his thought on language: "[. . .] Los seis prefacios desbordantes de entusiasmo son como seis manifiestos de agresivo humanismo en que Valla guerrea contra la barbarie y pregona la nobleza de las tareas gramaticales. El más clamoroso y sugestivo es el del libro primero en que, glorificando a la Roma *madre de las leyes* y mecenas de las letras [. . .]" (Asensio 1960:399–413).

22 An explicit articulation of this link between law and language may be found in the following assertion: "Esta nuestra lengua Castellana tubo prinçipio delos Reyes de Castilla y Leon: y començo a mostrar su valor y fuerças en tiempo del muy alto y muy poderoso rey don Alonso el Sabio digno de eternidad. Por cuyo mandado se escriuieron enesta feliçissima lengua las Siete Partidas [. . .]" (Nebrixa 1492).

ing a historical background for the apparently "sudden rise" of Judeo-Spanish legal testimonies in the early modern period was not his project. It is not clear how far his many followers transcended this.[23] It is not clear how far his many followers transcended this. This relation between law and language reappears in another passage in which Ibn Zimra writes:

> I am accustomed to administer the oath [. . .] in Spanish [i.e., *"bĕ-La'az"*] to the foreign [or *romance*-speaking] Jews [i.e., "*la-lo'azim"*]".[24] I do this even though they may know both languages [i.e., Spanish and Arabic] for I am able the more thoroughly to explain to them in their mother tongue the importance of the oath so that they shall not err in it or in any of its parts; thereby there will result no doubts (Goldman 1970:11).

Instead of constructing hierarchies of high and low; center and margins, normativity, here again we see the positive evaluation of polyglossia. Indeed, the note of personal pride in the linguistic and professional talent of the Hispanophone jurist in Cairo, born in Spain to a Hispano-Jewish family, with access to the original, is transparent. This admiration and commitment to the vernacular Judeo-Spanish sees it as natural and truthful. Again, it is not without a broader historical context. Juan de Valdés' *Diálogo de la lengua* (1535) for example, belongs in a current which seeks to lend dignity to the vernacular. He is renowned for the positive attitude to original, vernacular languages: the others are *pegadizas*—"both sticky and parasitic" to cite Smith's (1988:38) by now classic treatment. In Juan de Valdés own words:

> Todos los hombres somos más obligados a ilustrar y enriquecer la lengua que nos es natural y que mamamos en las tetas de nuestras madres, que no la que nos es pegadiza y que aprendemos en los libros (Valdés 1969:44).
>
> All humans must improve and enrich the language which is natural to us and which we suckled at the breasts of our mothers, and not the one which is a sham and which we learn in books.

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (b. 1478), who introduced Europeans to the hammock, the pineapple, and tobacco, is another case in point. He writes that he knows that when his writings reach Italy, Germany and Turkey, they will be translated. The translators will make mistakes and when they have to correct them, they will have to have recourse to his original, in his language, i.e., Castilian. So that

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23 In sharp contrast, see the extensive, previously unknown, original texts in Judeo-Spanish included in the responsa of Rabbi Me'ir Gavizon edited by Eliav Shochetman (1985) with the help of Isaac Benabu. For detailed discussion of Judeo-Spanish court testimony in the responsa of Rabbi Samuel de Medina, and for extensive bibliography, see the article by Bunis in the present volume.

24 I.e., *"U-v-la'az la-lo'azim"* 'and in La'az [Romance] to the *lo'azim* [Romance speakers]' (*Responsa of Radbaz*, Livorno, 1652, no. 155, 58a).

Castilian is more authentic and precise i.e., truthful. In his work, Latin is compared to an old man's disguise of rouge, false teeth and wig, intended to equivocate and seen as artificial and false (Gutwirth 2001:93–95). His mention of "Turkey" is particularly resonant for us. In other words, access to the original language is seen as a tool of precision and exactitude. This emphasis on truth and precision versus "disguise" reminds one of the statements on Judeo-Spanish by Ibn Zimra found above. It contrasts strongly with an H/L approach. Here the main operative categories are authenticity versus disguise.

This brings me to a third Ibn Zimra[25] text:

> [. . .] with the breaking away of groups from their fellow townsmen and their common language there is also a common breaking up of devout hearts nor are their prayers to God united but if they are of one city of origin and of one language then will peace dwell among them for each one will feel at home and know his status (Goldman 1970:86).

Even if Ibn Zimra does not make it explicit, the association of a shared, common language with peace and harmony in the synagogue may owe something to the story of Babel:

> And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech [. . .]. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech [. . .]. [. . .] the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth (Gen 11:1–9).

Rashi commented on "Lo! (they are) one people" the following: "All *this bounty* they have: that they are one people, and that they all have one language", echoing *Eliyyahu Rabba* 31. And on verse 7 ("not understand one another's speech") Rashi, inspired by Gen Rabbah 38:10 comments: "This one requests a brick, and that one brings mortar; this one stands and cracks his skull."

8 The Language of Synagogal Songs

The grouping of people by language such as Judeo-Spanish—rather than so many other possible classifications—may be attested in the Iberian Jewish tradition before the expulsions. Against this background of favorable, perhaps support-

25 Although by no means a common linguistic study, Goldman is useful for a number of reasons. All English translations of Ibn Zimra are taken from it. Cf. R. Yosef Ben David Ibn Lev, *Responsa*, Constantinople, 1716, part 2, no. 72, 87a: "In Salonika [. . .], when they arrived after the expulsions, each language established a community for itself, and no one goes or comes from community to community, and each community supports the poor of their language."

ive, attitudes to the Judeo-Spanish vernacular and its diversity we could study a number of additional synagogal phenomena. Within such a purview, the inclusion of texts other than prayers could claim the precedent of, for example, I. Levi (1892), whose study of the Hebrew-letter Judeo-Spanish inscriptions (such as "rey ahashveros y la reina esther") on a fourteenth century synagogal "*aumônière de pierre*" ['stone charity box or donations collection stone box'] led him to the conclusion that "*il montre l'usage de la langue espagnole dans le service de la synagogue.*"

There are others, such as the flourishing of vernacular musical traditions of song in the synagogue. It has left material traces in the incipits or tune markers of Spanish songs in the printed Ottoman siddurim of the sixteenth century. This phenomenon may be termed that of the *laḥan* ['melody'] but songs have words, so that they are relevant to Judeo-Spanish language. I cannot review here the whole literature since Abraham Danon in the late nineteenth century, but a few points may be in order. Here again, the question is one of being sensitive to intensity rather than complete change after 1492. Recent work has underlined the historical significance of a text from Rousillon in the Crown of Aragon: Duran's 1403 description of his contemporaries at the synagogue when singing as following the musical "ways of the [Spanish] gentiles" (Gutwirth 2004). An additional pre-expulsion text, that of Alami's synagogal critique, a few years later (1415), was directed against the *hazanim*, precentors, who introduce the music of the songs of the [Spanish] Christians into the liturgy (Gutwirth 2004). Schirman (1956) published the text of the fifteenth century poet, Šĕlomo B. Rĕ'uven Bonafed's (liturgical) poem, a *reshut*, with the rubric "lĕ-timrur bĕ-laʿaz" i.e., "to the (melody of a) *romance* lament." Yahalom (1988) studied the pre-expulsion St. Petersburg MS of prayers for the liturgical station known as "three weeks" with the rubrics containing various (four?) romance incipits. Seroussi (2009) and Seroussi and Beeri (2023) devoted extensive studies to the topic. Ample evidence for Jewish and converso taste for vernacular Spanish music, dance and song around the dates of the expulsions has been brought to light by research on archival documents (Gutwirth 2011).

This culture of celebrations of difference is where we see the appearance of *laḥan bĕ-laʿaz* [melody in the *romance*] in the rubrics to *piyyuṭim* [liturgical poems/songs] of Ottoman *maḥzorim* [Orders of Prayers for the Festivals] and *siddurim* [Orders of Prayers] which, unlike their peninsular predecessors, were now being disseminated amongst the Ottoman Jewish majority by the numerous and more uniform products of the printing press. What needs to be added is that in many of the old treatments of such incipits in the past, we miss a discussion of provenance. From our perspective, anchored in the history and culture of the Ottoman Jews originating in the Iberian Peninsula it *does* make a difference whether a printed text dates from an age when exiles born in the Peninsula were still alive or from a century or centuries later. While some of the printed sources are available in

numerous copies at various locations and had been known from, for example, nineteenth-century catalogues of Hebrew-character printed books in the great libraries, others are not. And yet, sometimes, amongst the horde of incipit studies, the priority has been to identify the Spanish song, effectively reducing the rubric in the Jewish prayer books to the status of "a version" or less. The chronology, status of the sources, discernment as to the differences between them are not a priority and therefore they were jumbled together (Frenk 1960). Some accept the dating 1525 for an early modern Ottoman example of such incipits: a printed copy of *Baqqašot* which served Avenary (1960) so well. It provides synagogal evidence of Ottoman Jewish familiarity with such Spanish songs as for example "De vos, duque de Aragona," the romance on the prison of the Duke of Arjona (1429); "Montaña hermosa, alegre y muy leda;" "Moriré de amor, mi madre, moriré;" "Por mi mal me lo tomaste;" "Si las manos tiengo blandas;" "Doliente ya es (?) Espinelo;" "Estaba la gentil dama." Every single one of these examples has its own character and resonances and could be studied by scholars of the traditional/popular ballads but one thing is certain: it is worlds apart from the twentieth century projections of Ottoman Jewish synagogal culture as one of isolation which could be reconstructed without attention to historical context. On the contrary, in the early years of the Ottoman Empire, these Spanish lyrics, as well as those of Turkish, Arabic and Greek origin, and their music are assumed by the Hebrew printers to be the common cultural heritage of the synagogal Hispanophone congregation. What is of particular interest for us, rather than the identifications, which have been dealt with so frequently and repeatedly (Frenk 1960 and others) is the provenance. If the unicum at the JTS [used by Avenary] comes from the Synagogal Geniza of Cairo (as may be suspected) we could transcend the vagaries of "East and West" and locate a little more precisely part of the phenomenon of the currency, in synagogues in the Ottoman Empire, of Spanish songs.

This Ottoman setting is where we hear complaints about the synagogal use of Spanish songs after 1492. So that the notion of an overnight break in 1492 does not work here either. Something similar might be said about the complete isolation from Spain and its culture after the Expulsion. As is well known, the Judeo-Spanish song repertoire [including the Ottoman or East Mediterranean component] includes post-1492 *romances* such as, for example, that on the death of the Infante don Juan, to name but one. If 1492 is not the absolute end (of contacts with Spain) neither is it the absolute beginning (of Spanish songs in the territories of the Ottoman Empire) as pointed out above. Then again, the above mentioned Spanish songs current in fifteenth century Byzantium were not a "cultural exception," neither were they mere circumstantial details of interest only to one individual traveler writing his travelogue/memoirs. The later "readings" are significant. The facts of such a presence of Spanish music in Byzantium are read and creatively reinterpreted in other

areas, regions and genres of fifteenth-century Spain. Gómez Muntané (2010:29) clearly asserted:

> Cualquier lector de su época, no importa su nacionalidad, podía dar fe de que cuanto ocurre y se interpreta en el *Tirant*, musicalmente hablando, tenía que ver con la práctica real.
>
> Every reader of his age, whatever his nationality, would testify that whatever occurs and is interpreted in the *Tirant*, in musical terms, reflected practical reality.

More precisely, the Spanish song at the Byzantine court is a "romance" or ballad, based on the story of "Tristan and Iseo;" probably, according to Gómez Muntané, *Ferido está don Tristán.*[26] Here again we find that it is possible to reconstruct some historical background for the Judeo-Spanish song phenomenon.

9 Literature, Languages, Synagogal Sermons

From a perspective which focuses on the opportunities and possibilities offered by pluralities we may approach other phenomena which would yield rather different results than usual. This would be the case if, against convention, we could compare less commonly read vernacular Judeo-Spanish *taqqanot*/*haskamot* [bye-laws] such as those Judeo-Spanish *taqqanot* of the sixteenth-century Salonika hospital published by Molho and Amarillo[27] to the Judeo-Spanish *taqqanot* given at a Valladolid synagogue in 1432.[28] Language and law cannot be comfortably separated: today's administrative departamentalizations are not helpful in understanding the early modern period. Only through an analysis of the precise formulations in Judeo-Spanish used by the centralized *sofĕrim* [notaries] may one discover the tendencies operating at the 1432 Valladolid *junta*. The most evident difference is the higher proportion of Hebrew and Aramaic items in the pre-expulsion text which is clear at a glance without need for a word frequency count.

But here I would like to attend also to the Cairene synagogal sermons, particularly the about ten or eleven Cairene MSS surviving in fragments of sermons in

26 "[. . .] el romance que canta el personaje de la emperatriz en el Tirant, que no es sino un romance sobre Tristán e Iseo, seguramente el célebre Ferido está don Tristán ninguna de cuyas fuentes conservan la parte de la música [. . .]." The relevant text in the novel is: "e tenint Hipòlit lo cap en les faldes de l'Emperadriu, ell la suplicà que cantàs una cançó per amor sua, la qual cantava ab molt gran perfecció e de bona gràcia. La senyora, per fer-li plaer, cantà un romanç ab baixa veu, de Tristany com se planyia de la llançada del rei [. . .]" (Gómez Muntané 2010:41).

27 Molho and Amarillo (1958:26–60) (in Hebrew).

28 Minervini (1992).

Judeo-Spanish transcribed or described by Schwab in 1907 and 1916. Schwab has been the target of numerous criticisms. I am not interested in adding to that particular chorus line. What is of interest here is the usefulness of such MS fragments for the subject of Judeo-Spanish in the synagogue in early modern Ottoman Cairo.[29] From this perspective, it becomes clear that students of the synagogal sermon have either overlooked this corpus of eleven Judeo-Spanish MSS or not made sufficient use of it. This is not entirely surprising. Partly, and apart from the question of access to the language, there is the fact that they are fragmentary, anonymous, undated and that the transcriptions are frequently doubtful. Also, there are, to be sure, texts which are not relevant. Jesús Antonio Cid (2012) after decades of research, succeeded recently in re-editing one of these Consistoire/Alliance Geniza fragments in Schwab's book on Judeo-Spanish *homélies* and identifying it as a Judeo-Spanish version of one of the most widely disseminated and appreciated types of stories in the Middle Ages, namely, the *Sendebar*. So that its inclusion in a book about "homilies" is debatable, to say the least. It does, however, show the persistence of medieval peninsular literary directions and tastes in the early modern period, in Ottoman Cairo. To understand somewhat more fully these "literary tastes" and cultural configurations of the Hispanophone community which conform the frame of their Judeo-Spanish usage, one may need to focus on and underline again the aspect of provenance in MSS. Indeed, the same Cairo Synagogue is the provenance of the MS IX.B.6 of the Consistoire/Alliance containing yet another non-liturgical, pseudo-homiletical, literary, satirical work in Judeo-Spanish which Schwab (1907) daubed *Alphabet de Ben Sira*.

The texts of the "*Homélies*" are not dated, but Schwab noted, in a few cases, the explicitly-attributed references to published Ottoman rabbinical authorities such as Algazi[30] in the third fragment and also in the fourth, where the name is followed by "z"l," denoting Hebrew *zi̱krono li-vra̱ka* 'of blessed memory,' used after the name of a deceased person. Although, as far as I am aware, neither students of *děraša* [sermons] nor Ottomanists have controlled Schwab's assertions, they seem to show that some are late eighteenth-century Cairene Judeo-Spanish Geniza texts, in other words, the period which is commonly associated with "writing down", with text production in Judeo-Spanish rather than latent, oral transmission.

From the point of view of the language, it is clear that, in contrast with the Hispanic component, the Hebrew/Aramaic or Semitic component is extremely intense and extensive in these fragments. That is to say that they are the contrary of the

29 See Schwab's articles for the transliterations, which will not be copied and duplicated here.

30 R. Yisra'el Ya'aqov Algazi (Izmir, 1680–Jerusalem, 1756) was the author of *Šĕ'erit Ya'aqov* (Constantinople, 1745 or 1751).

sixteenth-century Salonika Hospital *taqqanot*, which show an advance of the Hispanic component. I do not find the archaic category of "macaronic" of use. It may make some sense in analyses[31] of such sixteenth century texts as, say, the *Lozana andaluza* or some of Torres Naharro's passages. There, the multilingual utterances serve to construct and underline the inequalities of multilingualism and to produce the biting satire against diversity of languages in a sixteenth-century context of [Christian] peninsular cultures. But quite clearly the use of Hebrew or Aramaic in these Cairene synagogal fragments is the opposite of satirical.

Some attention to the codicological data may be introduced here. Of course, in the present state of research, codicology is a very loose and almost useless term when employed for this kind of fragmentary manuscript Judeo-Spanish Geniza material, rather than [the minority? of] full and dated codices. We cannot study quire disposition, let alone construct a *collatio* on the basis of fragments such as these. Similarly, in approaching fragments which bear no dates, everybody understands their limitations and the difference between dated MSS—where the dating is unproblematic—and undated MSS. What I mean is something different, which the librarian Schwab took for granted. Today we may not accept the paleographic nomenclature used by him. But it is clear that he is talking about different hands and that is the significant point. When he writes "sexagésimo" or points to differences in the *mise en page*—where some Judeo-Spanish sermon MSS are in columns and others are not—he is obviously indicating that they come from completely different, independent Judeo-Spanish MSS. What this means for us is that the number of full Judeo-Spanish codices today has no bearing on the number of Judeo-Spanish codices or notebooks of sermons in the early modern period. Here again, the obvious needs to be articulated: the state of our shelves today does not correspond to the past. In other words, the Judeo-Spanish manuscript fragments—rather than hypotheses—are clear testimony to lost Cairene libraries of the early modern period which were much richer in Judeo-Spanish codices or notebooks/drafts of vernacular sermons. My corollary includes Judeo-Spanish sermon MSS well beyond the Consistoire or Alliance collections and has implications for the fragments of sermons in Judeo-Spanish in the Taylor-Schechter (Cairo Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Library) or ENA (Princeton Geniza Project) collections. Is this wealth of Judeo-Spanish sermons a distinctly early modern phenomenon which contrasts sharply with a putative lack or absence of precedents on our shelves, in other words an absence of Jewish sermons in the vernacular in the Late Middle Ages?

31 For this category in other cultures, see for example McGrady (1998:265–271). For ideas on language in Iberian Jewish and converso cultures after the expulsions see Gutwirth (2013:285–306).

Recent research has shown that this is an optical illusion. We have both internal and independent evidence for the existence and content of vernacular Jewish sermons from fifteenth century Castile-Leon and the Crown of Aragon. We can point to the composition of the non-Hebraist public of these medieval vernacular Jewish sermons on the basis of archival evidence rather than hypotheses based on our subjective responses to such sermons today. Understanding the audience more precisely helps us to understand the original vernacular sermon delivered to that particular audience more precisely. We have clear evidence for the public's responses to the pre-Expulsion vernacular sermons (Gutwirth 2013).

Schwab did not think that medieval Jews wrote only in Hebrew and that, therefore, there is a lack of pre-expulsion sermons in the vernacular on our shelves. On the contrary. Needless to say, in the early 1900s, he could not have anticipated the discoveries of the late twentieth century concerning previously misidentified, unidentified and unknown Judeo-Spanish MSS nor the studies which brought into relief the sheer volume and range of the Jewish vernacular corpus nor other studies which began to reveal the quality of such works as the *Coplas de Yocef*, the *Proverbios morales* and other vernacular compositions from Hispano-Jewish communities. But he knew his Kayserling (1859) and alluded explicitly to Jewish literary compositions in the vernacular in his book on Judeo-Spanish Homilies.

This amalgam of literature and homiletics leads to the question of language, style, rhetoric and literary elements in the Judeo-Spanish synagogal sermons. This seems to be yet another lacuna in Judeo-Spanish studies. In contrast with various conventional studies of *midraš* and *děraša*, here, too, it is best to try to avoid approaching such cultural phenomena in a historical and cultural vacuum. That is to say that, while there is no doubt about the continuity in Jewish sermon history emphasized as early as Zunz, the cultural variations constitute the challenge for historians. In the case of sermons for Hispanophones, for us this means paying some attention to the sermons for the Hispanophone majority populations in the Late Middle Ages especially now that Christian audiences of Jewish sermons have been taken into account. In the case of the surroundings, the Christian vernacular sermons, the link between sermons and literature in a Hispano-medieval context has been well argued. Deyermond (1980), Cátedra (1984, 1986) and various others have made it perfectly comprehensible.[32] The vernacular sermon as underlying support of vernacular literature is evident in works such as Diego de San Pedro's *Sermón de amores* (circa 1485). This is the cultural historical background

32 Deyermond (1980); Gilman (1974); and Chapman (1970) are some of the scholars of medieval Spanish Christian sermons who point to their links to literature.

to sermons for Hispanophones in Christian Spain. The question here is what is the link between these two areas in Judeo-Spanish.

To my mind there is something nearing microliterature behind a simple line (transcribed in Schwab 1907) such as "y rabotenu dicen que david alaw ha shalom buen de longe (or lengua?) era que antes demanda un sobrico y despues un pidasico di queso y despues un pidasico de pan" ['and our Rabbis say that David peace be upon him was a master of language because first he asks for a crust and then for a little piece of cheese and then for a little bit of bread.']. We note the concern with order and rhetoric of gradations and the expressive, deft use of the diminutive in reconstructing a petitory scene. The adscription of rhetorical skills to King David enhances the standing of rhetoric. It is effected in the vernacular.

There is a feature which may be described as the self-reflective quality of these Judeo-Spanish synagogal homilies which are about the synagogue or prayers or events involving prayers such as the first Judeo-Spanish fragment of the above-mentioned book on fragments of Homélies (Schwab 1916:137r):

> Meldamos en Perek primero de berakhot[33] Aba Benjamin dicién: non su tefila de el hombre es aveira salvo en el bet ha kneset.
>
> [We study in the first (chapter) of *Berakhot* Aba Benjamin said: no prayer is *aveira* except in the synagogue.]

I allow myself a minor emendation of Schwab's transcription which does not correspond to the text in the Babylonian Talmud. It may be explained by the similarity between *resh* and *dalet*. So that we should read "non su tefila de el hombre es *oída* salvo en el bet ha kneset" [no prayer is heard (rather than no prayer is *'avera* ['sin'])]. Similar is the case of the sentence: "que ansí dice el pasuk 'por *avier* a el cantor y a la oración'" [for thus says the (biblical verse) in order to *avier* the cantor and the prayer]; again, we should read "por *oír* al cantor y a la oración en el lugar de el Cantor" [(. . .) to *hear* the cantor (. . .)].

The second Judeo-Spanish MS fragment—described as being in "Egyptian characters"—consists of Judeo-Spanish fragments of a now-lost codex of no less than 84 folios. It is concerned with the blessing of the *kohanim* ['priests'], again a synagogal institution. Something similar might be argued for the Judeo-Spanish sermon on *mila* ['circumcisión'] in the third fragment; that on weddings; or the funeral oration in Judeo-Spanish fragment IV. These are the themes of the standard tasks of the synagogal preacher in the Ottoman Empire.

Here I would like to draw attention to a line in this second Judeo-Spanish fragment: "Bien se, Seniores, que ninguno [. . .] si maraviliada" (or *se maraviliará*?)"

33 bBer 6a.

['I know full well, gentlemen, that no one (. . .) will be surprised']. Given the imprecision and ambiguity of the term "homilies", which could be oral or textual, it is important to note that there the orator appeals directly to his public in Judeo-Spanish by means of the vocative. This is a sign of oratory rather than purely written, textual commentary.

Equally rhetorical is the procedure of *humilitas* within *captatio benevolentiae*. Thus, for example, in the second fragment in Judeo-Spanish we read "Y es verdad que eini kdai le varekh; pero con todo eso al tehi berakhat (birkat?) hediot kala be einekha" ['And it is true that I am not worthy enough to pronounce blessings; nevertheless let not the layman's blessing be light in your eyes']. Similarly, in the Judeo-Spanish fragment ten, we find the Judeo-Spanish preacher or orator referring to his own sermon/oration as "*palabrica":* "diremos una palabrica" ['We shall say a little word']. The term "word" modified by the diminutive in Judeo-Spanish produces a particular semantic value which recalls equivalents in other Jewish languages (e.g., Yiddish *vertl*) to signify a saying related to Torah study. Another fragment contains the phrase: "Y en antes que entre en mi pobre plática" ['And before I begin my poor speech'].

Particularly interesting is the self-reflective reference to rhetoric and the stylistic requirements of oratory within the sermon itself. In MS XI we read:

> Sabido es que el que ha de alentarse a hablar divre tora be rabim ha menester que haga (haya?) havana y sekhel tzakh para saber ordenar y asentar su plática para que aquella habla y aquella plática la entienda la gente y que sean aquellos divre tora arevim al shomeehem y si no más le vale que calle.
>
> And it is well known that he who needs to encourage himself to make a speech concerning the Torah in public needs to have understanding and intelligence in order to know how to order and establish his speech so that it is comprehensible and pleasant for the people and that the words of Tora should be euphonious to the audience and if not it were better for him to remain silent.

Is not "ordenar y asentar" an echo of *dispositio* (as in Quintilian's *inventio et dispositio*)?

Here again, one cannot help recalling that there are precedents for this Ottoman Judeo-Spanish awareness of form and ideals of eloquence going as far back as pre-expulsion culture. It is an awareness and a desire which has been identified in late medieval texts (Gutwirth 1996), referring not only to Hebrew and its well known ideals of *zakkut* ['purity'], but also to vernacular style. For all its imperfections, Schwab's unnoticed labor of textual transcriptions from early modern Genizah MSS in Judeo-Spanish affords us the rare privilege of witnessing some of the uses of Judeo-Spanish in early modern Ottoman synagogues.

10 Conclusion

The above lines have been particularly concerned with questions about 1492 as a boundary between two periods. Periodizations are meant to be helpful and yet the question of the relations between "late medieval" and "early modern" continues to engage historians to this day.[34] The place of the fifteenth century is at the heart of the issue and it leads to divisions in perspective which could be traced as far back as Burckhardt and Huizinga. They did not, of course, argue so pointedly or intensely about selfhood (Aers 1992) or "the subject" or deep structural changes in the economy (Kaminsky 2000; Goldsmith 1995), religion and theology, political ideas and numerous other aspects of change.

Such discussions—so frequently bound even today by strict linguistic, geographic, religious or national frontiers—would seem to bear no direct relation to our subject. And yet, recent research has shown that as early as the nineteenth century, consideration of two Spanish works by Palencia led to postulating a dichotomy in the fifteenth century, where the "Semitic" medieval past was discarded for an Italianate, "modern" present (Gutwirth 2011). The contrary overemphasis on continuity led to the famous theory of Sephardic culture—particularly language—as "fossilized" in the fifteenth century, in the reign of the Catholic Monarchs. To be sure, Pidal, who thought of Sephardic culture as preserving "petrified" elements of the medieval past, was no Toynbee who claimed that Judaism as a whole was a fossil. After all, the frame is somewhat banal: Pidal was speaking at a post-prandial occasion at All Souls in the 1920s. He carried out an extensive and fruitful correspondence with Ottoman/Turkish Sephardic intellectuals. He valued Sephardic "traditionalism" and made it a lynchpin of his methodology and work.[35]

Economy, intellectual, scientific, religious and literary history—so particularly prominent in these discussions about periodization—would seem divergent pursuits and areas unconnected to our concerns. And yet, to give but one example (that of international trading), the Ottoman phase of the House of Nassi (so prominent in the patronage of Synagogues and synagogal texts in Ladino such as the Ferrara *Biblia*) has always been approached from a historical vantage point which considered its origins in the Lisbon international trade in spices, clearly dependent on the new, unprecedented discovery of the route via the Cape of Good Hope (Gutwirth 2017). Nonetheless, the once prevalent notion that international trade was previously unknown amongst Iberian Jews has been questioned and antecedents in, say, the intercontinental, Hispano-Maghrebi trade in the Late Middle Ages—before

34 Simpson (2002); Wallace (2004); and Hutton (2015).

35 On him, see Muñoz Solla (2012).

1444—have been reconstructed (Gutwirth 1985a). The link between language and economics may be understood a little better by bearing these phenomena in mind.

Similarly, Ettinger (1961), the early modernist, believed that Christian Hebraism was a new, modern, factor of such portentousness that it could explain the historical change in European attitudes to the Jews in the early modern period, implying a strong contrast with the late medieval period, where Christians could not read Aramaic or Hebrew characters and words. His basic notion, namely that history changes with changes in language, is valuable. But here the case of Alfonso de Valladolid/Avner mi-Burgos and the texts containing Ibero-Romance translations of Bible and Talmud might be instructive. Not because he was the only Christian Hebraist of the Late Middle Ages but because of the non-numerical question of content or quality. Of course, Baer had recognized his "fiery and original" character, basing himself on the MSS, probably before the 1940s, as early as the 1920s, when he was researching his article for the *Korrespondenzblatt*. But this became far more comprehensible to a broader audience after the editions of the MSS containing the *Mostrador* or the *Batallas*. More recent work, whether in philosophy,[36] history of science[37] or creative literature,[38] has fully confirmed Baer's view of his importance. To put it roughly, Avner argues against the Talmudists and Judaism from a position of profound compenetration with the language and texts and also with the methods of argument of the Talmud and, no less but more significant, its later, medieval commentaries. Such intimate and extensive grasp of the Aramaic/Hebrew sources is not easy to parallel, let alone exceed, amongst early modern analogues of later centuries. To achieve this within the possibilities of the *romance*, the "young" vernacular of that age, advances the theme of fourteenth-century originality even further and might lead to question the "Christian" character of the Ibero Romance translations of Bible and Talmud in his works. In other words, the vernacular had such potentials in the early fourteenth century, long before we encounter them in the exiles' Judeo-Spanish productions of the early modern period.

In the area of literature, we have had cases such as the *Coplas de Yocef*. Rediscovered in the 1920s, edited in the 1930s, the composition might well have seemed an icon of profound early modern change, of the medieval literature that was "for-

36 Particularly relevant is the implication of the view that Avner did not follow slavishly in the footsteps of the *Pugio*. The view that histories of Christian Hebraism can start with the *Pugio* and then skip the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to go on to the better-known Hebraists of the Renaissance is thus revealed as unhistorical despite the legitimate studies of the importance of the *Pugio* in the Renaissance. See Sadik (2008, 2010, 2011, 2015 and 2016).

37 Luria and Gluskina (1983); and Glasner (2013).

38 Particularly useful in this regard are the works of Alba and Sainz de la Maza (2009, 2013); and Sainz de la Maza (1986, 1992, 2006).

gotten" in the early modern period. No clearer example of the change in *mentalité*, culture, literary tastes brought about by the Renaissance seemed possible than this apparent rejection of a medieval "poetic jewel" by the early modern Sephardic reading public. And yet, later research showed where to look for multiple post-1492 remnants of it in Judeo-Spanish *aljamía* by focusing on provenance. Once this was accepted, more recent finds led to the realization that the late medieval poem was highly prized, printed and copied after the expulsions in the early modern period.

Literature, Christian Hebraism, diplomacy/*trujemanes*, history of cultures-in-contact and even law and economics are some of the aspects of the Hispano-Jewish transition from late medieval to early modern which have been nuanced by recent research. Language is a significant, major aspect of these fields.

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