

# The Contributors and Summaries of their Essays

**Moshe Taube** is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and Slavic Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on the Early Slavic translations made from Hebrew, and on Yiddish grammar, especially syntax.

Taube's paper describes the evolution of testimonies in Yiddish delivered orally before Ashkenazic Rabbinic courts and preserved in *Responsa* from the fifteenth century onward. It reviews the existing studies on these testimonies, which noted their historical importance but hardly touched on their linguistic significance for the history of Yiddish. It assesses the reliability of these testimonies as evidence for the evolution of the spoken language and concludes that in spite of the problems posed by the underspecified writing conventions of the Hebrew letters used to transcribe Yiddish words and sentences, as well as by the interference, mostly inadvertent, of the default Rabbinic written language—the mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic called by Yiddish speakers *Loshn koydesh* ('Holy Tongue')—the testimonies constitute a precious, untapped source of information on the evolution of spoken Yiddish, especially in the domains of phraseology and syntax.

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The precepts Jewish women are bound to observe are traditionally synthesized in three main *mišvot* concerning *ḥalla* (dough offering), *nidda* (menstrual impurity) and *hadlaqat ha-ner* (lighting of the candles at the beginning of Shabbat and the Festivals). The most influential work about this topic in Yiddish is *Seder Mišvot Našim* by Binyamin Slonik (1550 ca.–after 1620), printed in Cracow in 1577 and reprinted several times. This composition was reworked into Judeo-Italian at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Rabbi Ya'aqov Ben Elḥanan Heilprun. His *Precetti da esser imparati dalle donne hebree* (Precepts to be learned by Jewish women) appeared in Venice (in 1616) and again in Padua (in 1625) and in Venice (in 1710). In this paper, the relation between the Yiddish version and the Judeo-Italian one are analyzed, in order to underline the changes introduced by Rav Heilprun for his readers in Italy.

**Avriel Bar-Levav** is Associate Professor of Jewish history at the Open University of Israel. His research interests include History of the Jewish book, magic, Jewish attitudes towards death, egodocuments, and Jewish secularization. He is co-editor of *Zutot: Perspectives in Jewish Culture*, and editor of *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry*.

The linguistic reality of most of tradition-bound European Jewry in the early modern period was bilingual, and for Ashkenazic Jews that meant Hebrew and Yiddish operating together. Yiddish was the mother tongue (*mame loshn*) and Hebrew an acquired language. Teaching was in Yiddish and Yiddish was utilized in learning to read Hebrew and Aramaic. Another way to present the relations between Hebrew and Yiddish is by use of the complementary pair of terms 'the world of texts' and 'the world of readers', suggested by Roger Chartier. This article illuminates one of the earliest stages of the opening of the Jewish world of texts to Yiddish readers, utilizing a text in two languages by one author, Šim'on Frankfurt of Amsterdam (1634–1712), the author of *Sefer ha-Hayyim* (The Book of Life, Amsterdam 1703). Frankfurt's composition is one of the central and most influential books in the genre called 'books for the sick and the dying'. The book has two parts, the first in Hebrew and the second in Yiddish. The Yiddish part is not a translation of the Hebrew one but a separate work designated especially for Yiddish readers. The author wanted to address several kinds of readers in one duo-lingual work which he regarded as one whole.

**Michael K. Silber** is Cardinal Franz Koenig Senior Lecturer in Austrian Studies (retired) in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses

on the history of the Jews in Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy during the long eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with particular emphasis on religious and cultural transformations, citizenship and nationalism, linguistic change and language ideologies.

Silber's paper addresses the mutual interaction between Ashkenazic and Sephardic piety primarily but not exclusively through the diffusion of three texts: the Hebrew *Pele Yo'eş* of Eli'ezer Papo (1824) and its Judezmo adaptation by his son, Yē'uda Papo (1870–72), the Hebrew and Jüdisch-Deutsch *Pēsaq Din* of Michalowce (1864), the manifesto of Hungarian Ultra-Orthodoxy, and the related Jüdisch-Deutsch '*Et La-asot* of Hillel Lichtenstein (1870). Each text touched on the question of Jewish language policy. While concentrating on the Kingdom of Hungary in the nineteenth century, the author traces the diffusion of the texts in the Land of Israel and Eastern Europe, and later in contemporary United States and Israel, all the while noting adjustments to the changing linguistic environments.

**Binyamin Hunyadi** is a Research Fellow at the New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study in Bucharest, Romania. His research explores the history of the Yiddish press, as well as Eastern European Jewish history and culture.

In the process of the emergence of diverse trends within the Hungarian Jewish community, '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*' [God-Fearers' Journal], written and edited by R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (1837–1922) played a significant role. The journal reflected the problems tackled by the Hungarian *halakhic* figures of the time, and it helped to crystallize a certain methodology to fight modernity. '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*' was the first Yiddish and one of the first Jewish journals in Hungary. Schlesinger—already in the early 1860s, based on the assumptions derived from the teachings of the *Ḥatam Sofer* (1762–1839)—came to the realization that the challenges of modernity could be faced solely through the tools provided by modern reality. The technique invented by Schlesinger, which was discussed on the pages of '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*', has had a far-reaching influence on the development of Jewish religious thought, since it used new tools given by the 'open society' such as the mass circulation of news, propaganda and ideology, and using these same tools it aimed to destroy the main values of this same society, which provided them. Schlesinger deliberated on various rabbinic topics in '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*', such as the applicability and the extent of applicability of *minhag* [Jewish custom] in the modern world, the philosophy of the Orthodox Jew in the nineteenth century, and the possibility of an organized ultra-Orthodox web of communities that would use '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*' as its central organ. Furthermore, '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*' wished to found a philosophical framework for its imagined community that was based not only on well-grounded *halakhic* concepts, but also on the mystical interpretation of Jewish tradition. The present article endeavors to shed light on the various interpretative uses of rabbinic tradition in '*Ammud ha-Yir'a*'.

**David M. Bunis** is a Full Professor (Emeritus) in the Department of Hebrew Language at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and co-editor of *Massorot: Studies in Language Traditions and Jewish Languages*. His research focuses on topics in the Judezmo language in its historical, regional, stylistic and social variation, and on the foundations of 'Judezmism' as a Jewish language-centered ethno-ideology.

According to strict Jewish law as stipulated in the *halakhic* literature, the oral testimony proffered by witnesses appearing before the judges of a rabbinic court must be transcribed verbatim by the court judge. The *responsa* collections published by some Judezmo-speaking rabbis of the Ottoman Empire incorporate transcriptions of such oral testimony, presented as being reproduced verbatim. Since the turn of the twentieth century various linguists have relied upon these transcriptions as exact reproductions of the language used by the court witnesses—sometimes even specific, named witnesses offering testimony in particular places on specified dates—belonging to particular social sectors, practicing particular trades or professions, in the rabbinic courts of specific places during particular historical periods. The present article closely examines representations of the Judezmo court testimony attributed to witnesses appearing in the law court of the sixteenth-century Salonikan

Rabbi Šemu'el (or Samuel) de Medina (1505–1589), based on editions of his responsa published in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The examination discloses numerous divergences in language, at all linguistic levels, between the representations of testimony as they appear in the question section as opposed to the reply section of responsa in the same edition and in other editions; to the synopses of the responsa sometimes appearing in tables of contents of the various editions; and to versions of the same testimony published in the responsa of other rabbis of the period. Given these divergences it is suggested that linguists should proceed with caution when relying on such testimony for evidence of language use by particular witnesses in a given place and time, belonging to specific social strata.

**Ora (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald** is Emerita Full Professor in the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages and The Salti Institute for Ladino Studies at Bar-Ilan University. Her research focuses on the phonology and morphology of Modern Hebrew as well as on linguistic analysis of Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) texts.

The comparison between the original Hebrew *Šulḥan 'Aruk* and its Ladino translation in *Meza de el alma* of the latter half of the sixteenth century reveals significant editorial alterations and abridgments. Rabbi Me'ir Benveniste, the translator, employs distinct translation principles, as evidenced by the selection of *Dine Sefer Tora*, or the 'Laws of the Bible scroll'. While striving to provide equivalent translations for relevant passages, Benveniste chooses to omit numerous laws perceived as irrelevant to those unfamiliar with Hebrew or unversed in the art of Torah scroll writing. Nevertheless, he conscientiously includes specific directives concerning Torah scroll handling and the treatment of sanctified articles. At times, Benveniste takes modest liberties with the translation, supplementing the text with explanatory notes where necessary and simplifying laws to ensure accessibility for the lay community.

**Tamar Alexander**, z"l, was Emeritus Full Professor in the Hebrew Literature Department at the Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheva and the academic head of the Israeli National Authority for Ladino Language and Culture. She was the leading scholar of the folk literature and folklore of Ladino-speaking Jews. Her research addressed historical folk narrative as well as Judeo-Spanish and Ladino folk literature (folk narratives, proverbs, riddles, and magic).

The *Me'am Lo'ez* is considered by many to be the most important rabbinical series written in Ladino (or Judeo-Spanish). Initiated in Istanbul, 1730, by Rabbi Ya'aqov Chuli, and continued after his death in 1732 by rabbis in Istanbul and other parts of the Ottoman Empire through 1899, a major component in the series is its vernacular adaptations of midrashic interpretations of the Bible. The series volumes adapt material from a rich selection of rabbinic sources of diverse types in Hebrew; Chuli's volume on Genesis alone cites more than two hundred such sources, as well as oral sources. Chuli conceived the series as a kind of popular encyclopedia, aimed at making Hebrew sources available to the Sephardic Jews in their own group language. The present article focuses on the midrashim related in Chuli's Genesis which are ostensibly accounts of miracles; and yet the reader senses that Chuli was uncomfortable relating the miracles as actual supernatural occurrences, both because he knew that some of his readers were of a rationalistic orientation, and because he himself was uncertain about how to relate to the miracles recounted in the sacred texts. He solved the problem for his readers and himself by introducing notions "from world wisdom" which could provide scientific, natural explanations for the ostensibly supernatural phenomena recounted in the sacred texts.

**Katja Šmid** is a Tenured Scientist in Sephardic Studies in the Jewish and Islamic Studies Department at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) in Madrid, and co-editor of the *European Journal of Jewish Studies*. Šmid's fields of expertise are Ladino language and literature with a special focus on Judeo-Spanish rabbinic writings, Ottoman Sephardic women, the Jewish-Balkan cultural legacy, and Sephardic narratives.

Nearly all the Ladino literary production between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century is of a religious character and was printed in Hebrew Rashi script in the most important centers of Ottoman Jewish printing (Salonika, Constantinople, Izmir, Jerusalem), as well as outside the Ottoman Empire (Venice, Livorno, Vienna, Belgrade). Vernacular Rabbis, or rabbis who wrote in the local Jewish vernacular rather than in Hebrew, provided the Sephardic reading public with numerous works in Judeo-Spanish, either original compositions or translations and adaptations of the most representative Jewish works. The present article aims to draw attention to the production of Ladino ethical (*musar*) works, reconsidering a definition and classification of this literary genre by previous researchers. It offers an overview of musar works translated or adapted for Sephardic readership as well as original works of ethical content in Ladino. Among them, the author deals closely with three representative musar works in Judezmo: *Sefer Darke ha-Adam* ['Book of the Ways of Man'], *Sefer Musar Haskel* ['Moral Lesson'] published together in Salonika (1843, 1849 and 1892) by authors Yiṣḥaq Bēkor Amarachi and Yosef Ben Me'ir Sason, and *Bēraḳa ha-Mēšullešet o Las tres luzes* ['Triple Blessing or The Three Lights'], an extraordinary book which was edited by Rafa'el Yiṣḥaq Ben Veniste and published in Salonika (1881).

**Eleazar Gutwirth**, z"l, was Full Professor Emeritus of Hispano-Jewish History and Culture at Tel Aviv University. His research concentrates on the history of the Jews in late Medieval Spain and their descendants, their material, spiritual and literary cultures, and the evidence for them.

Gutwirth's article departs from the notion that Judeo-Spanish language was a social phenomenon. Its study, thus, depends on history and culture. The speakers' idea of diversity therefore deserves to be reconstructed. As its reconstruction in the Ottoman Empire depends on texts, its comprehension also depends partly on the materiality of texts and their content. This article therefore aims to augment the corpus of evidence relevant to these aspects of Judeo-Spanish in the early modern Ottoman Empire and to analyze it. It observes the uses, functions and significance of Judeo-Spanish and questions the notion that its divergence from peninsular Spanish was a "problem" in need of integration and reeducation. The article studies the attitudes to Judeo-Spanish at the time and analyses the tenor of statements of commitment to the vernacular. The article highlights the Synagogue as a central space not only of religion but also of legal and social life.

**Eliezer Papo** is Senior Lecturer in the Hebrew Literature Department at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, a Chairman of the Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture at the same University, and the chief-editor of *El Prezente—Journal for Sephardic Studies*. His research focuses on Hebrew/Jewish oral literatures, with specialization in the field of Sephardic literatures (oral and written, rabbinic and secular).

Being both erudite in Jewish Law and a self-maintaining merchant was a Sephardic cultural ideal. However, not many Sephardim accomplished both its components. Most men were not trained rabbis. Many were "mere" artisans. Whether rabbis, artisans or merchants, most Sephardic men were small businessmen. Many a time rabbis would run a small business of their own, or would establish a partnership with their brothers, cousins or other relatives. As a rule, even when not directly involved in business, Sephardic rabbis were sons or sons-in-law, brothers or brothers-in-law, fathers or fathers-in-law of small businessmen. Thus, they formed an integral and essential part of their business-oriented community. To the best of the author's knowledge, no other ethno-confessional group has ever included so many businessmen amongst its theologians, and no theologians from any other ethno-confessional group have ever had a more business-minded audience. Consequently, in the given framework, Sephardic *ḥaḳamim* developed a distinguished narrative of "doing business" with God (or, *ha-mavdil*, with Satan), in both worlds. The article analyses this "business theology" of Sephardic sages as presented in three different texts: in a description of the Sephardic business community given by David Moše Atijas in his *La guerta de oro* (Livorno, 1778), in the Zohar-based homilies of Ḥam Ribī

Avram Ben Moše Finci (*Leqeṭ ha-Zohar*, Belgrade 1858/9), and in the famous *Šitre ha-Hitqaššērut* of the members of *Hevrat Ahavat Šalom*, a mystical society that evolved within the renowned Sephardic Kabbalistic *Yēšivat Bet El* in Jerusalem.

**Anabella Esperanza** is Post-Doctoral Fellow at The Dan David Society of Fellows at Tel Aviv University. She is a social and cultural historian of the late Ottoman Empire and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino-speaking) Jewry. Her research focuses on the relationship between Jewish and Ottoman studies, the history of science and health, and gender studies, particularly in women's health, sexuality, religiosity, and shared ritual and medical cultures.

The *copla* entitled “*La Ketubá de la Ley*” is one of the most important paraliturgical compositions for Judeo-Spanish-speaking worshippers for the Shavuot Festival. Published more than thirty-five times from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, this *copla* deals simultaneously with the covenant between the People of Israel and God, and the People of Israel and their Law, the Torah. The covenant is symbolized by a formal marriage sanctified by the *kētubba*, the legal marriage certificate, which becomes the central metaphor of the hymn. This paper examines “*La Ketubá de la Ley*” as a case study of the implementation of liturgical poetic praxis by Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews. It presents a comparative analysis of the structure and content as well as the didactic and cultural role of the poem, while locating it in the context of the Hebrew *piyyuṭ* “*Yarad dodi lē-ganno*”, written by R. Yisra’el Najara (c. 1555–c. 1625) in sixteenth-century Safed, and the early corpus of Judeo-Spanish *piyyuṭim* for Shavuot, as defined in the article. In doing so, the chapter offers insights into the wide literary encounters of this *copla*, which are profoundly rooted in the Jewish paraliturgical literary production in Hebrew and the vernacular.

