

From Protestant Missionaries to Jewish Educators: Children's Textbooks in Judeo-Spanish

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From the second half of the nineteenth century until the 1930s, children's textbooks intended to impart the rudiments of reading and writing in Judeo-Spanish were published in the cities of Kushta (Istanbul), Salonika, and Izmir.¹ These books bore the titles *Silavario Espanyol*, *Silavario Djudeo-Espanyol*, and, at a later stage, *Nuevo Silavario Espanyol*, and *Nuevo Silavario Djudeo-Espanyol*.² In this article, I wish to trace the sources of this genre and indicate its trends and development — from Protestant missionaries to Jewish educators.

Up until the nineteenth century, children learned by traditional educational methods in the framework of the *meldar* and under the instructional aegis of the *Haham* (a Sephardic Rabbi).³ Girls enjoyed no structured education, and could generally neither read nor write. In the nineteenth century, however, a number of parallel historical processes arose that transformed the entire form of the educational system. Under pressure from the European powers, the Turkish authorities instituted a number of reforms that led to greater State intervention in the life of the Jewish communities, whose autonomy consequently considerably diminished (BENBASSA; RODRIGUE, 2001, 79–81).

In the internal Jewish sphere, western European Jewry began taking an increased interest in eastern Jewry, following the blood libel in Damascus in 1840 — and prominent figures, such as Moses Montefiore and Adolph Cremieux became involved on their behalf (Benbassa &

¹ The last textbook in this series to be printed — *Nuevo Silabario Espanyol: metod pratika i moderna por el ensenyamiento dela lingua Judeo-Espanyola* — was apparently published in Salonika in 1931. It was edited by Ovadia Shem-Tov Naar and printed, like the other books in the series, in Hebrew characters. After World War II, a condensed textbook in Latin characters called *More Adereh: Silabaryo por pratikarse el elevo en kurto tiempo el Ebreo sin profesor* [More Adereh: Silabaryo for the Student for the Practice of Hebrew in a Short Space of Time and without a Teacher] was published by Nisim Avraam Behar in Galata-Istanbul in 1949, being designed for mastering the Jewish prayers in Hebrew. The later editions of this textbook, 1966 and 1977, were already published in Turkish.

² The name *silavario* derives from the word *silava* — “syllable” — and indicates that the method for teaching reading used in these books is based on dividing the words into syllables. Some of the later textbooks in Kushta, and the majority of the textbooks in Salonika, bore the name *silabario* in the title. One textbook, published in Kushta in 1920 and 1922, contained the name *silaberio* due to the French influence prevailing in the Alliance schools (SEPHIHA, 1997, 11). In the book edited by Ovadia Naar, as well that published in Kushta, the term *silava* is not mentioned in the instructional chapters, possibly explaining the difference between the titles using *silabario* and those employing the term *silavario*. For the purposes of this article, I have used the contemporary transcription of Judeo-Spanish in Latin letters of *Aki Yerushalayim*.

³ For the *meldar*, cf. Ben Giat (1920), Michael Molho (1950), and Berenguer's study (BERENGUER, 2004) of Ben Giat's writings concerning this system. On finishing in the *meldar*, students who wished to continue studying within a religious Jewish framework entered a yeshiva.

Rodrigue 2001: 84). The Jewish press of the period described eastern Jews as poor and weak, their lack of good education depriving them of the ability to engage in the more gainful trades that required study and training.

The practical conclusion reached was that, in order to improve their condition, modern schools should be opened. European Jewish leaders found support for the introduction of change amongst the local elite, the 'Frankos', who themselves desired to implement educational reforms in the spirit of modernity. Direct cooperation between these two elite groups commenced in 1854, when the first Jewish school was established in Istanbul through the agency of Baron Rothschild's emissary, Albert Cohen. The curriculum included foreign languages, in addition to Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish (BENBASSA; RODRIGUE, 2001, 86; BORNSTEIN-MAKOVETSKY, 1996, 306). Similar schools opened in Izmir, Jerusalem, and Salonika.

An additional factor influencing education was the Protestant mission that began operating in the main cities of the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s with the intention of gaining Jewish converts. The impetus for the activities of the mission was the emergence of a messianic spirit among Protestant groups in Britain and the United States, characterized by expectations of the coming of the millennium. These groups harbored the belief that the Jewish people would accept Christianity and return to the Land of Israel, where the Kingdom of David and Solomon would be reestablished.⁴

The Protestant Mission believed that it would be easier to work among the Sephardi Jewish community, a group they felt to be weaker, more backward and uneducated and thus more susceptible to Western and Christian influence. The success of their endeavor, they were persuaded, would be enhanced if their activities were accompanied by philanthropic works, such as schools. Also being a weak force, the Ottoman government would forbear from intervening in their activities (BORNSTEIN-MAKOVETSKY, 1996, 274–277).

The mission's first activities were among the Jewish community of Izmir, where two missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (henceforth, the American Board) arrived in 1820. In 1831, the American Board also began to conduct operations in Kushta, later expanding its activities to Salonika. It was subsequently joined by the Church of Scotland, the Anglican Church, and the Free Church of Scotland, most of whose work was conducted among Jews of Ashkenazi and Italian extraction (BORNSTEIN-MAKOVETSKY, 1996, 274–78).

The situation of the Jews in the principal centers of the Ottoman Empire during this period as perceived by the Protestant mission is reflected in a letter sent by Rev. G. Solbe to his

⁴ The Protestant Mission operated among other Jewish communities in the world during the nineteenth century. In Morocco, the Anglican mission distributed books in various languages, although not in Judeo-Arabic. For the activity of the mission there, cf. Bashan (1999). In Bombay, India, the mission of the Free Church of Scotland operated among the Bene Israel community, the work there being conducted by John Wilson, who published a Hebrew grammar book in 1832 that included Bible stories in the community's language, Marathi. My thanks go to Ms. Ilana Tahan of the British Library Museum for drawing my attention to this work.

employers, the London Jews' Society (henceforth, LJS). In a report of his work in the Izmir community in 1843, Solbe wrote that the Jews were steeped in poverty and ignorance, only a small minority living in any comfort.⁵ In order to give Jewish children effective religious education, he recommended that a day school should be set up, the investment required for this being very low, in his estimation. He also noted that he had begun to study Judeo-Spanish, and would soon be able to conduct religious services in that language (*Jewish Intelligence*, October 1843, vol. 9, 354–355).

In the 1840s, schools for Jewish pupils were opened in the three main communities. Most of the activities, however, centered on Kushta, where a number of schools were founded by various missions. The first schools were intended for girls, and constituted a revolution in Jewish education. As early as 1845, the Church of Scotland established a school for Jewish girls. The Free Scottish Mission subsequently founded a school for Italian girls in 1847, which, three years later, had 32 students, including Sephardi girls. From 1850 onwards, schools for boys also began to function. The first was a school established by the Free Church of Scotland for Italian boys, the same mission also founding a school for Ashkenazi boys. In 1854, the American Board opened a school in the Balat quarter, which one year later already had a student body of 90 pupils. In 1855, this organization opened another school in the Ortaköy quarter, this for boys whose parents fell under European aegis. While the American Board ceased activity in this region between 1855 and 1857, the LJS opened two schools in the city.

In contrast to Kushta, the mission schools founded in Izmir and Salonika enjoyed little success. In the 1840s, the American Board school only had between ten and twelve pupils, the school established by the Church of Scotland in 1866 similarly being small and run on a low standard. An American Board school opened in Salonika in 1851, with only three pupils. While three years later this number had grown to eighteen, the school subsequently closed down following the cessation of the American Board's activities amongst the Sephardi Jewish community (BORNSTEIN-MAKOVETSKY, 1996, 295–297).

While the mission schools were unsuccessful from a religious perspective, failing to instill Christian values in their pupils, they did succeed in introducing modern education to Sephardi society (BORNSTEIN-MAKOVETSKY, 1996, 306). As part of their activities, the different missions issued many publications in Judeo-Spanish, including translated biblical texts, a Hebrew-Judeo-Spanish dictionary, the New Testament, various [messianic] Christian books, and an illustrated review journal entitled *El Manadero o la fuente de sensia* (1855).⁶ Among these publications were the various *Silavarios*, in all likelihood constituting

⁵ In his report, Solbe also describes the condition of ninety families living in temporary accommodation following the destruction of their homes in the great fire which occurred in the city in 1841. According to the LJS missionary, these families lived in abject spiritual and material poverty: cf. *Jewish Intelligence* 1843, vol. 9, 354–355.

⁶ The first missionary publications appeared in Izmir, issued by the Englishman G. Griffith, who printed primarily for the Anglican Protestant and the American missions (YAARY, 1959, 108). This press was responsible for the printing of the following books in Judeo-Spanish: a Bible translation, in 1838 and 1846 (though the *av bet din* of Kushta's Jewish community, Rabbi Shemuel Haim, authorized the notation that the translation was the

school textbooks. These continued to be published for some 50 years, in a number of editions printed by the Armenian Boyagian Press.

The first textbook to bear the name *Silavario* appeared around 1855.⁷ Its full title is *Silavario o ayuda para ambezar a meldar para el uzo de las eskolas de los Djudios Sefaradim* [*Silavario: Or, An Aid to Teaching Reading for the Use of the Sephardi Jews*].⁸ A twenty-page book, which includes no illustrations, it contains four sections: Part One presents the Hebrew alphabet in Rashi script, final letters and spirants, vowels and consonants; Part Two, which presents syllables, gradually progressing from two-letter syllables to those of three or four letters; Part Three, presenting words of one to six syllables; and Part Four, which contains reading passages, proceeding from sentences to short stories.⁹ This basic format became the model for all the *Silavarios* that appeared from then onwards.

The sentences and stories contain a clear Christian character, intended to impart the essence of the fundamentals of Christianity in addition to reading skills. Thus, for example, one of the sentences transmits the message, ‘Non ay ombre djusto en la tierra ke aga bien i no peke’ (p.12) [For there is not one good man on earth who does what is best and doesn’t err].¹⁰ While this sentiment is based on Jewish sources (Ecclesiastes 7:20), it accords with the Christian concept that man is born sinful due to the original sin committed by Adam and Eve.

work of W. G. Schauffler, the principal missionary of the American Mission, it was actually based on Abraham ben Isaac Assa’s translation [1739-1744], published in Vienna in 1813, combined with the Ferrara Bible translation of 1553: cf. Yaary (1959, 144, note 75); Bornstein-Makovetsky (1996, 298); the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (entitled *El libro de oraciones: asigun el uzo de la ke’hila del Mashiah de Inglaterra i Irlanda*, or “The book of prayers according to the rite of the community of the Messiah in England and Ireland”) in 1844 (absent from Yaary’s list; see Dov Hacoen, list of books printed in Izmir, 1406, item 3); Psalms (1853); a Hebrew grammar book, *Yesodot dikduk leshon ha-kodesh* by Schauffler (1852). In 1855, a Judeo-Spanish-Hebrew dictionary appeared in Kushta entitled *Otzar divrei leshon ha-kodesh* by the same author. Other editions of the Bible were printed in Vienna in 1841 and 1846, while the New Testament was translated from the Greek and published in Athens in 1844. The mission of the Free Church of Scotland was very active in publishing textbooks for schools — some of which were also intended for families — which included science and religious history and “inspirational” writings (such as letters from the Scottish congregation to the Jews, the story of an Ashkenazi convert, and so on). Some of these works have possibly been lost; a list of publications appears at the end of *La eskalera a la anbezadura* and *Eleh toldot Bene Yisra’el*. For the latter, see below. This list does not contain all the missionary literature printed, a subject which requires further investigation.

⁷ This publishing date was determined by Dov Hacoen of the Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi library, on the basis of the printer’s marks in the book. My thanks go to Mr. Hacoen for his assistance.

⁸ The textbooks were written in Hebrew characters, the traditional transcription of Judeo-Spanish. The use of the Hebrew alphabet served the Sephardi Jews as a sign of national and religious identification: cf. Bunis (2005).

⁹ While an examination of the sources and instructional methods from which the *silvarios* drew is likely to constitute a venue for additional research, this lies beyond the scope of the present paper. It is notable, however, that at the beginning of the nineteenth century English textbooks for children already taught the skill of reading by first presenting the alphabet and then gradually shifting from two-syllable words to those with several more. Examples can be found in Noah Webster’s textbook and the *New England Primer* of 1805, American textbooks of the time being based on the British models.

¹⁰ The biblical verses quoted here are taken from the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2000).

The book also provides general information regarding the basic elements of Protestant Christianity, such as the Ten Commandments (part of the Christian catechism) and the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, along with stories whose main protagonists are children whose behavior is designed to inculcate belief in God.¹¹ One such is the story of Yaakov, a boy of good character, who lives in Scotland and becomes blind at the age of eight as a result of contracting smallpox — whose sight is restored by a divine miracle (pp. 12–13). The book concludes with a five-stanza poem based on the first psalm, 'Happy is the Man' (p. 20).

In addition to teaching religious education and faith in divine providence, the book also seeks to inculcate Protestant codes of conduct and ethics. For example, the sentence 'La verdad ke danya es mijor de la mentira ke alegra' [A truth that hurts is better than a lie that cheers up] (p. 3) was intended to convey the message that children should always tell the truth, even when it is difficult and painful to do so. The sentence 'Lo ke es de azer oy no lo deshes para maniana' [What should be done today, do not postpone until tomorrow] was intended to teach diligence and self-control (p. 3).

Was the book *Silavario o ayuda para ambezar a meldar para el uzo de las eskolas de los Djudios Sefaradim* truly the first missionary textbook intended for Sephardi children, or was it preceded by others? A survey of the missionary publications indicates that two years' prior to its publication, in 1853, the Free Church of Scotland commissioned A. Churchill's printing press in Kushta to publish a book entitled *La eskalera a la anbezadura* [The Ladder to Study]. Illustrated by seventy-one woodcuts and designed for use by 'schools and families', this contained no alphabet and was not intended to teach reading as such, but did present, in addition to religious stories such as the Creation, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and Noah's Flood, a section on 'natural history', with information concerning man, metals, and fauna (such as the stork, camel, sheep, hens, etc.), and the basics of geography and astronomy.

This book specifically targeted the 'Sephardim of Kushta', the goal being to inculcate the fundamentals of education according to the principles of 'proper learning' — i.e., from the viewpoint of belief in God and His works of creation. The publishers stated that the book was written in 'lingua ordinaria' [ordinary language], and it was considered an innovation, books such as these for children previously not having been available. A list of further publications printed by the Free Church of Scotland for 'the benefit of' the Jews' was inserted at the

¹¹ In an effort to explain to Sephardi children the principles of Protestant belief, the Protestant mission (which precise one remains unclear and requires further elucidation) published *El Katehismo Menor*, translated from English, in 1854. The book is accompanied by 'proofs' ("prevas") from the Old and New Testaments and pays great attention, in the format of questions and answers, to the Ten Commandments as the behavioral code regulating relations between man and God and between human beings. The catechism has historically been considered an important educational tool within the Christian world, being included in children's textbooks in a question-and-answer format identical to that of the catechism in Judeo-Spanish. The *New England Primer* printed in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries is a good example of this kind of material. I have relied in this article on the *New England Primer* of 1805, close in date to the period in which the Protestant Judeo-Spanish children's textbooks were published.

end.¹² The editors noted that one-third of the book was based on new material, the remainder consisting of translations of the best English textbooks with additions and emendations. They also expressed their thanks to the American Board, which worked among the Armenians, for contributing half of the book's illustrations based on etchings in its possession.¹³

The *Silavario* books that followed constituted a kind of synthesis of the first *Silavario* and *La eskalera a la anbezadura*, containing, in addition to reading aids, a 'scientific' section as well as religious tales and sayings with a religious message. The *Silavario Espanyol*, published in Kushta in 1880, is a good example of this genre. The frontispiece notes that it comprises an expanded third edition, printed by the Boyagian Press. It consisted of 48 pages, including illustrations, the last page noting that it was being sold 'en el Han Amerikano' [in the American Han]. Purchase of a large number of copies gave the buyer a discount: while a single copy cost one piastre, acquisition of 200 cost 160 piastres, indicating that the book was intended for sale in bulk to schools.

It is possible that *Silavario Espanyol* was also published by the Free Church of Scotland — or at least in collaboration with it — since some of its illustrations also appeared in *La eskalera a la anbezadura*. For instance, the term '*La Gayina*' (the hen) is accompanied by a picture of a cock and a hen, under which appears the legend in Latin letters, 'poultry' (p. 20).¹⁴ The identical picture with the same legend appears in *Silavario Espanyol* for the term '*Las Aves*' (p. 8). The difference between the two texts lies in the content of each entry. While the earlier booklet contains more comprehensive, detailed information, that in the *Silavario* is highly condensed, the book evidently being primarily intended to teach children how to read. Since it was also designed to inculcate moral values, however, the authors preserved the information given in *La eskalera* concerning the hen's maternal instincts of protecting and feeding her chicks.

¹² A particularly interesting item in this list is a book of astronomy, *Una mirada a los sielos o la puerta a la Astronomia al uzo de las eskolas de los Djudios* [A Gaze at the Sky, Or: The Gate to Astronomy, for the Use of Jewish Schools]. Printed in 1850 by the Jewish publisher Nissim De Castro, this volume was approved by the Rabbis of Kushta — Refael Shabetay Ben Yakar, Yaakov Bechar David, and Haim Moshe Fresko — who warmly praised its contents and publisher and drew attention to its importance. It is possible that these rabbis were unaware that the book was published under the auspices of the mission. The Yaary list likewise fails to indicate that the book was produced by the Protestant mission.

¹³ Another book published in this period, also intended for use in schools and among families, was *Eleh toldot Bene Yisra'el o sinkuenta i dos kuentos del Arba'ah ve-esrim* [*Eleh toldot Bene Yisra'el, Or: Fifty-two Stories of Arba'ah ve-esrim*], containing 52 Bible stories from a Protestant perspective. The book, published by A. Churchill in 1854, was written by Alexander Thomson, who gave his permission to translate it into Judeo-Spanish from German, as well as for the inclusion of the etching-based illustrations, himself personally covering a large part of the printing costs. This book appears to have been distributed across the globe, being translated into 50 different languages, including Chinese, with 500,000 copies being distributed in the 24 years preceding its appearance in Judeo-Spanish. The Judeo-Spanish version also went through a number of editions. The third edition, translated from English, was published in 1886 and contained 117 stories for use by 'Los Israelitas Protestantes'.

¹⁴ The English legend appears under some of the animal entries, such as fox, frog, and ostrich. The editor does not appear to have been meticulous in deleting the original English terms from the borrowed material, whether the English textbooks or the American Board illustrations.

In the section providing general information, the term ‘world’ contains data concerning the number of Jews in the world (7,931,000), followed by Christians (divided into their various denominations — Catholic, Orthodox, Greek, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant), Muslims, and idol worshippers (such as Buddhists and Brahmins). This part of the book concludes with the statement that it is to be hoped that ‘all our brethren will come to know the one true God and receive His blessing’ (p. 46). The *Silavario* presents religious information, including the statement that the Bible is the oldest, most precious holy book in the world; the Ten Commandments; the Priestly Blessing; and the blessing of Agur.¹⁵ Under the heading “Golden Rules”, it also presents the *Shema* (Hear O Israel), sayings of the Sages, and the dictum ‘*Amaras a tu kompaniero komo a ti mizmo*’ [Love your neighbor as yourself — Leviticus 19:8], an important principle in both Judaism and Christianity (p. 16).¹⁶

The information on fauna included in the ‘scientific’ section stresses the usefulness of the various animals — such as, ‘*La vaka da leche para mi ijika*’ [The cow gives milk for my little girl]. The writers are also keen, however, to instill humane values, such as compassion for living creatures and refraining from cruelty towards them. Thus, for example, insects should not be destroyed since they have a function of their own, while one should also abstain from tearing off their wings, this being an act of cruelty (p. 41). Another value advocated is personal and environmental cleanliness: ‘*Lavate la kara, mi ijo. Ke sea todo limpio; El kuerpo, los vistidos, la kaza, la kaye, la sivdad*’ (p. 4) [Wash your face, my son. Everything should be clean: the body, clothes, the house, the street, the city]. At the same time, it aspires to implant a religio-Protestant value as mentioned at the ending of the segment, ‘*El Dio solo puede limpiar el korason*’ [Only God can cleanse the heart].¹⁷

Other values promoted are family love — ‘*El ijo ama a su padre*’ [The child loves his father] (p. 5); ‘*Yo amo a mi tio bueno*’ [I love my uncle] (p. 3) — and avoidance of theft: ‘*Guadrate de ladronisios chikos. Todos aborresen el ladron*’ [Avoid small thefts; everyone hates a thief] (p. 16). Charity was also encouraged: ‘*Ke me de, sinior padre, un pan para este povre ombre kojo*’ [Will he give me bread for this lame man, señor Father?] (p. 5).

The behavior and conduct to be followed are exemplified in the character of the ‘good child’ presented to the young reader in the form of a poem: ‘*Abramiko*’ [Avramiko — an affectionate name for Abraham in Judeo-Spanish] is a ‘natural’, ruddy child, washed and clean, gentle, well-loved, loyal, and polite. He is not idle [*ni haraganiko*], nor forgetful [*ni*

¹⁵ Based on Proverbs 30: 7–8, wherein Agur ben Jakeh asks God to keep him far from falsehood, poverty, and wealth.

¹⁶ According to the New Testament, the “greatest commandment”, which opens with the words ‘Hear, O Israel’, is acknowledgement of the One God and love of Him with all one’s heart, the second being ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’: ‘...he [one of the scribes] asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength’. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28–31).

¹⁷ Apparently inspired by the verses from the book of Psalms (51: 2, 10): ‘Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin,’ ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’

ulvidadiko], tells the truth, and blesses God every day for leading him on the right path in life (p. 9). An allusion to the Christian concept of original sin and bearing reproach with humility according to Jesus' example occurs in the following: '*Sufre las kulpasiones kon umilidad*' [Suffer blame with humility]. The poem ends with a call to the reader — referred to as 'little friend' — to emulate Abramiko and thus to live under God's blessing. In contrast, the 'bad boy' meets a bitter end: '*David*' is '*El ijo desovediente*' — the disobedient child — who, although talented and clever, lacks morals and is stubborn and wayward. Despite his parents' warning not to wade across the river, he does so and drowns, to their great grief (p. 29).¹⁸

An interesting phenomenon is the inclusion of girls as characters. While girls' schools were first opened under the aegis of the Alliance network only in the 1870s (BENBASSA; RODRIGUE, 2001, 94), as noted above, mission girls' schools were established as early as the 1840s. Young girls appeared in the books used in these institutions from the very beginning. The half-title page of *La eskalera a la anbezadura* explicitly states that the book is intended for boys and girls, while the title page of the various editions of *Silavario Espanyol* carries an illustration depicting girls engrossed in drawing and reading, most probably taken from English or American textbooks. The reading sentences likewise refer to girls as engaged in the traditional craft of sewing: '*Tu faja no vale para mi muniaka (Kukla)*' [Your cloth is useless for my doll]; '*Mi dedal kayo i no lo puedo ver*' [My thimble has fallen and I cannot see it] (p. 4).

In the majority of passages, girls are presented as 'good', maternal, and God-fearing. For example, Bulisa takes care of her cat and feeds it — just as the cat, also a maternal figure, cares for her kittens (p. 6). Also mentioned is an unnamed girl described as '*Una buena ijika*' — a good girl — who encourages her widowed mother to place her trust in God (p. 18).

In 1874, some twenty years after the appearance of the first *Silavario*, a Jewish *Silavario* was published in Izmir whose dedication and extant bibliographical listings suggest that it constitutes the first of its type *not* written by missionaries. Entitled *Silavario Espanyol kon letras de Rashi al uzo de los talmidim del Oriente* [Silavario Espanyol with Rashi Letters, For the Use of Talmidim of the Orient], it comprised the second, condensed (thirteen pages) part of a book for teaching Hebrew entitled *Alef Bet en lingua Ebraika (leshon ha-kodesh) al uzo de los talmidim del Oriente*.¹⁹

¹⁸ The dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' boys also occurs in the American textbooks of the early nineteenth century composed by Noah Webster, and in the *New England Primer*. The contrast appears to have constituted an accepted educational method during this period, characterization of two opposite figures and their labeling as the personification of good and bad evidently being regarded as a useful aid in helping children to distinguish between pleasing and reprobate behavior.

¹⁹ The first part of the book is intended to teach reading of the Holy Scriptures according to the Sephardi cantillation, and the prayers and blessings. In contrast to the *Silavarios*, which taught students to read Judeo-Spanish in unpointed Rashi script (as customary), those for the teaching of Hebrew were principally designed to instruct the pupils to read the Scriptures and prayer books (cf. GOMEL, 2006, 3). They thus employ pointed square script in order to ensure accurate and correct reading. As they learned to read Hebrew, the pupils therefore also learned to read Judeo-Spanish written in square Hebrew script. An instance of such instruction is found in *Yisrael beha"r* [Ben kevod ribi] Haim's book, *Otzar 'Ha-haim*, published in Vienna in 1823. Intended

It bears a short endorsement in Judeo-Spanish by Rabbi Abraham Palacci and a dedication to Alexander Sidi by the editor/publisher, the Armenian B. Tatikian.²⁰ Alexander (Alessandro) Sidi was a prominent figure in the Jewish community who struggled for many years to establish a modern school in the city.²¹

The dedication, written in Judeo-Spanish, stresses the innovative nature of the book for Alexander Sidi's 'co-religionists' in Turkey and its status as an exclusively '*Israelita*' (Jewish) book. Tatikian explains that his decision to dedicate the volume to Alexander Sidi derived from the latter's struggle to promote his brethren in Izmir and from the fact that his sterling character honorably represented the 'Jew'. Its character also attests to the deep friendship and esteem held by the Armenian publisher towards one of the influential leaders within the Jewish community in Izmir, who worked tirelessly to introduce modern ways of life into the traditional Sephardi culture.

While neither the dedication nor the endorsement given by Rabbi Abraham Palacci indicate the identity of the book's author, however, the liturgical passages in the two sections of the book, which included blessings and prayers, were clearly written by an authoritative writer with extensive Jewish knowledge, such as a *Haham*.

The *Silavario* is limited in scope and primarily designed to teach reading in Judeo-Spanish. It also includes brief notes regarding the Jewish festivals and fasts and their dates according to the months of the Jewish calendar. The book was also intended to instill within pupils the fundamentals of love of God and His Torah, and thus contains sentences imbued with a message of faith. Comparison with the contents of a missionary textbook of a similar nature — *Silavario Espanyol letras kuadradas* [*Silavario Espanyol in Square Letters*] — published

for children, according to the preface written by an acquaintance of the author, the envoy R. Haim Baruch Maestro of Hebron, was the first of its kind, although such children's books already being prevalent within the Ashkenazi communities. Following a presentation of the square Hebrew letters and pointing, the book gives first-reading examples in *Judeo-Spanish*, these words being familiar to the children as their mother tongue. In addition to teaching reading skills, it also imparted general knowledge of Judaism, math, geography, and other subjects, further containing a chapter devoted to good virtues such as integrity and honesty, charity through tithing, reading, and the enhancement of Jewish faith and religious knowledge deriving from recognition of the Creator and His acts of creation. The poetic language and detailed formulation differ greatly from similar chapters in the *Silvarios*, which, while inculcating similar principles, employ a far more condensed and purposeful style. For this book, cf. Bunis (1996). For an in-depth study of the system of teaching Hebrew used in Judeo-Spanish books in the Ottoman Empire, cf. Gomel (2006), who refers to both the *Alef Bet en lingua Ebraika* and *Otzar 'Ha-haim*.

²⁰ The printing press of the Armenian Tatikian is mentioned in Galanté's book on the Jews of Izmir (GALANTE, 1985, 81). According to this source, the Tatikian press was still in existence at the beginning of the twentieth century, publishing additional material relating to the local Jewish community. In 1897, it printed the community's administrative register and in 1874 produced raffle tickets in five languages, including Judeo-Spanish, for the benefit of collecting money for orphaned young Jewish women in Izmir. Several years earlier, in the 1830s, the press printed lithographs with Jewish figures from Izmir, now located in a number of collections around the world.

²¹ Alexander Sidi played an important role in the foundation of the first Jewish school in Izmir, *Azizye*, which opened in the early 1860s and operated until 1868 (RODRIGUE, 1990, 44). In 1872, he was elected president of the local *Alliance israélite Universelle* committee that promoted the establishment of the society's school in the city. A year later, in 1873, the school was set up (*La Buena Esperanza*, a festive issue marking the 25th anniversary of the paper, (*La Buena Esperanza*, 1896, 8)). The Jewish *Silavario* may have been used in the Alliance school.

in Kushta around 1870, nonetheless indicates that the two *Silavarios* closely resemble one another.²² A large part of the vocabulary and reading passages are identical, being more extensive in the Christian *Silavario*. Both contain an identical section entitled '*konsejos*' [advice] in the Christian edition (the Jewish version bearing no heading), which offers guidance about how to live a moral life — such as speaking the truth, clinging to integrity, and acting uprightly.

For example, a sentence in favor of giving charity and against delaying it occurs in both: '*Avre la mano al prove, i nunca digas maniana dare*' [Open your hand to the poor and never say, I shall give tomorrow] (Jewish *Silavario*, p. 50; Christian *Silavario*, p. 11).²³ A sentence denigrating stealing occurs virtually verbatim, with the exception of a single word. While the Christian *Silavario* specifically denounces *small* thefts (p. 11), the Jewish *Silavario* makes no distinction between grand and petty larceny, warning against all forms of thievery: '*Guadrate de ladronisio, todos aborresen el ladron*' (p. 50).

A further significant difference, also deriving from a minor textual variation in formulation, occurs in a sentence referring to God's love for His creatures. The missionary book states, '*El sinior ke esta en el alto nos ama komo sus ijos*' [The Lord above loves us as though we were His sons] (p. 7), while the Jewish *Silavario* alludes to the special connection between the Jewish people and God according to the Jewish view, assuring the reader, with a slight change in wording, that the Jews are the most beloved of God's children: '*El Dio ke esta en los sielos mos ama komo a sus ijos mas keridos*' [The Lord in Heaven loves us as though we were His most beloved sons] (p. 48).

The issue of love of the Torah and its study appears in similar fashion in both sources, Jews and Protestants alike holding the reading and studying of the Bible in high regard. The Christian *Silavario* thus teaches the child, '*Ama pues su ley santa, i melda en ella kon toda tu alma*' [Therefore, love His holy Testament and read it with all your heart] (p. 7), the Jewish *Silavario* advocating the same idea and linking together the elements of love of God, love of His Torah, and its study, further teaching the child the custom of kissing the Torah scroll: '*Ama tu a tu Dio, beza su ley santa, i melda en eya kon toda tu alma*' (p. 50) [Love your God, kiss His holy Torah, and read it with all your heart].²⁴

How is the appearance of the first Jewish *Silavario* and its resemblance to the Christian version to be explained? It seems that it was published in response to the need for a modern textbook written in Judeo-Spanish, the pupils' native language. In distinction to the teaching

²² Although the name of the printer is missing from the title page of the *Silavario*, the latter is identical to that of the Protestant *Silavarios* produced by the Boyagian Press. In the bibliographical listings of this book, it is suggested that the publisher is Boyagian and that this constitutes the first or second edition of reading-textbooks in Judeo-Spanish printed by this press.

²³ The first part of the sentence is based upon the phrase, 'For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, "You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

²⁴ The Jewish version resembles the verse, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might' (Deuteronomy 6:5).

of Hebrew, to which several grammar books were devoted, and the teaching of the chanting of the Torah, taught by a *Haham* within the framework of the *meldar*, no books existed for teaching reading in Judeo-Spanish — or for teaching the principles of Judaism, moral values, and the standards of proper behavior. Although French was the preferred language in the Alliance schools, the true way to the pupils' hearts was evidently through their native language. Moreover, in order to orient themselves in their environment, they had to acquire the skills of reading and writing in the latter, this constituting the language of the press, written literature, and personal correspondence.²⁵

The first Jewish *Silavario* paved the way for those that followed, which gradually expanded their format and covered an ever-growing number of topics. The authors and educators, some of whom remain anonymous, appear to have been closely familiar with the missionary *Silavarios*, employing them as a didactic model appropriate to their system. Adopting the model of teaching reading by syllable, like the missionaries they also interpolated a great deal of religious and moral content — Jewish, naturally — into the reading passages they offered. One outstanding example of this trend is found in *Silavario Espanyol: las letras kuadradas*, written by an unknown author and published in Kushta around 1910.

This, too, appears to have been based on the Protestant *Silavario* printed in Kushta around 1870. The author of the Jewish *Silavario* made explicit use of the mission *Silavario*, making omissions or emendations where necessary and providing Jewish content. The method for teaching reading is identical, the same precise examples being used, although the Jewish *Silavario* is more extensive and provides a greater number of examples. Content-wise, in addition to the Protestant text it also draws on the Jewish *Silavario* printed in Izmir, a chapter teaching how to write correspondence being appended. This *Silavario* in fact constitutes an enlarged version of both *Silavarios*, formulated in a uniform Jewish garb.

For example, the rules concerning order and cleanliness, work and diligence, a calm temperament, and refraining from stealing were borrowed from the Christian *Silavario* either verbatim or with a very slight change in wording, since these behavioral norms corresponded to those promulgated by Judeo-Spanish society: '*Mira ke no manches el libro*' [Beware not to stain the book] (p. 8; Christian *Silavario*, p. 9); '*El ke non sembra non sigara*' [He who does not sow will not reap] (p. 8); '*El ke no siembra no sigara*' (Christian *Silavario*, p. 9);²⁶ '*Sea tu espirito blando*' [May you have a docile spirit] (p. 8; Christian *Silavario*, p. 9);

²⁵ Some of the later Jewish *Silavarios* taught *soletreo* script, intended for informal writing — such as the exchange of letters, personal diaries, and so forth: see, for example, *Nuevo Silavario Espanyol* (Izmir, 1921).

²⁶ A parallel to this sentence occurs in the title of the reading section, '*Los que sembraron con Lagrimas recojen con Cantes*' (Psalms 126:5) in *Nuevo Silabario Espanyol: metod practica i moderna*, edited by Ovadia Naar and published in Salonika in 1931. In an article regarding the moral values of the Alliance network and their influence on the schools in Salonika and Morocco, Rena Molho cites this title as an example of the value of education towards labor the system worked to instill in Jews in the East and the Balkans as part of its efforts to transform their mentality and educate them in Western values (MOLHO, 2008, 134). This principle, like other moral values such as cleanliness, fairness, silence, and obedience, corresponded to the Protestant values given expression years earlier in the Christian *Silavarios*. It should be remembered, however, that laziness and idleness were never acceptable in Sephardi society, a fact attested by many proverbs. Discussion of this issue lies beyond the scope of this article, however.

and the familiar warning against theft: '*Guadrate de ladronisio, todos aborresen el ladron*' (p. 9; Christian *Silavario*, p. 11).

Sentences reflecting general principles of faith also resemble one another, with the exception of references to God's name. For example, the sentence in the Christian book, '*Las plantas i flores del kampo son la ovra del sinior*' [The plants and flowers in the field are the Lord's creation] (p. 9) is amended in the Jewish *Silavario* by replacement of the word *sinior* by the Judeo-Spanish word for God, *Dio* (p. 8). Similarly, the short chapter '*sentensias morales*' [moral sayings], which in the Christian *Silavario* gives advice as to how to live a moral life, appears almost exactly as in the original language, with only a slight — but significant — correction, embodying the difference between the Protestant and Jewish views. While both *Silavarios* agree that the bad child will remain bad (in the sense of 'A twisted thing cannot be made straight' [Ecclesiastes 1:15]), the missionary book also argues pessimistically that the good child may turn bad: '*El ninio bien kriado puede ser malo, el mal kriado no puede ser bueno*' [The well-reared child can be bad, the badly-raised [child] cannot be good] (p. 14).²⁷ The Jewish *Silavario* is far more optimistic, teaching that if the child is good, he will remain so: '*El ninio bien kriado non puede ser malo, el mal kriado non puede ser bueno*' [The well-reared child cannot be bad, the badly-raised [child] cannot be good] (p. 12).

Other changes were made in adjusting the sentences to the rules of Judeo-Spanish, and sometimes even in the correction of an illogical sense. For example, the following sentence from the Protestant *Silavario*, '*El kolchon es gordo i caliente*' [The mattress is thick and warm] (p. 9) becomes '*El kolchon es godro i pesgado*' [The mattress is thick and heavy] (p. 8) in the Jewish *Silavario*.

The *Silavario* adds a chapter of advice from the *Haham* to the *talmid* [pupil] (p. 12). The first recommendation is in fact a principle tenet of faith taken from the Protestant *Silavario*, according to which the world is the result of God's creation and proof of His existence. The Jewish *Silavario* elaborates on this idea, however, adding rules that only apply to the Jewish world — such as proper behavior in the synagogue, the meaning of reaching the age of thirteen with regard to observing the commandments and being responsible for one's deeds, and so forth. It also presents Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith (lacking in the Protestant *Silavario*), the Ten Commandments, and the Priestly Blessing.

The author specifically preferred versions of the Ten Commandments and the Priestly Blessing that adhere to the traditional *Ladino* calque-translations of the sacred texts.²⁸ To make the text more understandable for the child, he replaced archaic words with more commonly used ones.

²⁷ The Christian concept that the well-reared child can be bad derives from the doctrine cited above: 'For there is not one good man on earth who does what is best and doesn't err' (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

²⁸ A literal translation which retains the original Hebrew constructions of the sentences, cf. Bunis (1993, 14).

Thus, for instance, the Jewish *Silavario*'s version of the Priestly Blessing runs: '*Te bendiga Adonay i te guadre, arrelumbre Adonay sus fases a ti, i te engrasye. Alse Adonay sus fases a ti, i te de pas!*' [The LORD bless you and protect you! The LORD deal kindly and graciously with you. The LORD bestow His favor upon you and grant you peace] (p. 17; Numbers 6:24–26).²⁹ In contrast, the version found in the Protestant *Silavario* deviates from the archaic formulation, quoting instead from the missionary translation version of the Bible: '*Adonay te bendiga i te guadre; Aga alumbrar Adonay su kara sovre ti i te engrasye; Alse Adonay su kara a ti, i ponga en ti paz*' (p. 16; *El libro de la ley, los profetas, i las eskrituras*, 1870, 192). A further example of the same principle is the first commandment in the Jewish *Silavario*: '*Yo Adonay tu Dio ke te kiti de tierra de Ayfto*' [I, the LORD your God, who brought you out from [the] land of Egypt] (Exodus 20: 2; p. 15) — which the Protestant *Silavario* gives as: '*Yo soy Adonay tu Dio, ke te saki de la tierra de Ayfto de la kaza de siervos*' [I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery] (*Silavario Espanyol*, 1880, 39; *El libro de la ley, los profetas, i las eskrituras*, 1870, 102).³⁰

As noted above, over the course of time Jewish *Silavarios* gradually expanded their format, adding illustrations (albeit different ones from those appearing in the missionary books) and additional study chapters, such as writing letters on a range of subjects, mathematics, supplementary scientific topics (such as the study of bacteria), rules of hygiene (e.g., eating kosher food and refraining from expectorating) and rules for behavior at home and outside; sometimes, proverbs were also included.³¹ They also developed the model of the 'good' and 'bad' boy, with a plethora of examples corresponding to the Sephardi cultural world.³² From the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jewish *Silavarios* sought to instill in the hearts of the pupils a patriotic love and link to Turkey, referring to it as their "homeland."³³ A practical

²⁹ Haim Yisrael's *Arba'a ve-esrim Ladino* translation of the same verses is as follows: 'Bendigate Adonay i guardate: alumbre Adonay sus piadades ati i engrasiete: Alse Adonay sus eras de ti i ponga ati pas' (1813, 10a). My thanks to Dr. Avner Peretz of the Maale Adumim Institute for Ladino, for his kind assistance with the citations from Yisrael's *Arba'a ve-esrim*.

³⁰ The word *saki* appears in place of *kiti* in Haim Yisrael's *Arba'a ve-esrim* translation: 'Yo Adonay tu Dio ke te saki de tierra de Ayfto de kaza de siervos' (1813, 26b). The Ten Commandments do not appear in the 1870 Protestant *Silavario* but are found in the 1880 edition.

³¹ On bacteria, refraining from expectorating, eating kosher food as a form of hygiene, and the study of mathematics, see *Nuevo Silavario Djudeo-Espanyol* (1921, 49–50, 29, 12–14); on the rules of behavior at home and outside, see *Nuevo Silabario Djudeo-Espanyol* (c. 1900, 6); examples of well-known proverbs in Judeo-Spanish are found in *Nuevo Silavario Djudeo-Espanyol* (1908.: 17).

³² For example, the *Nuevo Silavario Djudeo-Espanyol* (1908) presents the good boy Izakito (1908, 18–19), who refrains from stealing as a godfearing child, and Yakoviko, who thieves and is immediately punished (1908, 27). In similar fashion to the Protestant *Silavario*, this book also contains a story in which disobedience ends in death. In distinction to the story of David, who flouted his parents' instructions and died, however, the Jewish *Silavario* presents a story about a lamb that did not obey its mother and was devoured by a wolf. The Jewish author appears to have refrained from attributing deadly punishment to reprobate behavior performed by a child, substituting the child with a young animal (1908, 14–15). The *Nuevo Silabario Djudeo-Espanyol* (c. 1900) refers to: 'El buen ijiko' Joseph (c. 1900, 7), Esther, a girl who treats an old person respectfully (c. 1900, 7-8), the attentive Shemuel and the obedient Judah (c. 1900, 9), while conversely depicting children whose behavior should be censured, such as an irritable boy (c. 1900, 12–13), a liar (c. 1900, 14), and a child who is habitually late to school (c. 1900, 18–19).

³³ Information about cities in Turkey is given in *Nuevo Silavario Djudeo-Espanyol* (1908), wherein it is related that Istanbul is the most beautiful city in the world and that Bursa possesses hot mineral springs beneficial to one's health (1908, 17-18). The *Nuevo Silavario Espanyol*, by Ephraim Melamed of Izmir, published in 1921,

step towards integrating the Jews into the local Turkish culture was taken by Nevres Sasson in 1903 in Kushta, who wrote a *Silavario* in Judeo-Spanish for studying Turkish in Ottoman script (Turkish in Arabic writing), *Silvario en Turko-Espanyol*.

Shortage of space has prevented us from covering here all the *Silavarios* published Kushta, Salonika, and Izmir. In summary, however, it may be said that the Protestant missionaries prepared the way for the employment of modern educational methods by Jewish educators by introducing textbooks and *Silavarios* into their schools. While these were written with the aim of converting Jews, the Jewish educators were not deterred and adapted the material for their own purposes, with the necessary adjustments for their target audience. In so doing, they followed the example of the Rabbis who had permitted the use of some missionary books, such as Bible translations.³⁴ The ideas held in common by the two groups — recognition of the need for modern textbooks to expand the general knowledge of the pupils, the desire to imbue education with moral values, faith in God, and reliance upon the Holy Scriptures as a source of faith — enabled these books to be incorporated and integrated within the Judeo-Sephardi education system.

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speaks of Turkey as the 'homeland' [la patria] which one must struggle to make a civilized place to live in and defend from its enemies (1921, 38)

³⁴ Having thoroughly examined the Bible translation by William G. Schaufler of the American Board, the *av bet din* of the Kushta Jewish community, Rabbi Shemuel Haim, permitted its use: cf. above, n. 5.

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