

El enkanto de la majia

Sephardic Magic: History, Trends and Topics

Tamar Alexander, Eliezer Papo

Hebrew Literature Department, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

In Sephardic sources, oral and written (in Judeo-Spanish or in Hebrew), one can find rather extensive descriptions of various magic practices. Even from rabbinic writings that oppose the use of magic, one can discern from the negative railings a depiction of different magic traditions and practices. In sharp contrast with this abundance of material, the study of Sephardic magic is still in its primal phase and the research yields are quite meager.

By the term Sephardic we mean the Jews who lived in Spain until the Expulsion (1492), as well as their descendants who founded their own communities in the Ottoman Empire, Southern Europe, or the New World; communities in which they proceeded to cherish, transmit, and develop their Iberian Jewish traditions until modern times. This ethnic group, with all its internal diversity, shares a common country of origin (Spain) and a common language—Judeo-Spanish (Ladino). We define a magical phenomenon as Sephardic according to the following criteria:

- (a) The addressor (the writer or the performer) defines himself as a Sephardi
- (b) At least two members of the ethnic group recognize the phenomenon at hand (magic belief, ritual, or formula) as part of their tradition
- (c) Elements of content: the text at hand, or some of its terminology, appears in Judeo-Spanish; or it contains components of traditional Sephardic daily life (food, costumes, customs, etc.).

The cultural uniqueness of any ethnic group stems from its particular relations with other ethnic and religious groups and their cultures. Sephardic culture, including its magic traditions, developed in the framework of four distinctive factors of influence:

1. Jewish culture and its canonic Hebrew and Aramaic sources, such as the Hebrew Bible and Classic Rabbinic literature (the latter abounding with magic elements), *halaxa* (Jewish law), philosophy and, as far as magic is concerned, mainly the *kabbala*. These sources are shared by other Jewish groups as well.
2. Iberian culture (the country of origin of the group) with its Arabic and Romance traditions.
3. Cultures of different ethnic groups with which Sephardic Jews have been in contact since their resettlement in the Ottoman Empire.
4. Ethnic cultures of other Jewish groups.

Unlike the elements of the established religious traditions, magic concepts and practices tend to cross ethnic and religious boundaries with much greater facility and smoothness.

In this survey, studies dedicated to different aspects of Sephardic magic will be classified according to the three above-mentioned criteria. We will start by surveying research dedicated to written Hebrew sources (*Midraš*, *Talmud*, *Kabbala*) dealing with phenomena like dream interpretation, sorcery, demons, and *dibbuqim*, which present the largest cluster of the existent research. Much less research focuses on a comparison of Sephardic magic to Spanish Iberian magic or to the magical traditions of the cultures of the countries in which Sephardic Jews lived after the Expulsion. Some studies, however, do concentrate on magic in one Sephardic community or compare among magic practices (such as spells, incantations, magic medicine, *segulot*, amulets and magic rites like *indulko* and *seradura*) of a few different Sephardic communities. The survey ends with ethnographic literature and memoirs published by community members, from which much information on magic beliefs and practices can be deduced. In each of its parts the survey presents the history of the research in the field, as the studies are cited in chronological order. At the same time, the most prominent magic-related topics underlined in the research are reviewed side by side with different research methods.

Until modern times, when trying to organize and summarize the positive knowledge of different phenomena of human life (including the phenomena related to the realm of magic), Jewish intellectuals would, first of all, turn for guidance to Hebrew canonical sources. The traditional Sephardic intellectual elite was no different. A

good example of the approach is **R. Šelomo Almuli**'s¹ (1490-1542) *Mefašer Ḥalmin* (Dream Interpreter), published in Salonica after 1515 and republished in 1518 in Constantinople.²

Almuli, a physician and Hebrew grammarian born in Spain who, after the Expulsion, became a *dayyan* (member of rabbinical court) in Ottoman Constantinople (Istanbul), wrote his book in Hebrew, summarizing in it all the information on the issue at hand dispersed in classic and medieval rabbinical sources, thus described in his own words: *Our sages, may their memory be blessed, and their holy books which flow as inexhaustible springs: the Talmud, the Holy Zohar, Rabbenu Sa'adya Gaon, Rabbenu Hay Gaon and others.*³ It goes without saying that Almuli refers in his work to famous biblical dreamers, such as Joseph, Jacob, Solomon, and Daniel.

Other Sephardic *ḥaxamim*, such as **R. Moše ben Barux Almosnino** (1518-1581), Salonican rabbi, philosopher, and preacher, wrote on the same topic in Judeo-Spanish. His *Tratado de los suenyos* (Treatise on Dreams) was published in Salonica, in the year 1564,⁴ together with his *Regimiento de la vida*. Almosnino was a prolific Hebrew author, who wrote numerous responsa, homilies, and biblical commentaries. His philosophical and scientific works were also written in Hebrew, and his sporadic opting for Judeo-Spanish seems to have been motivated by a wish to address certain works to a broader reading public. In the case at hand, the choice of the language might have been caused by the fact that the treatise is actually an answer to three questions posed to the author by Don Yossef Nassi, the Duke of Naxos, who probably was not too well-versed in Hebrew. The Duke's questions to the rabbi were the following: Are

- 1 Outside the Balkan Sephardic Community this family name is usually mispronounced and mistransliterated as Almoli.
- 2 Šelomo Almuli, *Mefašer Ḥalmin* [Dream Interpreter] (Hebrew), Salonica c. 1516. For a French translation, see Solomon ben Jacob Almoli, *La clef des rêves: traité d'oniromancie juive: traduction intégrale du livre Pitron 'halomot par Chelomo Almoli; complétée par une présentation, des références, des notes par Réouven Frajerman*, Éditions Salomon, Jérusalem c2001.
- 3 Quoted according to Šelomo Almuli, *Sefer Pitron Ḥalomot haŠalem* [The Complete Book of Dream Interpretation] (Hebrew), Bakal, Jerusalem 1965, p. 3.
- 4 Two of Almosnino's three Judeo-Spanish works were republished in 2004 in Latin transliteration. See Moše ben Barux Almosnino, *Regimiento de la vida, Tratado de los suenyos*, by John M. Zemke, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona 2004.

man's dreams in accordance with his character, is there a natural explanation for how a dream forms images that signify future events, and what causes a person to dream of things long since forgotten? The last question also included wondering whether natural reasons, too, account for biblical Joseph's dreams. In response, Almosnino argues that the foundation of Joseph's interpretations is a complete knowledge of the natural sciences. His analysis of Joseph's dreams is scientific, and it is based on Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*, as well as on the third part of Maimonide's *Guide for Perplexed*, thus carrying the Aristotelian/Maimonidean line of rational and anti-magical thinking into Sephardic thought. Interestingly, after answering the Duke's three questions, Almosnino recounts and interprets his own dream about the Duke, his brother, Šemuel, and their mother, Dona Gracia.

From its numerous editions one can deduce that Almuli's *Mefašer Halmin* was much more cherished by the Sephardic reading public than Almosnino's *Tratado*, probably because it was less scientific and more traditional-minded. Unlike the science-oriented part of the Sephardic intellectual elite, Sephardic common masses seemed to prefer the magical explanations of dreams. The fact that Almuli's book contains an alphabetical dictionary of symbols seen in dreams, as well as their interpretations, made it more practical and less theoretical, a thing which was also appreciated by the general public. It should be noted that on many occasions the entries in this dictionary reflect concepts and beliefs of the contemporary Sephardic community.

According to the Talmudic principle, *the dream follows the interpretation* (BT Beraxot 55b) a tremendous power is given to the words of the interpreter, which changes the reality on the basis of his interpretation, just the way the magicians claim to shape reality by their powers.⁵

5 For talmudic understanding of the dream, see for example, Haim Weiss, *All Dreams Follow the Mouth, A Reading in the Talmudic Tractate* (Hebrew), Kineret Zimora-Bitan Dvir, Or Yehudah 2011, and especially the analysis of the story of Bar-Hedya which changed the lives of Abaye and Rabba by the way he interpreted their dreams. The motive for his different interpretations was differences in the honorarium each of the *amoraim* paid him; Y. Harari, *Early Jewish Magic: Research, Method, Sources* (Hebrew), The Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 2010; Philip Alexander, "Bavli Berakhot 55a-57b: The Talmudic Dream book in Context", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 46 (1995), pp. 230-248; Galit Hasan Rokem, "A Dreams Amounts to the Sixtieth Part of Prophecy, On Interaction between Textual Establishment and Popular Context in Dream Interpretation by the Jewish Sages", in Benjamin Z. Kedar (ed.), *Studies in the History of Popular Culture*, The Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem 1996, pp. 31-45.

The *Haṭavat ḥalom* (Rectification of a dream) ceremony is based on the same magical concept of the power of words. A person who had a bad dream appears in front of three friendly and sympathetic people telling them three times *helma ṭava ḥazai* (I had a good dream), and they respond three times in a similar fashion *helma ṭava ḥazeta* (you had a good dream) and so on. These two phrases are then repeated seven times. Like so many other ceremonies, this one is also based on the idea that words have magical power to change or create reality. Magical numbers, three (three friends, threefold utterance of the sentence) and seven (sevenfold repetition of the ceremony), play a significant role in the ceremony. Besides that, this ceremony is conducted in public, and the power of the word is re-enhanced by the power of the collective.

In her comprehensive book on the Sephardic folktale, **Tamar Alexander** argues for a literary approach to dream analysis, seeing in it a genre of *personal narrative*.⁶ Following a short recapitulation on the place of the dream in Jewish tradition, Alexander analyzes a number of dream stories which were transmitted orally and later written down by a single Sephardic female storyteller.⁷ In addition to those characteristics of the dream story as a genre of personal narrative, Alexander sees it also as an *accumulative story* to which in every performance a new stratum is added, a stratum that contains the reactions of the ever-changing addressees of the story.

A similar literary-folkloristic approach is presented in additional studies by Alexander dedicated to *šedim* (demons) and *kišuf* (sorcery).⁸ In a recent article, Alexander deals with the image of the biblical sorcerer Balaam as it was presented in the *Mecam Locez on Numbers* by R. Yiṣḥaq Magriso (d. 1687).⁹ *Midraš Mecam Locez on the entire Torah* and some of the *Neviim* and *Ketuvim* is the most important

6 Tamar Alexander, *The Heart is a Mirror: The Sephardic Folktale*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 2008, pp. 520-534

7 Miryam Raymond, *Mifgašim baḥalom* [Meetings in Dream] (Hebrew), Astrolog, Tel-Aviv 1995.

8 Tamar Alexander, "Design of the Demon Story Genre: Marriages Between a Man and a Demon" (Hebrew), in Yael Azmon (ed.), *A View into the Lives of Women in Jewish Societies*, The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, Jerusalem 1995, pp. 291-308; Tamar Alexander, "Theme and Genre, Relationships between Man and She-Demon in Jewish Folklore", *Folklore and Ethnographic Reviews* 14, nos. 1-2 (1991), pp. 56-61.

9 Tamar Alexander, "Balaam as Wizard according to *Me'am Lo'ez* on Numbers", *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* (in print).

work produced in Judeo-Spanish. It is a collective opus by ten different authors, some of whom were the most prominent rabbis of their generation, written over some 169 years (1730-1899).

The entire *Paršat Balaq* in R. Magriso's commentary is depicted in a very picturesque manner, including many references to different magical practices, blatant sexual relations, and sectology. According to this Sephardic rabbi, Balaam is an audacious and sophisticated sorcerer who is not deterred by dangerous rituals in order to get through to the teachers of *sorcery*: °Aza and °Azael. At the same time, he has an evil eye known for its capability of harming, and he is a wanton creature who maintains sexual relations with his she-ass. He is aware of the weaknesses of humans, knowing well how to use them for his own profit. Consequently, he is successful in leading the people of Israel astray from the divine path, by seducing them to idolatry. By the power of his sorcery, Balaam rules over the demons and bends them to his will. Not too much of Balaam's prophetic status (as it is described in the Bible) survived in the way his figure was reconstructed in *Mecam Locez*. Even his capability for prediction is very limited in Magriso's eyes.

From the introduction to his commentary on *Numbers*, one can discern that Magriso is attracted to the irrational world of mysticism, wonders, and sorcery. *Paršat Balaq*, provided him a broad framework for implementation of these tendencies. While relying on classic and medieval Rabbinic sources (Talmud, Midrašim, and the Zohar), he compiled sources from them which were suitable for the narrative he was constructing. Many of the elements used in this construction, such as sorcery (described as knowledge derived from the fallen angels), mythological creatures (gigantic fire-spitting serpents or hybrid cats), sexual deviations (zoophilia, prostitution and rich and beautiful heathen woman), or idolatry, are deemed as forbidden and foreign in rabbinical culture. This probably only added to their attractiveness in the eyes of the Jewish population, and consequently to the popularity of this volume of *Mecam Locez*.

Another central concept of Jewish magic and consequently of Sephardic magic are *šedim* (demons). They are believed to be intangible creatures which, according to the *Mišna* (Avot 5:5) were created on Sabbath eve at dusk. Many references to *šedim* are scattered all over midrašic and talmudic literature.¹⁰ The most prominent demons are even mentioned by their names, such as Bilar, Samael, Ašmeday, Lilith, Keteb, and Agrat bat Mahlat.

10 Especially Tractate Hagiga 16.

Eli Yassif analyzes the medieval myth of Lilith (the primal Eve) as it appears in the book *The Tales of Ben Sira*,¹¹ a book that was translated into Ladino and circulated among many Sephardic readers.

Alexander also devoted a chapter in the above-mentioned book,¹² to the topic of demon stories in Sephardic Jewish culture. The chapter analyzes a number of the most common demon tales in Sephardic culture, such as *A Tale of a Jerusalemite*, (translated to Ladino) *The Niggardly Mohel*, *The Ari and the She-Demon* (translated to Ladino), *The Tale of the Spirit and the She-Demon*, *Tales of Ṣaddiqim (Saints)*, and personal narratives about meetings with demons taken down from contemporary Sephardic storytellers. All the stories are analyzed from a literary-folkloristic point of view, and categorized according to literary genres (tales, legends and personal narratives), as well as within the context of their historical times.

Joseph Dan wrote an article on Ibn-Susan's story on demons (which combines the exorcism of a she-demon with the exorcism of a spirit, a *dibbuq*) as early as 1974.¹³ Unfortunately, this fine piece of nineteenth-century Sephardic literature did not receive the attention of the researchers the way it should have.

The confrontation of *ḥaxamim* (rabbis) and *ṣaddiqim* (saints) with *šedim* appears as a stage in the cycle of hagiographic legends. Many of these saintly figures were Sephardic Jews. Thus, for example, the Ari forces a female demon to divorce a young man who married her in what he considered a game. Similarly, R. Abulafia from Tiberias engaged in exorcism of a female demon. Notably, in this story the Sephardic rabbi succeeded where the Ashkenazi one failed, and the fact is emphasized in the story itself.

Joseph Dan defined the genre of Hebrew hagiographic story,¹⁴ while **Meir Benayahu** published both *Šivḥe haAri* (Praises of the Ari)¹⁵ and *Sefer Toledot haAri*

11 Eli Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew), Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1984.

12 Tamar Alexander, *The Heart* (Note 6), pp. 312-332.

13 Joseph Dan, "The Story of the Dibbuk and the Demon Wife" (Hebrew), *Ha-Sifrut* 18-19 (1974), pp. 74-84.

14 J. Dan, "The Beginnings of Hebrew Hagiographic Literature" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 1 (1981), pp. 82-101; Joseph Dan, "Hagiographic Literature: East and West" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 26 (1986), pp. 77-86.

15 Meir Benayahu, "Šivḥe haAri" [Hebrew: The Praises of haAri], *Areshet* 3 (1961), pp. 144-165.

(The History of the Ari).¹⁶ **Tamar Alexander** dedicated a chapter in her book on the Sephardic tale to an analysis of the praise stories on the Ari and Maimonides.¹⁷ Both became cultural heroes in the entire Jewish world; but being of Sephardic stock, both are seen by Sephardic Jews as their ethnic heroes.

Maimonides harshly opposed any occult elements that were absorbed into Judaism.¹⁸ His definite view of any type of sorcery as nonsense and foolishness, illusion that leads to idol worshiping, is reiterated over and over in his halachic and philosophical works. Some rabbis, however, considered his position as contradictory to the statements of the Sages, and this stirred a strong opposition already in his own time. Among the most prominent leaders of the opposing side, one must mention **Nahmanides**¹⁹ and his disciple, R. **Šelomo ben Aderet**.²⁰ both of whom were active in Christian Spain.

But the conclusion of Alexander's analysis proves that the mechanism of the legend is stronger than the historical biography, and thus even Maimonides who detested magic turns in the stories into a saintly figure who performs magic acts. Aside from

16 Meir Benayahu, *The Toledot Ha'Ari and Luria's "Manner of Life" (Hanhagot)* (Hebrew), Yad Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 1967. See also Meir Benayahu, "The Constantinople Group Versions of 'Toledot Ha'Ari' and the Early Translations of the Book into Ladino", *Sefunot* 10 (1966), pp. 211-298.

17 Tamar Alexander, *The Heart* (Note 6), pp. 170-222.

18 Yossef Qapah (ed.), *Mišna 'im peruš haRambam* [Mišna With Maimonide's Commentary] (Hebrew), Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1965, 'Avoda Zara 4; Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, translated with an Introduction and notes by Shlomo Pines, vol. 2, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1963, part 3. See also Aviezer Ravitzky, "'The Ravings of Amulet Writers': Maimonides and His Disciples on Language, Nature, and Magic" (Hebrew), in Avi Sagi and Nahem Ilan (eds.), *Jewish Culture in the Eye of the Storm: A Jubilee Book in honor of Yosef Ahituv*, Hakibbutz Hameuhad & Jacob Herzog Center, Ein Zurim 2002, pp. 431-458, or the English translation of the same: "The ravings of amulet writers": Maimonides and his Disciples on Language, Nature and Magic", Ephraim Kanarfogel & Moshe Sokolow (eds), *Between Rashi and Maimonides: Themes in Medieval Jewish Thought, Literature and Exegesis*, Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, New York 2010, pp. 93-130; as well as Moshe Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah", *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. I. Twersky, Cambridge Mass, 1990, pp. 31-81.

19 See, for example, his commentary on Judges 4:5.

20 See, for example, R. Šelomo ben Aderet, *Responsa*, vol. 1, resp. 413.

this study, the other works mentioned here deal with Sephardic hagiography without analyzing its specific cultural context.

Discussing haAri, R. Yisḥaq Luria, founder of the Lurianic Kabbala in sixteenth-century Safed, brings us to the issue of magic and Kabbala. This question is part of a larger question that arises in most of the studies about Jewish magic that concerns the issue of the distinction or lack of distinction between magic and religion.²¹ The different scholars' approaches range from one extreme to the other.

The new trends in research have abandoned the apologetic approach of the nineteenth century that argued that Judaism is "unpolluted" by superstitions and magic.

At one end are the studies that lead almost to a coalescence of magic and religion and the cancellation of borders between them. This approach can be found in **Moshe Idel's** *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*.²² Idel considers magic the basis of the existence of most of the Jewish religious expressions. He feels that the official system of religious ritual, as fashioned by the Sages, is a type of magic activity.²³

At the other end, opposing the idea of coalescence of magic and religion is **Yehuda Liebes**; in a recent article on Magic and Kabbala, he considers magic a low form of religiosity that cannot be integrated with religious texts of the highest degree. Liebes places magic and religion on a hierarchical ladder; arguing that, unlike religion, magic is a technical procedure far removed from any love or fear of God.²⁴

In **Joseph Dan's** opinion,²⁵ magic elements are very limited in the theoretical teachings of the Kabbala (which did not discuss issues of sorcery at all) or in the Zohar (where they appear with great caution), in distinction from what is usually called "practical Kabbalah". HaAri's disciple, **R. Ḥayyim Vital**, devotes an extensive discussion to the topic of sorcery in his *Book of Visions*²⁶—but, in Dan's opinion,

21 For an extensive survey of the subject, see Yuval Harari (Note 5, above), pp. 125-129.

22 Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah, New Perspectives*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1988.

23 See, for example, Moshe Idel, "On Judaism, Jewish mysticism and magic", in Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic: a Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Brill, Leiden 1997, pp. 195-214.

24 Yehuda Liebes, "Magic and Kabbalah" (Hebrew), in Esther Liebes (ed.), *Devils, Demons and Souls, Essays on Demonology by Gershom Scholem*, Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2004, pp. 3-7.

25 See, for example, entry *Kešafim* in the *Hebrew Encyclopaedia*.

26 Morris M. Faienstein (ed.), *"The Book of Visions": The Diary of Rabbi Hayyim Vital* (Hebrew), Ben-Zvi Institute, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 2005.

without relying upon HaAri's teachings. A totally different notion appears in the studies of **Moshe Idel** surveyed above, or in **Dorit Cohen-Alloro's** doctoral dissertation, devoted to the study of magic and sorcery in the Zohar.²⁷ Recently there appeared a collection of studies by **Gershom Scholem**, edited by **Esther Liebes**, dealing with demons, spirits, and souls in Kabbalah.²⁸

An article written by **Boaz Huss** deals with the Book of Zohar itself as a magic object, especially among Sephardic and Oriental Jewish communities.²⁹ Still, it is true to say that generally speaking the researchers of Kabbala usually are not familiar with Ladino sources, and usually do not pay attention to the specific Sephardic cultural context.

An exceptional work, from this point of view, is Moshe Idel's³⁰ article which juxtaposes two major types of magic: the Italian type and the Spanish type. While the Italian type, being primarily a philosophical reworking of the Kabbalah, shows an intense theoretical but not practical interest in magic, the Spanish type is rather characterized by a severe criticism of philosophy, and perceives its own magical traditions as if stemming directly from Divine revelation. Idel claims that these deep differences were caused by the different historical experiences of these two respective Jewish groups. While the Italian Jews at the end of the fifteenth century lived in relative tranquility, the Jews of Spain experienced the Expulsion, which reformed totally and in a revolutionary manner their view of reality.

Yossef de la Reina was, according to Idel's classification, a typical Spanish Kabbalist. The story about de la Reina derives from the circles of the Ari, it was related orally and was written down in a folk version by R. Šelomo Navarro.³¹ The

27 Cohen-Alloro, Dorit, *HaMagia wehakišuf beSefer haZohar* (Hebrew), Ph.D. Dissertation: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 1989.

28 Esther Liebes (ed.), *Devils, Demons and Souls, Essays on Demonology by Gershom Scholem*, Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2004.

29 Boaz Huss, "Sefer ha-Zohar as Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendour Between the Thirteen and Eighteen Centuries", *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 7 (1998), pp. 551-596.

30 Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism", in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher (eds.), *Religion, Science and Magic in Concert and in Conflict*, Oxford University Press, New York 1989, pp. 82-117,

31 Joseph Dan, "The Story of Rabbi Joseph de la Reyna" (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 6 (1962), pp. 183-196; Eli Yassif, *The Knight The Demon and The Virgin, An Anthology of Hebrew Stories*

story concerns a mythical and tragic confrontation between R. Yossef de la Reina (who wanted to hasten the onset of messianic time and bring about the redemption) and the king and queen of the demons, Sama'el and Lilith. R. Yossef de la Reina was a historical figure, a *haxam* known as an adept at conjurations and practical Kabbalah. The event apparently took place in Spain. R. Yossef succeeded to secure Samael and Lilith with ropes, but he agreed to let them smell a *levona* (spices), and Sama'el gained back his power. Yossef clung to Lilith, but ultimately he committed suicide. This is not a hagiographic story; but, rather, one of a failure whose aim, among other things, is to warn against trying to bring about messianic times.

Emerging from the Lurianic concept of *gilgul* (reincarnation) that developed in Safed in the sixteenth century was the idea of possession, that is, the penetration of a foreign entity into the body of a person. Later, in the seventeenth century, a term *dibbuq* (literally: *attachment*, as this malicious or malevolent possessive spirit is believed to attach itself to the body of a living person) was coined to describe the phenomenon. It appeared for the first time in a pamphlet in Yiddish, printed in Volhynia in 1680, but the phenomenon preceded the coining of the term by about one hundred years, and it is rooted in the Kabbala, where the phenomenon was called *cibbur*. The *cibbur* could be a good spirit which descended to help the righteous.

The *dibbuq* is a spirit of a sinner who can enter neither heaven nor hell. The texts describing the exorcism of a *dibbuq* cover a range of over 400 years. The phenomenon is common to this day, in Sephardic, Oriental and Ashkenazi communities. In his book *Dibbuk Tales* **Gedaliah Nigal** published sixty such texts.³²

A portion of the stories and studies deal with Sephardic exorcist figures as for example the article by **Harris Lenowitz**³³ on the spirit exorcism in the books of R. Hayyim Vital (who saw exorcism as a way to be recognized as a Messiah); as well in the article by **Roni Weinstein** on R. Moše Zacuto.³⁴ **Joseph Chajes** analyzes the

from the Middle Ages (Hebrew), Keter, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 181-194. For an analysis of the legend from Kabbalistic point of view, see Moshe Idel (Note 30, above).

32 Gedaliah Nigal, *Dibbuk Tales* (Hebrew), Rubin Mass, Jerusalem 1983.

33 Harris Lenowitz, "A Spirit Possession Tale as an Account of the Equivocal Insertion of Rabbi Hayyim Vital into the Role of Messiah", in Matt Goldish (ed.), *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 2003, pp. 197-212.

34 Roni Weinstein, "Kabbalah and Jewish Exorcism in Seventeenth-Century Italian Jewish Communities: The Case of Rabbi Moses Zacuto", in Matt Goldish, *ibid.*, pp. 237-256.

phenomenon of spirit possession in sixteenth century Safed.³⁵ These articles appeared in an anthology of studies on the *dibbuq* edited by **Matt Goldish**.³⁶ An article that focuses on the exorcism of a spirit in Sephardic Jewish culture is that by **Rachel Saba-Wolfe** on R. Eliyahu haKohen haltamari, who lived in Izmir in the seventeenth century and exorcised four spirits from four different patients.³⁷ Descriptions of the events were published in Hebrew in his book *Minhat Eliyahu*,³⁸ which was later translated into Ladino. Saba-Wolfe takes note of the description of the socioeconomic situation of the Sephardic community in Izmir, as discerned from the stories. Both the victims as well as the evil spirits are Sephardic; and they are all mentioned by name.

In one of his articles about possession, **Yoram Bilu** compares the phenomenon of a *dibbuq* to the phenomenon of a *maggid*, a spiritual entity which appeared to guide different prominent rabbis, such as R. Yossef Karo or R. Yossef Taitazak.³⁹ Bilu's approach is a psychological anthropological one that sees the *dibbuq* as an emotional disturbance that functions as a cultural resource.⁴⁰

Until now we have concentrated primarily on research that deal with Sephardic magic as it appears in written Hebrew medieval, pre-modern, or contemporary sources. Let us turn now to comparative studies that are attempting to understand Sephardic magic in the context of Iberian magical culture and practices. One of the most prolific authors in this field is certainly **Jose Manual Pedrosa**. In different studies Pedrosa compares various Sephardic magical concepts, texts, and practices and their Hispano-Christian counterparts. Pedrosa wrote a serial of his articles each of which focuses in a different phenomenon. Thus, for example, in 1993 he published

35 Joseph Chajes, "City of the Dead, Spirit Possession in Sixteenth Century Safed" in Matt Goldish, *ibid*, pp. 124-159.

36 Notes 34 and 35 above.

37 Rachel Saba-Wolfe, "'Un ruah ke entro en una mosa': Rabbi Eliahu Ha-Cohen Ha-Itamari and his Fight against Spirit Possession", in this volume pp. 121*-159*.

38 Eliyahu haKohen haltamari, *Minhat Eliyahu* [Eliyahu's Offering] (Hebrew), Besalel haLewi Ashkenazi, Salonica 1824.

39 Yoram Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterns of Altered Consciousness in Judaism", *AJS Review* 21 (1996), pp. 341-366; see also: Zvi R. J. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, Oxford University Press, New York 1962.

40 Yoram Bilu, "The Taming of the Deviants and Beyond: An Analysis of Dybbuk Possession and Exorcism in Judaism", in: Matt Goldish (Note 32, above), pp. 41-73.

a study on *conjurations* and magic rituals related to infantile dentition,⁴¹ and in 1995, a study about *La oración de las cuatro esquinas* (The Four-Corner Prayer) which can be defined as a type of conjuration.⁴²

In his anthology *Entre la magia y la religión: Oraciones, conjuros y ensalmos*,⁴³ published in 2000, Pedrosa gathers seven studies based on six articles which had already appeared between 1994 and 1999 in different scientific periodicals in Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, and Germany. Yet, this anthology is not a mere compilation of existing articles. In its seven chapters, the original articles were considerably elaborated and expanded. Now, they are also interlaced by a common prologue aimed at defining terms such as *oración* (prayer), *conjuro* (conjuration), *ensalmo* (spell), and *plegaria* (supplication), as well as at reconceptualization of the complex relationship between magic and religion.⁴⁴

Throughout the anthology, Pedrosa exposes relations between different magical and religious traditions, revealing the continuous bi-directional borrowings between the genres at hand (prayers, incantations, and spells). Thus, for example, in the prayer *La candela nocturna* (The Nocturnal Candle), widespread in Spain and Portugal, appears the literary motive of *tres llaves* (three keys), which is also present in different Sephardic spells as well as in one Sephardic incantation.

The fourth, the central and longest chapter of the anthology, entitled *El conjuro latino de Carrio* (The Latin conjuration from Carrio), deals with part of a Gothic-Latin slate discovered in 1926 in Carrio, a small Asturian community, namely, a Latin conjuration for preservation from rain-related devastations. In his analysis of the text of conjuration, Pedrosa dwells on different magic formulas, such as *donde ni gallo canta ni gallina cacarea* (where the rooster does not sing nor the chicken cackles), showing their numerous parallels from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protocols of

41 Jose Manuel Pedrosa, “Conjuros y ritos mágicos sobre la dentición infantil”, *Revista de Delectología y Tradiciones Populares* 48 (1993), pp. 155-67.

42 Jose Manuel Pedrosa, “Correspondencias cristianas y judías de la oración de Las cuatro esquinas”, in *Las dos sirenas y otros estudios de literatura tradicional (De la Edad Media al siglo XX)*, Siglo XXI de España Editores, Madrid 1995, pp. 187-220.

43 Jose Manuel Pedrosa, *Entre la magia y la religión: Oraciones, conjuros, ensalmos*, Sendoa Editorial, Oiartzun (Guipuzkoa) 2000.

44 This is one of the crucial questions of the field that has been repeatedly addressed by researchers of magic, general and Jewish alike. See, for example, Yuval Harari *Early Jewish Magic* (Note 22, above).

the Spanish Inquisition until the modern oral texts from Spain, the Sephardic Balkans, Portugal, France, Italy, and Romania. Pedrosa's comparison does not limit itself only to different Roman languages (including Judeo-Spanish). Aware of the Balkano-Slavic connection of Romanian and Judeo-Spanish, after bringing a Bosnian Sephardic spell containing the magic formula at hand, Pedrosa proceeds to compare it to a Serbian spell which contains similar formulas.

An additional example of a comparison between Sephardic magical texts and practices with those of the peoples from their “new” Balkan surrounding can be found in the study of **Krinka Vidaković-Petrov**,⁴⁵ which compares one Sephardic *prekante* (healing *incantation*) to its Serbian parallel.

Recently, **Yaron Ben-Naeh**,⁴⁶ a cultural historian, published a study on magic beliefs and practices among Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire. The article begins with a number of general remarks about the world of magic of Sephardic Jews; continues with a brief survey of the types of sources—and then, focuses on certain magic rituals and customs, such as binding grooms, *mumia*, and particularly *indulko*.

A portion of the studies, especially the pioneer ones, tend to concentrate on magical traditions within a single Sephardic community. While stressing the peculiarity of a single community, this approach facilitates comparison of different magic traditions within the greater Sephardic group.

The first researcher who focused on a specific geographic area was **Melvin Firestone**, who published (already in 1926) a study on healing ceremonies among the Sephardic Jews in Seattle.⁴⁷ Firestone proposed categorizing the ceremonies according to three ways of harm (evil eye, fear, diseases) and three ways of healing (incantation, fear, enclosure).

Another suggestion for classification appears in two articles devoted to *indulko* by **Moshe David Gaon**: “Fetters of the Indulko”⁴⁸ and “The War of the Sephardim

45 Krinka Vidaković-Petrov, “Spanish Folklore and the Balkan Cultural Environment”, in Tamar Alexander, Abraham Haim et al. (eds.), *History and Creativity in the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Communities*, Misgav Yerushalayim, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 285-300.

46 Yaron Ben-Naeh, “A Tried and Tested Spell: Magic Beliefs and Acts among Ottoman Jews” (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 85 (Autumn 2000), pp. 89-111.

47 Melvin Firestone, “Sephardic Folk-Curing in Seattle”, *Journal of American Folklore* 75 (1926), pp. 301-310.

48 Moshe D. Gaon, “Harsubot haindulko” [Fetters of Indulko] (Hebrew), *Yed'a 'am* 5 (1958/59), pp. 29-34.

and Ashkenazim against Indulko.⁴⁹ Gaon describes thirteen healing rites collected by one of the *ḥaxamim* of Constantinople and published in a local Sephardic newspaper. Gaon proposes classifying the ceremonies according to the addressee of the healing, the place of healing, and the purpose of the healing. This is a rather detailed division and results in over-congruency that in effect cancels out the distinctions between the ceremonies. In his articles, the author gives salient expression to the apologetic approach typical for early studies that deal with Jewish magic in general. Gaon considers these ceremonies and beliefs as “superstitions” and “afflictions” that had spread among the Sephardic and Eastern Jews under the influence of the environment, being prevalent mainly among the uneducated lower classes.

In the same period **Michael Molho** published his extensive monograph on traditions and costumes of the Sephardic Jews of Salonica. Even though the author does not concentrate on magical practices, some of them are described in general terms.⁵⁰

A contemporary study that concentrates also on one single Sephardic community, the community of Sarajevo, was conducted by **Tamar Alexander and Eliezer Papo**. Their article offers a literary-folkloristic and linguistic analysis of Ladino *prekantes* used by Sephardic woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The authors placed special emphasis on the gender aspects of the phenomenon, thus applying to the study of Sephardic magic tendencies which characterize the research of Jewish magic in general ever since the 1990s.⁵¹ These gender-oriented studies see in the attribution of sorcery to women, an oppressive, political means typical of struggle between genders, which reflects the Sages’ fear of independent women which could challenge their political and ideological authority.

49 Moshe D. Gaon, “Milhemet Sefaradim weAshkenazim beindulko” [Sephardic and Ashkenazi War against the Indulko] (Hebrew), *Edot*, I (1945/46), pp. 104-107.

50 Michael Molho, *Usos y costumbres de los sefardies de Salónica*, Instituto “Arias Montano”, Madrid-Barcelona 1950.

51 See, for example, Simcha Fishbane, “‘Most Women Engage in Sorcery’: An Analysis of Sorceresses in the Babylonian Talmud”, *Jewish History* 7 (1993), pp. 27-42; Meir Bar-Ilan, “Witches in the Bible and in the Talmud”, *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* NS 5 (1993), pp. 7-32; Tal Ilan, “*Witch-hunt in Ashkelon*” (Hebrew), in Ze’ev Safrai, Avi Sasson and Nahum Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon the Bride of the South* (Hebrew), Eretz, Tel Aviv 2002, pp. 135-146; and Rebecca Lesses “Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (2001), pp. 343-375.

The article by Alexander and Papo had quite an impact and was published in Ladino,⁵² Hebrew,⁵³ English,⁵⁴ and Serbian⁵⁵ in different journals dedicated to folklore research or to Sephardic studies. The innovation of the article is in the literary, folkloristic, gender analysis concentrating on the texts of the incantations (*prekantes*) recited in Ladino and perceiving them as a literary genre.

The article proposes a model that classifies the *prekantes* into two basic categories according to the place and role of the *prekantera* [the professional female healer]: (a) the female healer invoking her own powers and operating by herself; (b) the female healer turning to supernatural powers with a request for help. Each category is divided into two subcategories: (a1) The healer clashes with the illness in ordinary reality and directly; (a2) The healer clashes with the illness in an imaginary reality and indirectly. The subdivision of the second category refers to the addressee with a request for help: (b1) The healer wrestles with the illness with the aid of the holy forces and turns to God; (b2) The healer wrestles with the illness with the aid of the impure forces and turns to demons. The simple ceremonies are known to all, and any woman can perform them. They deal with minor damage caused by the evil eye. Rites belonging to the other subcategories are secret and are carried out only by expert professional healers. Through this discussion the authors expand on the subject and discuss the status of the woman in Sephardic Jewish society, and the standing and power she acquires by means of her command of incantations and healing rites.

The exclusion of women from religious learning, shared by all traditional cultures, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim alike, unintentionally brought about special culture of sisterhood, characterized by a constant interchange of experiences and practices. While male texts and ceremonies were deeply marked by their respective religious traditions, usually being conducted in the Holy Tongue of the group (Hebrew or Aramaic for Jews, Greek or Church-Slavonic for Orthodox and Latin for Catholic Christians, and Arabic for Muslims), many a time at some holy place (synagogue,

52 Tamar Alexander & Eliezer Papo, “*Te aprikanto i te diskanto: La medicina tradicional de las mujeres Sefaradis de Bosna*”, *Neue Romania, Judenspanisch* 10 (2006), pp. 7-58.

53 T. Alexander and E. Papo, “The Power of Word: Sephardic Magic Spells from Sarajevo” (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 24/25 (2006/07), pp. 303-347.

54 Tamar Alexander & Eliezer Papo, “On the Power of the Word Healing Incantations of Bosnian Sephardic Women”, *Menora* 2 (2011), pp. 57-117.

55 Tamar Alexander & Eliezer Papo: “O moći riječi: Iscjeliteljske basme bosanskih sefardskih žena”, *Zeničke sveske* 13 (2011), pp. 229-278.

church, mosque, monastery, *tekke*, grave of a saintly person, etc.) or being addressed to specific saints of every religious group—female texts and ceremonies were usually devoid of these distinctive qualities, which made them more universal and suitable for cultural interchange. While it is hard to imagine a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim using each other's religious ceremonies; female texts and ceremonies could “pass without a fuss” from one group to another. This is an interesting example of international female sisterhood that undermines the inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-ethnic boundaries.

The gender point of view of Sephardic magic is found also in the fairly extensive book by **Isaac Levy** and **Rosemary Levy Zumwalt** on magic healing rites among Sephardic Jewish women.⁵⁶ The starting point for the work is gender methodology that perceives the women who deal with magic as representative of “domestic religion”. The authors limit themselves to dealing with women and only on the basis of oral documentation, with no reference to written sources. The work focuses on Sephardic communities in the former Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Balkans. The study is based on field work carried out over forty years and represents a time span ranging from 1800 up to World War II. Isaac Levy provides the intra-group view as a Ladino-speaking native of Rhodes. Rosemary Zumwalt represents an extra-group view. The book opens with four introductory chapters: The first offers categorization of the various illnesses and the ways to cure them; the second surveys the history of the Jews in Spain and the Ottoman Empire; the third explains the work procedures of this study; the fourth deals in general with the power of the word. The remaining chapters are devoted to the magic rites themselves: the evil eye and the actions taken to cure its damage, simple magic rites as well as more complex ones such as incantations (*prekantes*), enclosure (*seradura*), and *indulko*, “a sweetening ceremony”.

The folkloristic approach implemented in the last two studies was also typical of **Raphael Patai**, one of the pioneers of the research into Jewish folklore, who wrote about *indulco* and *mumia*.⁵⁷ *Mumia* is a magic medicine composed of the ground dust of animal or human bones.

Besides *mumia*, which was used also in traditional male medicine, the rest of the traditions analyzed in the listed studies are almost exclusively female. Male healing

56 Isaac J. Levy & Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, *Ritual Medical Lore of Sephardic Women: Sweetening the Spirits, Healing the Sick*, Urbana and Chicago 2002, pp. 74-94.

57 Raphael Patai, “Indulco and Mumia”, *Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964), pp. 3-11.

traditions (especially those that include magical practices or are based on magical concepts) were much less touched upon in the research than the female ones.

Similarly to Sephardic women, Sephardic men had their own incantations, but these were usually uttered in Hebrew (the Holy Language of the group), and they usually contained many verses from the Hebrew Bible (especially from the Book of Psalms) or non-biblical parts of Jewish liturgy. Consequently, male incantations have a Hebrew name, and they are called *leḥašim*.

The other two genres typical of traditional Sephardic male medicine also have Hebrew names: *refuot* (cures) and *segulot* (remedies). While the term *refuot* most usually refers to the cures based on traditional practical knowledge and on what today we would deem as a rational approach, *segulot* are usually related to magical beliefs, concepts and practices. This distinction is not always used with precision in the sources, as traditional community magic was not considered to be irrational, and sometimes the terms are used as synonyms. Notwithstanding that, *segulot* are mostly perceived as magical powers ascribed to certain natural or human-made objects or symbolic acts. These powers can heal, enhance healing, solve the problem at hand, or provide prosperity and longevity. In contrast to *prikantes* and *leḥašim*, *segulot* do not necessarily include verbal formulations. Yet, when these do appear, just as in the case of *leḥašim*, they are usually based on the quotation of certain biblical verses in Hebrew. The verses are to be repeated three or seven times. Sometimes other magical numbers are used. However, some *segulot* include verbal formulations in the vernacular language. For example, a woman who gave birth to a dead child a few times, in her next pregnancy should cross seven times above a pregnant she-dog saying: *Your children to me and mine to you*. By doing this, she will pass the “bad luck” of her offspring to that of a she-dog. Many *segulot* belong to this category of symbolic act.

Books of *segulot* were widely disseminated among Sephardic communities, as they were all-over Jewish world. Yet, relatively few studies have been devoted to this topic. R. **Marc Angel** dealt with the *segulot* common among the Jews of Rhodes, as these were preserved in a short section dedicated to popular medicine in the manuscript written by Nissim Israel at the end of nineteenth century.⁵⁸

58 Marc D. Angel, “Seguloth in a Manuscript from the Island Rhodes”, *Estudios Sefardíes* 1 (1978), pp. 83-89.

Recently, Eliezer Papo wrote an article about one remedy book from Sarajevo, produced around the year 1820 by David Papo, a member of the famous local pharmaceutic clan, whose members provided pharmaceutic and medical services to the people of Sarajevo for more than three hundred years.⁵⁹ The article represents the first attempt to describe this manuscript and examine its content. On base of a thorough analysis of the structure (internal distribution of materials related to the same health problems) and the language (informal, direct, and familiar style; staccato and fragmentary way of writing and the usage of the spoken language) of the manuscript, the author claims it to be an innovative (not based on a previously existent manuscript or printed book) and cumulative (gradually collected and registered) firsthand source, whose novelty can hardly be overestimated.

The attempts to make available to the educated public the original texts on Sephardic popular medicine, which are presently scattered in manuscripts or rare printings all over the world, in new, easily accessible, annotated and explicated editions, is of extreme importance. Recently **Pilar Romeu Ferré** prepared such an edition of *Séfer refuot* (Book of cures), originally published in Salónica, ca. 1855,⁶⁰ but now accompanied with an introductory study, a glossary, and a bibliography of related research literature.

Two recent articles on the subject were published by Katja Smidt and Tamar Alexander. **Smidt**⁶¹ analyzes the traditional Sephardic rabbinic view of the ill, sickness, and healing, as reflected in the halachic Judeo-Spanish works of the famous nineteenth-century Sarajevo *haxam* R. Eli'ezer ben Šem-Tov (Santo) Papo, classifying the author's views of the field in seven categories: prayers of the ill person and for the ill person; rules of hygiene and preventive medicine; doctors; diseases and their traditional cures; guidance for cases of epidemic diseases; *segulot*, amulets and *prikantes*; and, last but not least, *kišuf* or magic.

59 Eliezer Papo, "Healing the Sick, Subjugating the Spirits, Fighting the Magic and the Evil Eye: A Glance at Medical Lore of Bosnian Sephardic Men", in preparation.

60 Pilar Romeu Ferré, *Agua tibia, media vida: El Séfer refuot o Libro de medicamentos. (Salónica, ca. 1855)*, Tirocinio, Barcelona 2010.

61 Katja Smid, "Usos médicos y mágicos de los sefardíes de la Bosnia otomana a mediados del siglo XIX según las obras *halájicas* de Eli'ezer Papo", en Yolanda Moreno Koch (ed.), *De cuerpos y almas en el judaísmo hispanomedieval: entre la ciencia médica y la magia sanadora*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca 2011, pp. 221-253.

Alexander's article is dedicated to one type of *segulot*, the love-evoking *segulot*, according to *Sefer Refua veHayim* by R. Hayyim Palaggi from Izmir (1878) and *Sefer Refua veHayyim miYrušalayim* by Yizhak Baxar Eli'ezer (reprinted in Jerusalem 1931).⁶²

In the field of music, the important work of the ethnomusicologist **Susana Weich-Shahak** has to be mentioned. In 2001 **Weich-Shahak** published a book about children songs in Ladino which contains also the text of one *prekante*.⁶³

As far as material culture is concerned, in the field of Sephardic magic (as well as in research of Jewish magic in general) the most prominent artifact is the **amulet**. Researchers in this field analyze the materials of which the magic artifacts were made, their artistic design, their usage as well as the texts used in them; all of these in the context of the surrounding artistic culture. In Sephardic culture, sacred objects (such as *Sefer Tora*, *tefillin* or *mezuzah*) can also be considered as amulets.

Studies dealing with Jewish amulets often refer to Sephardic amulets, but usually without paying enough attention to their distinctive characteristics. Two studies by **Shalom Sabar** make particular reference to specific Sephardic traditions: the article on the image of Joseph in the art and folklore of the Sephardic and Eastern Jews,⁶⁴ and the article on "Childbirth and Magic", which contains sections on the amulets among the Amsterdam's Portuguese community and in Jerusalem's Old Yišuv.⁶⁵

An example of a study devoted to a single amulet is that by **Esther Juhasz**,⁶⁶ who in her doctoral thesis focused on the *Šiviti Menora*, which is a page or tablet drawn in the shape of a menorah with its title being the verse *I am ever mindful of the Lord's presence* (Ps. 16:8) and containing the text of Psalm 67. Tablets such as

62 Tamar Alexander, "Love Evoking *segulot* and the Concept of Love in Sephardic Culture", *Studies in Honor of Eli Yassif* (in preparation).

63 Susana Weich-Shahak, *Repertorio tradicional infantil sefardi: retahilas, juegos, canciones y romances de tradición oral*, Madrid 2001.

64 Shalom Sabar, "Ben Porat Yoseph: The Image of Joseph in the Folklore and Art of Sephardic Jews and the Jews in the Lands of Islam" (Hebrew), *Bet Mikra* 55 (2010), pp. 169-192 and pls. 8-19 (English summary: 12*-13*).

65 Shalom Sabar, S. "Childbirth and Magic: Jewish Folklore and Material Culture", in D. Biale (ed.), *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, Schocken Books, New York 2002, pp. 670-722.

66 Ester Juhasz, *The Shiviti Menorah, A Representation of the Sacred, Between Spirit and Matter* [in Hebrew], Ph.D Thesis, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 2004.

these are hung in Ashkenazic, Sephardic, or Oriental synagogues. The third chapter in her work is devoted to the concept *I am mindful* as an amulet and discusses the links between magic and religion in this context. A historical survey examines the place and distribution of the *Šiwiti* from the beginning of its creation through to Israel today. Even though Juhasz does not concentrate on Sephardic communities as such, much valuable information about the concepts and practices related to *Šiwiti Menorah* characteristic of this community can be drawn from her work.

The last literary genre examined in this survey is the ethnographic literature; produced, ever since the nineteenth century, mostly by the members of the group. Being memoirs rather than studies these works usually do not have academic pretensions, but many a time they serve as important sources for documentation of Sephardic costumes, popular beliefs and practices, including those related to magic. Among the pioneers of the genre are certainly **Abraham Moses Luncz**, an Ashkenazi pilgrim to the Land of Israel, who described in the journal *Yerušalayim*, impressions and observations of the “customs of our brethren in the Holy Land and the life of the people”⁶⁷ and **Abraham Danon**, who wrote a pioneering survey of folk beliefs among Ottoman Jews, as early as 1899.⁶⁸

An especially prolific Sephardic author was **Jacob Yehoshua**,⁶⁹ who wrote over twenty books on the life of the Sephardim in Jerusalem. We shall mention only two of them, *Childhood in Old Jerusalem: Descriptions of Days Gone By*⁷⁰ and *Between Tradition and Atmosphere in Sephardic Dwellings in Jerusalem*.⁷¹ **Yaakov Elazar** also wrote a few books on the customs of the Sephardic Jews of Jerusalem, such as *Hašerot Yerušalayim*,⁷² while **Benny Nahmias**’s *Haḥamsa* concentrates only on

67 Abraham Moses Luncz, “Minhage ahenu beEres haQodeš weHayye ha’am” [The customs of our brethren in the Holy Land and people’s lives] (Hebrew), *Yerušalayim* 1 (1882), pp. 1-70.

68 Abraham Danon, “Les superstitions des juifs ottomans”, *Mélusine* 8 (1896/97), pp. 265-281, repeated in *Actes de l’Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes* (Paris, 1899), pp. 259-270.

69 On Yehoshua’s attitude towards magic, see article by Eli Shay in this volume pp. 161*-181*.

70 Jacob Yehoshua, *Niñez en la vieja ciudad de Yerushalayim*, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem 1965.

71 Jacob Yehoshua, *Between Present Time and Tradition: Sephardi Jewish Community of Jerusalem*, The Jerusalem Sephardi Council, Jerusalem 1979.

72 1975.

Sephardic magic; describing amulets, beliefs, customs, and folk medicine of the Sephardic Community of Jerusalem's Old City.⁷³

In almost every single Sephardic community similar works were produced. Thus, **Avram Pinto** described the life of the Jews of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina in general,⁷⁴ while **Laura Papo “Bohoreta”** focused on the life of Sephardic woman in this country;⁷⁵ **Shlomo Alboher** described the life of the Jews of Monastir,⁷⁶ while **Yosef Gabbay** wrote about the life-style in his city, Tétouan.⁷⁷ Similar monographic works have been produced in other Sephardic communities as well, by the authors who themselves were members of the communities described in their works. Consequently, their writings reflect their own memories and introspections.

Popular articles and reviews on specific magical phenomena are scattered in different journals. In this situation, according to the type of source or author, a portion of the articles are reviews written by amateurs belonging to the group while a minority of them are actual research studies. In the journal *Aki Yerushalayim*, written in Ladino, a number of pieces have been published on a topic akin to our subject mainly by **Moshe Shaul**, the chief editor, and **Matilda Koen Sarano**. The researcher **Esther Benbassa** wrote about the evil eye.⁷⁸ Matilda Koen-Sarano surveyed proverbs concerning the evil eye⁷⁹ as well as general thoughts about it;⁸⁰ she wrote two other pieces, which appeared in the same journal, about curses.⁸¹ Also on the same topic and

73 Benny Nahmias, *Hamsa, qamecot, emunot, minhagim u-rfua cammamit be'Er haatiqa birušalayim* [Hamsa, amulets, beliefs, costumes and popular medicine in Jerusalem's Old City] (Hebrew), Modan, Tel-Aviv 1996.

74 Avraham Pinto, *Jevreji Sarajeva i BiH*, Sarajevo 1987.

75 Laura Papo “Bohoreta”, *Sefardska žena u Bosni*, priredio i na bosanski preveo Muhamed Nezirović, Sarajevo 2005.

76 Shlomo Alboher, *Monastir (Bitola) Macedonia: an Ancient Jewish City Where No Jews Exist Today, the Flames of Treblinka Consumed Them* (Hebrew), *Histadrut haŠiyonit ha'olamit*, Jerusalem 2005.

77 Yosef Gabbay, *Tetuan*, Institucion Machon Dovshi, Jerusalem 1990.

78 Esther Benbassa-Dudonney, “El ojo malo”, *Aki Yerushalayim* 3:12 (1982), pp. 26-29.

79 Matilda Koen-Sarano, “El aynara en el reflán djudeo-espanyol”, *Aki Yerushalayim* 10:40 (1989), pp. 42-45.

80 Matilda Koen-Sarano, “Rekordos i refleksiones sovre el ‘ainarah’”, *Aki Yerushalayim* 5:18 (1983), pp. 23-24.

81 Matilda Koen-Sarano, “Las maldiciones”, *Aki Yerushalayim* 4:13/14 (1982), pp. 36-37 and Matilda Koen-Sarano, “Las maldiciones djudeo-espanyolas de Yerushalayim”, *Aki Yerushalayim* 13:46 (1992), pp. 54-55.

in the same publication appeared an item by **Haim Vidal Sephiha**.⁸² Another three pieces on items of blessings and curses were published by **Moshe Shaul**. They, too, appeared in *Aki Yerushalayim*.⁸³

He also wrote about incantations against the evil eye according to the book *Refua wehayyim* by R. David Hayyim Palaggi,⁸⁴ and another general item on *prikantes*.⁸⁵ as well as an article on a book of medicine from Izmir published in 1878.⁸⁶

In conclusion: The studies dedicated to various types and periods of Jewish magic in general refer also to these phenomena among Sephardic Jews, but usually without focusing on magic concepts and practices unique to Sephardim, or on magic as an additional way for Sephardic Jews to express their particular ethnic identity. The studies that do concentrate on certain aspects of Sephardic Jewish magic are still quite scant, and we are still waiting for a comprehensive study on magic phenomena in Sephardic culture, a research that would map, categorize, and analyze these phenomena, comparing them to Hebrew culture of the rabbinic elite, to Iberian cultures, as well as to ambient cultures in the Ottoman Empire. Such a research would need to examine the entire corpus of all known testimonies on magic concepts and practices preserved in Hebrew or in Ladino, in written or oral literature of the group. A monographic study of this type would fill a large vacuum that is still felt in the research into Jewish magic in general and the study of Sephardic magic in particular.

82 Haim Vidal Sephiha, "Bendiciones i maldiciones arekojidas por el 'Atelier Judeo-Espagnol' de Paris", *Aki Yerushalayim* Year 3, 9 (1981), pp. 44-47.

83 Moshe Shaul, "Saludos i bendiciones para okaziones determinadas", *Aki Yerushalayim* 3 (1979), pp. 36-37; Moshe Shaul, "Saludos i bendiciones", *Aki Yerushalayim* 3:11 (1981), pp. 31-32 and Moshe Shaul, "Maldiciones en djudeo-espanyol", *Aki Yerushalayim* 4:13/14 (1982), pp. 33-35.

84 Moshe Shaul, "Perkante para ojo malo sigun el libro 'Refua behaim' de Harbi Haim Palachi", *Aki Yerushalayim* 5 (1980), p. 47.

85 Moshe Shaul, "Prekante", *Aki Yerushalayim* 14:47, p. 49.

86 Moshe Shaul, "El sefer refuot / Livro de milizinas, Izmir 1878", *Aki Yerushalayim* 8:44 (1986), p. 47.



קמע, כסף; תוניסיה, בערך 1930. באדיבות משפחת גרוס, תל אביב
Amulet, Silver; Tunisia, ca. 1930. With the courtesy of Gross Family, Tel Aviv