

El Prezente

Studies in Sephardic Culture

vol. 7

MENORAH

Collection of Papers

vol. 3

Common Culture and Particular Identities:
Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Ottoman Balkans

Editors: Eliezer Papo • Nenad Makuljević

December 2013



Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



Center Moshe David Gaon
for Ladino Culture



1838

Faculty of Philosophy
University of Belgrade



Menorah

El Prezente, Editorial Committee: **Tamar Alexander**, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; **Yaakov Bentolila**, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Editorial Council: **Rifat Bali**, Albert Benveniste Center of Studies and Sefardic Culture, EPHE, Sorbonne, Paris, and The Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Culture Research Center, Istanbul; **David M. Bunis**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; **Winfried Busse**, Freie Universität. Berlin; **Paloma Díaz-Mas**, CSIC, Madrid; **Oro Anahory-Librowicz**, University of Montreal; **Alisa Meyuhas Ginio**, Tel Aviv University; **Laura Minervini**, University of Napoli 'Federico II'; **Aldina Quintana**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; **Rena Molho**, Pantheon University, Atens; **Shmuel Refael**, Bar-Ilan University; **Aron Rodrigue**, University of Stanford; **Minna Rozen**, University of Haifa; **Beatrice Schmid**, University of Basel; **Ora (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald**, Bar-Ilan University; **Edwin Seroussi**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; **Michael Studemund-Halévy**, University of Hamburg

Menorah, Editorial Council:

Vuk Dautović, **Jelena Erdeljan**, **Nenad Makuljević**, Department of History of Art, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade; **Svetlana Smolčić Makuljević**, Metropolitan University, Belgrade; **Eliezer Papo**, Department of Hebrew Literature, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Editorial Coordinator: **Tzahi Aknin**

Language Editor: **Fern Seckbach**

Graphic Design: **Sefi Graphics Design**

Print: **BGU Print Unit**

Cover photo: Felix Kanitz, "Turkish Market Street (Turkische Bazarstrasse)", With the courtesy of the Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (7901-II-003)

ISBN 978-965-91164-4-7

© 2013

All rights reserved

Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva
Israel

Table of Contents

Preface	1
<i>History & Society:</i>	11
Dušan I. Sindik	
Jews in Serbian Medieval Written Sources	13
Yaron Ben-Naeh	
Dangerous Liaisons in Castoria	27
Ioannis Zelepos	
Multi-denominational Interaction in the Ottoman Balkans from a Legal Point of View: the Institution of Kiambin-marriages	43
Katja Šmid	
A Sephardic Rabbi's View of his Bosnian Neighbors and Common Ottoman Culture as Reflected in his Writings	55
Vladimir Jovanović	
“Good” Turks and “Evil” Ones: Multiple Perspectives on the Turkish Community Reflected in Serbian Sources of the Early Nineteenth Century	77
Gila Hadar	
Jewish Women's Conversion to Islam in the End of the Ottoman Era (Salonica) “Mijor dezeo verte kortada la garganta ke azer insulto a tu ley santa”	95
<i>Linguistics:</i>	113
David M. Bunis	
From Early Middle to Late Middle Judezmo: The Ottoman Component as a Demarcating Factor	115
Ivana Vučina Simović	
In Search of the Historical Linguistic Landscape of the Balkans: the Case of Judeo-Spanish in Belgrade	165

Alisa Meyuhas Ginio	
The Attitude Toward <i>Lēshon haKodesh</i> and <i>Lēshon Laʿaz</i> in Two Works of Sephardi <i>Musar</i> Literature: <i>Meʿam Loʿez</i> (1730) and <i>Pele Yoʿeş</i> (1824; 1870)	187
<i>Literature:</i>	199
Krinka Vidaković-Petrov	
Some Balkan Specifics of Sephardic Folksongs	201
<i>Art:</i>	215
Zoran Rakić	
Islamic Influence on Illumination of Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Serbian Manuscripts	217
Saša Brajović	
Between the Ottoman Empire and the Venetian Republic – The Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Coast in Early Modern and Modern Times	225
Nenad Makuljević	
The Trade Zone as Cross-Cultural Space: Belgrade Çarşi	233
Irena Ćirović	
Imagining the Forbidden: Representations of the Harem and Serbian Orientalism	247
Vladana Putnik	
Influence of the Ottoman Architecture on the Aesthetics of Folklorism in Serbian Architecture	265
List of Participants	277
Guidelines for preparing a Manuscript for Publication	283

Dangerous Liaisons in Castoria

Yaron Ben-Naeh

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The subject of this article is an episode in the city of Castoria (present-day Kostur) whose main protagonist was an energetic, violent woman who fostered relationships with non-Jews, including Janissaries, devised a plan to dispossess her husband of all his possessions, and even tried to murder him. In addition to being an interesting episode of the 1680s, the story hints at several significant aspects of Jewish life in the Ottoman Balkans as well as in other parts of the empire.

The Jewish community in Castoria was among the most important in the southern Balkans, alongside Skopje, Monastir (Bitolj), Belgrade, Sarajevo, and others. Situated on the shore of a lake and on an important commercial crossroads not far from some of the renowned Balkan fairs, it was an important commercial center during the Ottoman period. Among the merchandise that passed through its markets were lumber, furs, wool, wax, and wheat. A Jewish community existed there continuously from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Like many other communities, it still awaits an adequate study, and the little information we have is sorely lacking. Noteworthy is the monograph written by Michael Molho.¹ Castoria's location on a Balkan commercial crossroads attracted many people, migrants as well as emissaries—some who came on their own behalf and others to collect funds for communities in the Holy Land. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that we find in our story an emissary from the Holy

1 For the Jewish community of Castoria, see, for the present, Michael Molho, *Histoire des Israélites de Castoria*, Salonica 1938; Maren M. Frejdenberg, *Jewish Life in the Balkans (15th to 17th Centuries)*, Tel Aviv, 1999, pp. 89-90. For statistics of the Castoria community and others, based on Ottoman tax censuses, during the sixteenth century, see Mark A Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Freiburg 1980.

Land who is visiting the city and becomes involved in finding a compromise between the woman and her husband.

During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, many Sabbatean emissaries passed through Castoria on their way to spread news and information among groups of believers in Balkan cities, from where they continued to communities of Sabbateans in Italy. Nathan of Gaza, who prophesied that Shabbetai Zevi was the next messiah but was forced to leave Salonica, resided in Castoria for seven years, from 1669 to 1676. He then returned to Salonica, from where he moved on to Sofia. Toward the end of his life he came to Skopje, where he passed away and was buried in 1680. During his stay in Castoria, he set out on several missions at the command of his messiah, the convert to Islam Shabbetai Zevi, such as the one to Yumirgina in 1672.² Benayahu's study, based on a careful reading of the sources, points to constant travel between Balkan communities as well as family ties in this region, such as connections with Arnavut Belgradi—Berat in present-day Albania.

Castoria was also administratively connected to Salonica, which lies to its east. An edict of A.H. 1087 (1676) decreed the collection of the *cizye* tax from all Jews in the Salonica *sanjak*, which also included Castoria and many other cities, such as Veria, Istip, Yenisehir, Trikala, Seres, Monastir, and Belgrade.³ Castoria's location led to its Jews maintaining close ties with the community of Salonica, the largest and most important in the Balkans and a leading center of Torah study. It is not surprising, therefore, that a question concerning this case was sent to R. Aharon haCohen Peraḥya of Salonica, probably due to his role as one of the chief rabbis (*rabbanim kolelim*) of that community, whose authority was respected and accepted by rabbis in all Balkan Jewish communities.

2 Meir Benayahu *The Sabbatean Movement in Greece* (= *Sefunot*, 14), Jerusalem 1973, pp. 227-30, 234-45, and more [in Hebrew]. See also in the index.

3 Stefan Andreev (ed.), *Ottoman Documents on Balkan Jews, XVIth-XVIIth Centuries*, Sofia, 1990, Doc. 14. For the close relations between these two communities, see also Daniel Estrousa, *Magen Gibborim*, Salonica 1754, §40, fol. 63a [in Hebrew].

The Details of the Episode

The wife of Moshe haCohen, a wealthy man of Castoria, was a bad wife, disobedient

Moshe haCohen had a wicked wife who continuously misbehaved and was disobedient. He married another woman in order to restore the first one to the right path, but this was in vain. Moreover, she stole his property and hid it in houses of her non-Jewish acquaintances in town.

and unchaste, with close relations (social and sexual) with non-Jews in town, including Janissaries from the local garrison. In order to change her ways, he married a second wife. This was in vain, and her reaction harsh and violent: she caused the death of the second wife, probably by poison; and seized the possessions of her husband, which she hid in the houses of her non-Jewish acquaintances in town. Surprisingly, even though the woman was continuing with her intimate relations, he still wanted his wife with him. A compromise negotiation that was conducted by an emissary from Jerusalem was of no avail. Relations between the couple deteriorated, and the peak came when one night she hit him with a heavy stick, causing him severe injuries. The fellow fled to Monastir with a few of his possessions where he married again (with a license from the local rabbi) after a five month period. He was still trying to appease his first wife, but she answered his letters with curses and menace. Later, he wanted to return to Castoria to visit his children and try to mediate a conflict that raged within the community. His wife heard about his intentions and ordered his murder by the Janissaries; he was now living in constant fear. It was then that the question arose as to whether he had broken his oath and breached his commitment to the emissary from the Holy Land—not to marry an additional wife—a breach that entailed paying a high fine and another compensation to his wife; or perhaps this was not the case because he had done so under duress and had committed himself conditionally, hoping that his wife would come back to him while also trying to save his assets.

The man involved, as noted, was R. Moshe haCohen, and the emissary alluded to, who mediated between him and his wife, was R. Abraham, son of R. Moshe Galante, an emissary of the Jerusalem community.⁴ Apparently Moshe did return to Castoria, where he lived until his death in 1702. His last will and testament to his sons has survived.⁵

4 Avraham Yaari, *Emissaries from Eretz-Israel*, Jerusalem 1951, pp. 301-2 [in Hebrew].

5 צוואת ר' משה הכהן, קסטוריה תס"ב. "במותב תלתא כחדא הוינא נחנא כי דינא דחתימין לחתא כד אתא קדמנא הח'כס] חיים הכהן יצ"ו וקם על רגליו והעיד בתורת עדות גמור'הו כראוי איך בהיתו הגביר משה

הכהן נ"ע מוטל על מטתו חולה שעמד בחוליו כמו ד' או ה' חדשים וידענו בכירור שמאותו חולי נפטר לבית עולמו וחיי טבא לרבנן ולישראל שבק ובאותו חולי הלך הח'כסן חיים הנז' לבקר ומצאו חולה אך דבריו ומילוליו היו נכונים ונכוחים ומיושבים והשיב על הין הין ועל לאו לאו ושם היו ושם נמצאו ב' בניו ה"ה הגבירים ה"ר גבריאל וחיים הכהנים יצ"ו ואמר להח'כסן חיים הנז' אני מצוה לבני מחמת מיתה ואתה תהיה לעד גמור ואמר דברים הללו בלשון לע"ז: קומו לאש קאזאש מיאש קי מורה מי היגו איל ג'יקו הגביר אלישע הכהן יצ"ו אי תודו לוקי איי די דיינטרו די אילייאש קומו מטלטלי'ם די נחושת וברזל בדיל ועופרת ומטלטלי עץ קומו קארוטאש אי בוטאש מחוט ועד שרוך בעל אי תכשיטים של כסף וזהב ואי תודו מורו די מלבושים טאנטו די לאנה אי די שידה או לינו אי מעות בעין קי איש מחזיק אין איליוש בני הקטן אלישע הנז' אי טאנבין לאש קאזאש קי אישטאן אין איל בולאטו אי לה בוטיקה קי אישטה אין איל ג'ארשי אי איל קאנפו קי אישטה אין איל ג'ארדאקי אי לאש וינייאש קי טינגו אין לה שיכדאד אי לאש וינייאש קי טינגו אין אל קאזאל די טיארלישט'ה טודו אישטו שילודי במתנה גמורה כל הנז' אמי פיגו אלישע הנז' אי היום מי פיגו אלישע הנז' איש מחזיק בכל הנז' אי נו טיינין מיש פ'גוש הר' גבריאל וחיים הנז' אין טודו אישטו פארטי משה פרוטה קי טודו אישטו שילודי במתנה גמורה אמי פיגו אלישע הנז' לי ארישפונדיין איל ח'כסן חיים הנז' אל גביר משה נ"ע הנז' אילי דישו איי שיעור אין טודו אישטו קילידאש אה וואישו פ'גו אלישע הנז' אי ארישפונדיין הגביר משה נ"ע הנז' איי קון לו דילאמאדרי איי ובתנאי קי אישטי לה מאדרי שינייורה אי פארטונה אין טודו אישטו קון מי פיגו אלישע הנז' ג'ונטו ואם באולי נו אב'רה איליישו לוש אירמאנוש הנז' קי אפ'אלגין: לי טורנו אדויר הח'כסן חיים הנז' ווש פילייאש דין וואישוש פיג'וש די טודו אישטו דיש'ו איל גביר משה נ"ע הנז' יא מי פיליייו: בולטו איל ח'כסן חיים אי ליש דישו אה גבריאל וחיים הנז' ווש קונטונטאש ווש אוטרוש די אפירמאס לה צואה די וואישו פארדי רישפונדיירון אי דישירון לוקי אינקומינדה נואישו פארדי נעשה ונשמע. כל זה העיד בפנינו הח'כסן חיים הכהן בתורת עדות גמורה: וכן היקר מתתיה רוסו קם על רגליו והעיד בתורת עדות גמורה שגם לו ציוה הגביר משה נ"ע הנז' הדברים האלו אות באות תיבה בתיבה וגם הר' מתתיה הנז' אמר שבשעת הצוואה הנז' היו דבריו ומילוליו נכונים ומיושבים ככני אדם הבראים והשי'וב לנו על הין הין ועל לאו לאו כל זה העיד הר' מתתיה הנז' ... לא היה עם הח'כסן חיים בשעת הצואה כי אם לבדו היה וגם הוברד שבשעת הצוואה לא נטלו הגבירים גבריאל וחיים הכהנים לא קנין ולא שבועה והיה זה בקאשטוריא יום ב' ח"י למב"י [=כלומר שמונה עשר יום לספירת העומר] שנת התס"ב וקיים. יוסף מבורך דיין. יצחק בכר אברהם י' וינישטי דיין. יעקב אליהו דיין.

Shelomo Amarillo, *Kerem Shelomo*, Salonica, 1719, Hoshen Mishpat, §71, fol. 198c [in Hebrew]. The will is further discussed in that volume, §72, fol. 200d-201a

יעקב היו לו ג' בנים ראובן שמעון לוי והשיא אשה לראובן וברעות אלהא דשמיא נפטר ראובן בלא בנים ויאמר יעקב לשמעון בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה וישמע שמעון לקול אביו ... וכראות לוי בנו הקטן את אביו בסכנה חשב מחשבות בלבבו לפתות את אביו שיתן לו כל נכסיו ויפצר בו עד מאד עד שהודה אביו לדבריו ויקרא לוי לב' שכניו לעדים וכראות יעקב את זריותו ועורמת בנו הקטן ומחשבתו אשר חשב לסלק את אחיו שמעון מלירושו אז בחכמת תורתו צוה להשכנים שיכתבו בלשון לע"ז איך מניח כל נכסו ביתו ללוי בנו הקטן וכל זה היה בלי ידיעת שמעון וז"ל אין איסטו מישמו דיאה נוס מאנדו אלייאמאר איל שינייור חכם אינפירמו אין שו קאזה אי אבי'נדולי פריגונטארן פור איל דיאה אי מיש אין קי אישטאמוש נוס דיספונדיין קון טודו אינטירו אי ג'ואישו אי דיקלארו אי דישו קי טודו קואנטו אין סו קאזה שי אלייאקי קי פ'אירי שוליו טאנטו אין מובליש קומו אין פלאטה אי אורו או אלגונה ג'וליא די אויי קי איש שו אולטימה וילונטאד פור קואנטו דיג'ו סו איג'ו לוי אה אוג'ו אנייוש קי לו אישטה סוסינטאנדו קון שו טראואגו פור קואנטו אין דיג'ו טיינפו איל דיג'ו ח"ד יעקב נו אה גאנאדו און אש לוס ליברוש קי סי אלייאדין סיר סוליוש קומו אנשי מישמו דוש ספרים קי טייני אינפישארו אה אישקריויר לה מיטאד די דיג'וש ליברוש אי און ספר שי לי די אשו איג'ו שמעון אילי קי דיזי לי אה אוג'ו באשטאנטי מינטי קומו שו פושיבילידאד אי די טודו אישטו לי טומאמוש

The following is the episode as it was unfolded in Hebrew in the question sent to the rabbinical authority in Salonica:

הגביר [ר] ה"ר משה הכהן יצ"ו תושב עיר קאשטוריה יע"א [=יכוננה עליון אמן] אומר ואלו דבריו 'נתנני ה' בידי לא אוכל קום' (ע"פ איכה א, יד) זו אשה רעה שכל ימי היותו נשוי עמה לא נח ולא שקט ולא שלו מפני רוע מעלליה כדלף טורד ביום סגריר ואשת מדנים נשתה עד שמחמת זה הלך ונשא אשה אחרת ברשות החכם השלם שבעיר מרכיץ תורה ביניהם שהורה להתר וחשבו כי ע"י שתראה צרתה בצדה תחזור אשתו הא' [=הראשונה] למוטב ותהיה נשמעת לו ולא נעשתה מחשבתו כי לא עלתה לו ארוכה כי אדרבא הוסיפה על חטאתה פשע וגזלה כל נכסי בעלה הנמצאים אתה בבית והבריחה והטמינה אותם בבית תוגרמים וערלים. ויהי אחרי כן נפטרה אשתו השניה לב"ע [=לבית עולמה] והוגד לו מפי מגידי אמת שאשתו הראשונה שלחה לה סם המות ע"י דבר אחר שתאכל ומתה.⁶

ואחרי זאת שם נמצא ושם היה שליח אחר מא"י [=מארץ ישראל] תוב"ב [=תכונן ותבנה במהרה בימינו] והודיעו לו הדברי' [ם] האמורים והשתדל בכל מאמצי כח להטיל שלום ביניה' [ם] ולא עלתה בידו כמו שנתגלה אח"כ. וה"ר משה הנזכר כדי שתשיב לו אשתו כל הנכסים גזולה ממנו נתרצ' [ה] מן השפה ולחוץ להיות עמה בשלום אך לא מרצונו ולא מלבו והכריחו השליח שיכתוב [ב] כתב על זה שאם באולי ישא אשה אחר' [ת] שיהיה חייב ה"ר משה הנזכר לתת להקדש א"י תוב"ב סך מה <חמש מאות גרוש לירושלים אם ישא אשה נוספת, ועוד שלוש מאות אם יגע במעות המוחבאים בבית> בתורת קנס ושישבע על זה. <מהסכם הפשרה המובא בהמשך עולה כי הגביר הבטיח לאשתו, מרת לירישייא, גם מתנה בסך מאה גרוש אריות כדי שתשא ותתן בהם>, וה"ר משה הנזכר קודם שיודה וקודם שנשבע על התנאי והקנס הנזכר מסר מודע' [ה] בפני עדים כשרים שכל מה שיעשה עמה הוא באונס מפני שהיתה תפוסה מכל הנכסים הנזכר וכדי שתשיב ותחזיר הנכסים הודה לרב' [ה] ונשבע לקיים התנאי והקנס הנז' וגם בשעה שנשב' [ע] אמ' [ר] בלבו ה"ר משה הנז' אני נשבע על תנאי שהיא תהיה נשמעת לי ותשוב מדרכיה ומעלליה הרעים ואם לא תחזור למוטב ולא תהיה נשמעת לי אין כאן שבועה כלל ומעכשיו היא בטלה. ואחר הדברים האלה בראות ה"ר משה הנזכר כי אשתו הנזכרת היתה מתיחדת עם תוגרמים רגליים וקנא את אשתו והיתה הקנאה

קנין אי לו פ'דמו די שו פרופיאי מאנו דילאנטרי די נושאי אנשי מיסמו טומאמוש קנין אל דיג'ו לוי דיקי דיורה שושטינאר אה דיג'ו סו פאדרי ח"ר יעקב טודו טיינפו קי איל דייו פואירי שירבידו די טינירלו אין אישטי מונדו די טודו שו ניסיאריו. מ"א [=מודה אני] יעקב. פב"פ עד. פב"פ עד".

- 6 I have dwelt elsewhere on poisoning as a simple and easily available means of getting rid of someone, less problematic as a criminal offense. I refer the reader to what I wrote in Yaron Ben-Naeh, "An Adultery Scandal in Istanbul: Responsa Literature as a Source for Jewish Life in the Ottoman City", *Mi-Mizrah umi-Ma'arav* 8 (2008), pp. 40-41 n. 11 [in Hebrew]; see also C. Imber, "Why You Should Poison Your Husband: A Note on Liability in Hanafi Law in the Ottoman Period", *Islamic Law and Society* 1 (1994), pp. 206-16.

בוערת בקרבו כאש בוערה ולא היה יודע מה לעשות כי היה מתיירא מהתוגרמים פן יהרגוהו על דבר אשתו וכל מה שהיה אומר לה שתעשה היא עושה בהפך כי לא היתה חושבת אותו בעיניה כקליפת השום עד שכ"כ [=שכל כך] גדלה רשעתה כי ביום א' בקשה איזה תואנה ועלילה ונתקוטטו והיא ברוע מעלליה לקחה עץ א' והכהו לבעלה על ראשו מכה עצומה מאד עד כי נבקעה ראשו כי כל כוונתה היתה להרוג אותו ע"י ההכאות ההם. והוכרח ה"ר משה הנזכר לברוח מן העיר בחצות הלילה באשון לילה ואפלה אי מפני הבושה כי הכרת פניו ענתה בו ואי מצד המכות עצומות כי כל ראשו היה פצעים וחבורות ורטיות ולא היה לו פתחון פה לדבר מפני אימה ופחד גדולה מהתוגרמים והרגליים הנכנסים והיוצאים בביתו ולקח מעט מזער מנכסיו מהבא בידו והלך לו לעיר מונישטיריו [=מונסטיר] ונשאר כל רכושו ומקנה קניינו אשר רכש בידה ורשותה ואעפ"כ [=ואף על פי כן] בהיותו שם במונישטיריו שלא לה במכתב לאמר שאם תחזור בתשו' [בה] ותעזוב דרכיה המקולקלים הרי טוב יחזור לביתו ואם לאו שישא אשה אחרת. והיא תשיב אמריה לו בחירופי' [ם] וגדופי' [ם]. ושהה שם כמו ה' חדשים אולי בהמשך הימים תחזור בה ותסיר גלוּליה מפניה ונאפופיה מבין שדיה וכראות שלא חזרה בה ואדרבא עודנה מחזקת בטומאתה הלך לפני חכם העיר וסיפר לו כל הדברים האלה והראה לו כתב א' חתומה מיחיד עיר קאשטוריא מעידין ומגידין איך אשתו הנזכר [ת] הכהו מכה רבה מאד ונודע לו אמיתות הדברי' [ם] הנזכרי' [ם] אז אמר לו החכם הנז' בודאי אשה זו היא מורדת ונתן לו רשות להשיא אשה אחרת על פי החכם הנזכר. ושהה שם כמו שנה ומחצה. והן עתה שמע ה"ר משה הנזכר המריבות שנפלו בין יחידי ק"ק קאשטוריא ובין חברי החברה של ג"ח [=גמילות חסדים] וגם שנתאווה לראות את בניו העומדים שם בעיר קאשטוריא הלך לשם אולי יתוּך השלום בין היחידים ובין החברים ולראות את בניו. וכשידעה אשתו המרשעת שבא בעלה בעיר הלכה ודברה אל התוגרמי' [ם] רגליים בכך ממון שנתנה להם כדי שיהרגו לבעלה והוכרח ה"ר משה הנזכר להיות נחבא בבתי גואי ולא יצא החוצה מפחד הרגליים שרוצים להורגו וכאשר נודע כל זה באמת לכל באי שער עירו וכאלה רבות ממה שעושה לו אשתו המרשעת. ועתה שאל ה"ר משה הנזכר אם יש רפואה למחלתו מהשבועה והקנס הנזכר אם הוא פטור יען הוא אנוס גמור והשבועה [ה] שנסבע היה באונס כנראה מתוך המודעה וגם שאמר בלבו על תנאי שהיא תחזור למוטב, ואם לאו שהשבועה אינה שבועה, באופן כי יש אונס ממון ואונס הגוף והוחלה השבועה מאליה ואין כאן שבועה או נאמר שהשבועה במקומה עומדת וחייב לפרוע הקנס. על הכל יורינו מוריניו ורבינו המורה לצדקה על הדין ועל האמת ושכמ"ה [=ושכרו כפול מן השמים].⁷

Translation:

The rich and honorable Moshe haCohen, resident of the city Castoria may God protect it, says as follows: he has been given a bad wife, and that during their marital life he has not lived in peace and quiet due to her ceaseless wicked actions

7 Aharon haCohen Perahya, *Parah Matte Aharon*, 2 vols., Amsterdam 1743, vol. 2, §106, fol. 146c-d [in Hebrew].

and her quarreling nature. Thus, he went and married a second wife, by permission of the community's rabbi, both assuming that by seeing that her husband has another wife she will amend her ways and will become an obedient wife. But these aspirations did not become true, and the state of things between the couple only worsened, and she has added crime upon her sins and stole his valuables that were at home, smuggled them [out] and hid them in houses of fellow citizens, Muslim Turks and Christians. A while later the second wife died, and Moshe was told by reliable people that the first wife had sent the second wife a poisoned foodstuff, of which she died.

After that affair, an emissary from Palestine [=a rabbi who collected money for one of the communities of the four Holy Cities] arrived in the city, and as he was informed of the case, he made great effort to bring the two to make peace with each other, but as we will see, he failed. In order to get back his stolen belongings, Moshe—the husband—reluctantly agreed to return and live with her peacefully, and he was made to sign a promissory note and swear a severe oath that if he will marry another wife he will pay the sum of 500 kurush to the endowment of Jerusalem, and another 300 kurush fine if he will touch the money which is hidden at home. He also promised his first wife 100 kurush as a present of good will in order that she will negotiate and conduct some business with the money. Yet, before swearing and signing the written settlement, Moshe declared before legally acceptable witnesses that all he is about to agree to is not valid, and is done just so that she will return his stolen belongings. Moreover, during taking the oath, he made a condition in his heart according to which the agreement will be valid only if she will mend her ways and become an obedient and dutiful wife, otherwise the oath is null.

Later on he saw his wife repeatedly spending time with Turkish Janissaries (under suspicious circumstances, as she was alone with these men), and he suspected she was committing adultery with them; jealousy was raging in him like a fire, but he did not find a solution, as he was afraid that the soldiers would murder him. Nonetheless, whatever he requested or ordered, she did the opposite, as he was nothing for her. And her wickedness grew to the degree that one day she found a false cause and quarreled with him, and then she took a wooden rod and beat his head with it and broke his skull, in order to murder him. So, he had to flee from the city at midnight for two reasons: the first was his shameful condition, injured by his own wife; secondly, he was afraid of the Turks and the janissaries who were frequenting their home, and could not complain against her. He gathered

some valuables and escaped to Monastir, leaving behind all his property in her hands.

From Monastir he wrote his wife a letter, pleading with her to behave properly and promising that if she will agree, he will return home; or else he will marry another wife. And she answered in curses and damnations. So he remained [in Monastir] for about five months, hoping she would repent and cease to live in such vile a way. And when he finally realized she did not regret and would not change her bad ways, and had even worsened, he went to the local rabbi and told him the whole story and showed him a letter from Castorian Jews attesting and supporting his version, and the rabbi declared her as a rebellious wife and allowed him to marry another wife. Moshe remained in Monastir a year and a half. Now he wished to return to his native city for two reasons: he heard that there were quarrels between some people of the Castorian community and the members of the local Gemilut Hasadim benevolent society, and as an honorable member he might try to bring peace between the parties, and secondly he wished to see his sons who live in Castoria.

So he left on his way, and when his wicked wife heard about his arrival she hurried to the Janissaries and paid them to murder him. Moshe now had to hide and did not dare to go outdoors, as he was afraid he would be assassinated by the Janissaries who were after him, as was well known, and all knew of her behavior and actions.

Now Moshe comes and asks about his legal status—is his oath still valid so that he must pay the fines to which he (forcibly) agreed, or is he free of it as he agreed to it under pressure and while signing made a condition (which she failed to fulfill), and he also declared its invalidity in advance. Is his oath valid and he must pay the mentioned fine or is it not valid and he is free—Our Lord the Rabbi would decide the ruling and the truth, and may he receive his payment from heaven (that is, from God)”.

Clearly, this is a question sent by Moshe haCohen or someone on his behalf. The phrasing presents him in a positive light and his wife most negatively, though without applying the words “adultery”, “prostitution”, or “rebellious”—key terms in halakhic discussions of such issues. The person submitted the question, while presenting the facts straightforwardly, carefully walking a tightrope: the woman is a shrew and commits terrible and unacceptable acts, but this is not the subject of the question. Surprisingly, the decisor is requested to judge only in the matter of the oath and the fine

regarding taking a second wife in marriage. As is common in the responsa literature the narrative submitted as a halakhic issue presents the man's. It is possible that the manner in which the facts are presented and interpreted do not reflect the real situation, at least as experienced by the wife, or even of the couple's social environment.

We shall now examine how this episode illuminates several aspects of life in the Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire.

Women and the Family

The relations between the man and his wife, who by her behavior had undermined all traditionally assumed power relations, even if highly irregular as they certainly were, deviate from anything we would expect from a traditional Jewish society in a Muslim country. However, they do teach us that the accepted image of women in Muslim lands as being weak and passive is mistaken.

We encounter here a woman of strong and independent character who conducts business by herself. From the agreement drawn up between the two, it is obvious that she was well off, and her husband even obligated himself to provide her with an additional significant sum so that she could "negotiate with it"; in other words, she was a merchant, a partner in an economic undertaking, or a moneylender, and independent enough to make financial gain. Clearly she managed her own financial affairs, but this point does not merit special attention. She is a woman who does not balk at poisoning, acts of violence, and even commissioning a murder, this in addition to her use of violent language and behavior that is far from normative.

The wife maintains friendly ties and romantic or even sexual connections with Turks and with soldiers (Janissaries); in this, as a Jewess, she trespasses the boundaries set by the community. It transpires, even though she is an extraordinary woman who is far from representing a common Jewish woman, that at least theoretically the possibility of significant social mobility is open even to a Jewish woman in a provincial city, where we would expect to find a much more close-knit and segregated lifestyle. Thus, this lady, Lidisia, joins a gallery of other strong-willed women mentioned in passing in the Hebrew sources, mainly the responsa literature. Some of these women display physical and verbal violence toward their husbands,⁸ others put the emphasis

8 Avraham De Boton, *Lehem Rav*, Izmir, 1660, §52, fol. 32a-b [in Hebrew].

on control of possessions and are able to read and write, while yet others maintain friendly connections and/or sexual relations with non-Jews and exploit their special standing to threaten their husbands or even communal leaders. Besides crossing community bounds, she also trespasses gender limits, behaving in a manly manner—strong character; cunning, fearless behavior; and physical violence.

Another issue raised by this document is the question of bigamy or polygamy. Among both Muslims and Jews, taking a second or third wife (while being married) was not a widespread phenomenon, certainly not among the middle class, and not in western Anatolia and the Balkan provinces, unlike in the Arab ones. The Hebrew sources relevant to this issue generally deal with permission for a husband who wishes to marry a second wife; only rarely do they mention the attitude of the first wife. That she is opposed to her husband marrying another woman is understandable and well known, but it is rare that we read of her active opposition to this step. In the present case the wife's protests were useless, so she simply decided to murder her competitor, even though it is unclear why and how the second wife was an obstacle to her or interfered with her mode of life.

This episode is informative about another matter. Taking a second wife is generally related to barrenness, the wife being unable to function, or the desire of the husband to marry a young and pretty woman. Clearly none of these are relevant in the present case: Moshe does not want children, since he already has some—as is evident from his will; nor was taking another wife a carnal matter. Rather, it was a way to cope with the impossibility of living with his first wife and to subdue a woman whose behavior was improper. The very threat to take another wife is a strategy employed by men well aware—as is clear from the text—that such an act would anger the first wife and perhaps cause her to mend her ways and be obedient and modest, traits expected of her by society.

Several questions remain open in this respect:

a) Why does Moshe want to go back to live with such a difficult woman? Even after her licentious affairs and despite the fact that she wounded him physically and took his possessions, he still wants her and hopes that she will repent. Why does he not divorce her on the grounds of adultery and being rebellious? The reader is reminded that a charge of adultery is difficult to prove, and perhaps that is why it was not raised in the question sent to Rabbi Aharon haCohen Perahya, which centered round the husband's oath and the fine he was to pay should he take a second wife. It is hard to

believe that he was afraid of the monetary implications of a divorce: theoretically he could divorce her without alimony because she was an adulteress; moreover, he was wealthy enough to sustain such an outlay. Could it be that he loved this woman despite her doings, or perhaps because of them?

b) Why does the wife not put an end to the marriage? Is it because her society would not accept a Jewess who lives with a non-Jew? Or why does she not convert to Islam and mobilize Islamic law and the soldiers to further her cause? Could it be that Judaism afforded her more freedom of action than did Islam?

c) A third set of questions relates to the families: both those of the husband and the wife are silent about the case. Perhaps they do not live in the same city? Are the parents of the couple still alive? And what about the children, who are only mentioned when the father wants to visit them from his place of exile: who cared for them all these past months and years—his parents, or other relatives? A long time passed before the father mentioned he wished to see them and it might be that were it not for the other matter—mediation of an internal community dispute—he would have waited even longer. What does this indicate about parent-children relationships?

Relations with the Majority Society⁹

I have already noted above the mobility of Moshe's wife between the Jewish community and the outside, non-Jewish, environment. This should not be taken for granted, whether due to her upbringing (the obstacles posed by language and culture) or to the normative behavior expected of a Jewish woman. How, then, did such a woman develop, one who could communicate in Turkish with the soldiers and in Greek with residents of Castoria? How and why was she attracted to this milieu, so far removed from her own world, her education, and from the values she was expected to internalize? And once again I raise the question: Why did she choose to remain within

9 I have dwelt on acculturation of Jews in Ottoman society, its significance and many manifestations in my book and several articles. See Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century*, Tübingen, 2008, ch. 9, esp. pp. 425-33; id., 'Urban Encounters: The Muslim-Jewish Case in the Ottoman Empire', in: Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh eds., *Researching Ottoman History: Studies in Honor of Prof. Amnon Cohen*, Brill, Leiden 2014, 177-197.

the fold of Judaism and not take the final step—conversion to Islam—as did tens of thousands of Christians in the Ottoman Balkans?¹⁰

No matter how extreme this case was, it is still informative about the existence of relations between Jews and non-Jews. We can learn about such connections and friendly relations, and even acculturation into the milieu of the majority society, from the regulation issued in Castoria's Jewish community in 1685. Its purpose was to put an end to the custom of non-Jews participating in Jewish weddings, whether as guests and thus spectators or as hired musicians. It even notes the possibility that an important personage in the city might order that musicians be brought to the wedding, probably as a sign of friendship and fondness, to add to the merry atmosphere. The intention of those who drafted the ordinance was to erect a barrier between Jews and non-Jews and protect Jewish society and its members from assimilation and from intimate relations. Perhaps the date of this regulation also hints at an indirect reaction to the scandalous affair in question with non-Jews, which was no secret, since it emphasizes the need to keep Jewish women, who are less careful about covering their faces and bodies, out of the sight of non-Jews. The sanction to be applied to transgressors was excommunication and a fine totalling two percent of their property.¹¹

10 Conversion to Islam is discussed in depth by Marc D. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe*, Oxford, 2008.

11 Here is the copy of the mentioned communal regulation, dated 1685:

"טופס הסכמה של ק"ק קאסטוריא יע"א ... זה יצא ראשונה ראה ראינו פועל רע ומר לענה וראש שחוק וקלות ראש ויהי ביום כל'אות כ"ל ששון וכ"ל שמחה כ"ל חתן וכ"ל כל"ה ערבה כל שמחה ערוב כבוד מאד עומדות הנשים מקושטות מרקדות בפני הערלים המנגנין זמרין גברי ועניין נשי לא זו אף זו ויבאו האנשים על הנשים קרובי החתן והכלה ותצאנה כל הנשים הקרובות אשה לקראת אשה ונותנים יד זה לזה ומרקדים זה עם זה דו פרצופין זכר ונקבה ויראו כל העם וירונו והנה פשתה המספחת כמעט הותרה להם הותר'ה) ס"ד אלא נעשת'ה) להם כהיתר וכבר זכרנו ימים מקד'ום) חסיד'ום) הראשוני'ום) גדרו את הפרצה הזאת פעם ושתיים וגדורה היתה וברוב הזמן נפרצה פרץ ע"פ פרץ. עתה חזרנו על הראשונה וקבלנו עלינו ועל הבאים אחרינו ברצון טוב ואהב'ה) ונפש חפצה מדעתנו ורצוננו ונשבענו שבועה חמורה ע"ד המב"ה וע"ד הנ"ב וע"ד הרבנים חסידים קדישי שאלוניקי יע"א לגדוד הפרצה הזאת שלא לשמוח אל גיל בעמים ובכל שמחתנו לא יאתערב זר שלא יכנסו בגבולינו כל מיני זמר וכל מין ניגון ע"י גוי גם כל מין למינו יערב האנשים לקראת האנשים ונשים לקראת נשים ושמים ושמים לעשות רצון קונם ולא ישנו את תפקידם. גם תנאי היו דברינו שאם ח"ו יבאו אצלנו תקיפי ארעא מגויי ארעא וכל עורב למינו ערב וטמא טמא יקרא ויאמר להביא אצלנו כל מין זמר וכל מין ניגון ונהיה מוכרחים במעשינו לקבלם הא מילתא דלא שכיחא היא ולא גזרנו על זאת והותר לנו לקבלם. אמנם ינגנו בבית החתן ואחוזות מריעיו ולא תעמוד אשה כנגדם ולא תראה החוצה בין נשואה ובין אלמנה אפי'ולו) ככת שית או ככת שיתין כלל ועיקר ובזאת יהיה לישראל שלישיה בקרב הארץ והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק אמן. ... וכל הממאן ולא ישמע בקול מורים ובשריר'ות) לבו הרע ילך ויעבור

Voluntary Character and Vulnerability of the Community

We know from other sources that the existence of a Jewish community was dependent upon the agreement of its members to accept the authority of the elected leadership and obey its rulings. In the question sent to Rabbi Peralhya the passivity of the community stands out—the communal leadership is powerless when faced with a member who does not comply to its rules of behavior (in contrast to the rhetoric of the regulations issued that very year, threatening excommunication and fines, that perhaps were never implemented), and we see the lack of any ability to oppose intervention from the outside on the part of the authorities or local powerful personages.¹² The inherent weakness of the communal leadership was a result of the dhimmi status that curtailed the jurisdictional power of the Jewish communities and their ability to punish delinquents. The question also mentions the tension between the community leadership and the benevolent society, though it does not specify what was the cause of this dispute.

The Status of the Holy Land vis-à-vis the Community

Alongside the subordination of the Castoria community to the Jewish leadership of Salonica and the sending of this question to a rabbi of that community, the episode illuminates the special standing of the Holy Land. Over half a century ago, Avraham Yaari noted the unique role played by emissaries from the Holy Land for Diaspora communities through laying down halakhic rulings and solving or mediating

על אחת מהנהגה בין איש ובין אשה בין שיעבור על דברינו בין בדבור בין במעשה בין ברמיזא יהיו דברינו אלה אליו כגחלי אש תבא אליו מארה דמאריה עלמא ארוד הוא ביום כו' ומחוייבים אנחנו בשבוע'ה חמורה להחרים לאיש העושה זאת או לאשה אשר תעבור לנדותו ולשמתו כדשמת'ה| ברק למרוז ולהבדילו לרעה מכל שבטי ישראל פתו פתו כותי וכו' ולא למנות אותו בעשרה לקדיש ולקדושה ולא לשמוח בשמחתו ולא להתערב כאבלו ולא לקבל את בנו לת"ת כללן של דברי'ום| יהי'ה| מובדל ומוחר'ום| עד ישוב וניהם ככל לבו ובכל מאודו ויתן קנס אחד מחמשים ממה שיש לו דהיינו שילכו הממוני'ום| וטובי העיר וישומו כל מה שיש לו אפי'לון| תכשיטי אשתו ויתן א' מנ' [=אחד מחמשים, כלומר שני אחוזים משווי כלל רכושן| ואז יעל'ה| ויבא בקהל ה' בכלל העושי'ום| רצון קונם כו' ... ושומע לנו ישכון בטח והיה עליהו רענן. יום אחד לחדש תמוז משנת התמ"ה ליציירה והכל שריר ובריר וקים ע"כ טופס ההסכמה הנז'.

Peralhya, *Parah Matte Aharon*, §5, fol. 9a-b.

12 For the weakness of the Jewish community, see, for example, Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, p. 241 and elsewhere.

communal disputes. This case lends support to Yaari's conclusion. Galante was not only an authoritative personality, since he represented the Holy Land and Jerusalem, but also had an undisguised interest in drawing up the agreement, for it included a substantial fine in favor of the Holy Land, and thus would augment his own income.¹³

Personal Possessions and Consumption

Wealthy persons kept their assets in the form of homes, clothing (especially embroidered dresses and other textiles), jewellery, household utensils of expensive materials such as gold and silver, and much cash money. Thus they could use their wealth for pleasure and luxury, as a display of their economic standing, and as a manner of investment when there was no developed banking system. Such items could be easily sold for cash, or transferred to a safe place when threatened by fire, confiscation, or looting. Spiriting away possessions by a wife to her parents' home or to that of non-Jewish friends, out of the reach of her husband, is a well-known practice.¹⁴

Male Honor

Another subject that appears offhandedly in the question is male honor, which I have discussed *in extenso* elsewhere.¹⁵ The woman in question exceeds accepted gender limits, overturning the common power relationship. It is she who threatens her husband, a respected wealthy man, and it is she who injures him physically and causes him to flee shamefully. In this case, then, male honor was undermined twice, both when the wife committed adultery (especially with non-Jews) and when she physically assaulted and wounded her husband—a total reversal of the gender roles in this patriarchal society. This woman placed herself outside the body of proper and chaste wives and women.

13 Yaari, *Emissaries*, pp. 301-2.

14 See Ezra Malki, *En Mishpat*, Constantinople, 1770, Even ha'Ezer §2, fol. 54c [in Hebrew].

15 Yaron Ben-Naeh, "'El onor no se merka kon paras': Honor and Its Meaning among Ottoman Jews", *Jewish Social Studies* 11, 2 (2005), pp. 19-50.

She does this at a time and in a society in which one of the manifestations of male honor is to maintain the chaste behavior of the women in his household and to provide for them. Fear of disgrace mandates obedience. Even if society might treat adultery with some leniency, beating and wounding the husband went too far in the reversal of gender roles. To this should be added the woman's involvement with the non-Jewish milieu, her fluency in additional languages, her capacity for maneuvering, her ability to maintain personal relationships, and the fact that she apparently engaged in commerce.

Privacy

Another noteworthy fact is the lack of privacy within the community owing to population density and housing conditions, and perhaps to a different mentality. Unlike the privacy of the body, male or female, which was almost a taboo, and covering the body with clothes as an important marker, denoting chastity and honor, there was no possibility of hiding information. The public was aware of what was going on—but did not intervene. We see this in both cases—here and in the adultery/fornication scandal in Istanbul.¹⁶ This is attested in dozens of cases, whether in the adultery scandal in Istanbul or when men cohabited with Christian female slaves.

* * *

A seemingly minor and extraordinary episode in one of the cities in the Balkans is illuminating concerning a wide range of topics, whether on the community level or in the realms of culture and society. It undermines accepted images and stereotypes, thus calling for reassessment of Jewish history as well as some of the paradigms in Ottoman history. It demonstrates how diffusive were the limits of communal life within the city, how weak the communal leadership was when faced with transgressions of religious rulings and the breach of social norms (especially by strong, determined people with close relations to local men of the ruling class), and how deep the gap was between communal and religious ideals and the realities of daily life. Above all, it teaches us how much our image of the past is in need of revision through careful re-reading with sensitivity and the lenses of modern discourse.

16 See Note 6 above.

