

12-31-2011

# The Contribution of Hebrew Printing Houses and Printers in Istanbul to Ladino Culture and Scholarship

Rachel Simon

*Princeton University*, [rsimon@princeton.edu](mailto:rsimon@princeton.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ajlpublishing.org/jl>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [Information Literacy Commons](#), [Jewish Studies Commons](#), [Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#), [Other Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Reading and Language Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Simon, Rachel. 2011. "The Contribution of Hebrew Printing Houses and Printers in Istanbul to Ladino Culture and Scholarship." *Judaica Librarianship* 16: 125-135. doi:10.14263/2330-2976.1008.

# The Contribution of Hebrew Printing Houses and Printers in Istanbul to Ladino Culture and Scholarship<sup>1</sup>

RACHEL SIMON

## ABSTRACT

Sephardi printers were pioneers of moveable type in the Islamic world, establishing a Hebrew printing house in Istanbul in 1493. Initially emphasizing classical religious works in Hebrew, since the eighteenth century printers have been instrumental in the development of scholarship, literature, and journalism in the vernacular of most Jews of the western Ottoman Empire: Ladino. Although most Jewish males knew the Hebrew alphabet, they did not understand Hebrew texts. Communal cultural leaders and printers collaborated in order to bring basic Jewish works to the masses in the only language they really knew. While some books in Ladino were printed as early as the sixteenth century, their percentage increased since the second quarter of the eighteenth century, following the printing of *Me'am lo'ez*, by Jacob Culi (1730), and the Bible in Ladino translation by Abraham Assa (1739). In the nineteenth century the balance of Ladino printing shifted toward novels, poetry, history, and biography, sciences, and communal and state laws and regulations. Ladino periodicals, which aimed to modernize, educate, and entertain, were of special social and cultural importance, and their printing houses also served as publishers of Ladino books. Thus, from its beginnings as an agent that aimed to "Judaize" the Jews, Ladino publishing in the later period sought to modernize and entertain, while still trying to spread Judaic knowledge.

---

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fifteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, 2009). This is part of a larger study on Hebrew printing houses and printers in the Islamic World. For an overall survey, see Simon (2010b), pp. 100–112.

The introduction of movable type in Europe in the fifteenth century greatly facilitated the spread of knowledge among wider socioeconomic circles than had previously been the case. Another cultural result was the gradual increase of publications in vernacular languages intended for the masses, in contrast to the past, when manuscripts were mainly written in sacred languages used almost exclusively by religious, cultural, and political elites, who consequently were their main audience. Vernacular languages developed, enriched their vocabularies, and regularized their orthographies and structures in response to the growing need to formally express new **and varied ideas and subjects. Thus, in Christian Europe, Latin gradually lost its prominence as** the language of scholarship and culture at the expense of growing numbers of publications in German, French, English, and other languages. Jews faced a similar trend, and in many regions publications in Hebrew gradually became less widespread than those in Jewish vernaculars. A case in point is the increase of Ladino<sup>2</sup> publications in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, which was one of the major Jewish printing centers in the Islamic World.<sup>3</sup> Other major centers of Ladino printing included Salonika<sup>4</sup> and Izmir,<sup>5</sup> as well as in Amsterdam and Venice. This process, which took over two hundred years, was one result of the introduction of movable type to the Islamic World, when in 1493<sup>6</sup> Sephardi printers established a Hebrew press in Istanbul.<sup>7</sup> In addition to being a pioneer in this field, the importance of Hebrew printing in Istanbul is based on the

---

<sup>2</sup> This paper does not deal with the differences among the various languages which were spoken and written by Sephardim.

<sup>3</sup> Out of 758 titles in Hebrew type printed in Istanbul, over 280 books and periodicals were in Ladino (see below).

<sup>4</sup> Printing in Hebrew type in Salonika started in 1512 (Simon 2010b, pp. 101–102); Vinograd (1995, vol. 1, pp. 666–686) lists 941 titles in Hebrew type printed in Salonika until 1863, of which, according to the language index (vol. 2, p. 486), 120 titles were in Ladino and four in Spanish. Ben Naeh (2001, p. 91) mentions that according to Yaari (no reference provided and personal query to Ben Naeh did not result in any, either) more than 3,500 titles had been printed in Salonika. On Ladino periodicals published in Salonika, see: Simon (2010a, pp. 77–80).

<sup>5</sup> Printing in Hebrew type in Izmir started in 1657. Yaari (1958, pp. 113–114) lists 415 books in Hebrew type printed in Izmir; of these, 117 books were entirely or partially in Ladino, starting in 1838. Most of the periodicals (at least 23) were in Ladino. See also Posner and Ta-Shema, (1975, p. 134); Simon (2010b, pp. 102–104) (Izmir). On Ladino journals published there see Simon (2010a, pp. 74–77).

<sup>6</sup> The date is: 4 Tevet, five thousand, two hundred, and *fifty-four*; some think that it should be “*sixty-four*” (Yaari 1967, p. 17). It would have been the first press of its kind in the Islamic world, even had it started in 1503.

<sup>7</sup> On Hebrew printing in Istanbul, see Simon (2010b, pp. 100–101). Hebrew printing soon spread to other Ottoman cities, including Salonika (1512), Cairo (1557), Safed (1577), and Izmir (1657). Armenian and Greek printing followed suit, also in Istanbul (1567 and 1627 respectively), as did printing in Arabic type, which started in 1728 at the Mütferrika Press, with some help by the main Jewish printer in Istanbul at the time, Jonah ben Jacob Ashkenazi.

quantity and variety of genres it produced, as well as the centrality of Istanbul as the Ottoman capital with a Jewish community of significant cultural and political impact.

Following the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, numerous Sephardi Jews settled in the Ottoman Empire. Sephardim had great cultural influence on indigenous Jews, though local customs were slow to disappear. Sephardi customs and especially their language—Ladino—eventually became the norm for most Jews in the western parts of the Ottoman Empire. Hebrew remained the language of ritual, prayer, and scholarship, but its comprehension by the Jewish masses decreased, despite the existence of communal Jewish religious education where Hebrew was taught. Jewish education in the Ottoman Empire, as in other parts of the Jewish world, was at the time designed to enable men to participate in communal public life: to pray and read in the synagogue from the Holy Scriptures in Hebrew and Aramaic (Lehmann 2005, pp. 29–30). Thus, because only adult males were active participants in the formal communal religious life, community leaders felt obliged to provide education to boys only. The latter usually studied for four to six years, and learned Hebrew script in order to be able to read texts using that alphabet. Only a small percentage of them continued to advanced Jewish studies, intending to fill communal religious and educational positions. Hebrew was not the spoken language of most Jews, and until the mid-eighteenth century no effort was made in Istanbul to provide proper, systematic translations of the Holy Scriptures and other basic texts. Consequently, most Jewish men did not understand what they read and merely recited Hebrew and Aramaic phrases (including prayers) from written texts (Lehmann 2005, pp. 29–30, 34–37; Simon 2000). The majority of Jewish women were even less literate, because their education was experience-based, taught at home by older female relatives, and geared toward running a Jewish home by applying relevant Jewish laws to this end and to their personal life. Thus, many women could not read at all, and in the western parts of the Ottoman Empire they generally knew only the Jewish vernacular: Ladino (Simon 2000, pp. 88–90). These cultural conditions had far-reaching implications for the development of printing by the Jews of Istanbul (Lehmann 2005). The following analysis is based on Abraham Yaari's study of Hebrew printing in Istanbul (1967). As is the case with any bibliography, this one, too, might be incomplete, but it still provides a solid picture of printing with Hebrew type in Istanbul.

The early Hebrew printers in Istanbul focused on printing Hebrew classical rabbinical works and Jewish law books, which were felt to be in short supply or lacking altogether. Thus, for example, in 1493 the brothers David and Samuel Nahmias from Portugal, who pioneered Hebrew printing in the Ottoman Empire, printed in Istanbul the Hebrew language legal treatise by Jacob ben Asher, *Arba'ah turim*. This trend continued until 1730 almost 240 years following the establishment of the first Hebrew printing house in Istanbul, by which time close to 330 books had been printed there, most of them in Hebrew. Only seven were translations, or included translations, or were original works in other Jewish languages—mainly Ladino but also Greek in Hebrew script, Judeo-

Arabic, and Judeo-Persian.<sup>8</sup> The run of each edition was relatively small and the Hebrew-language books were of use mainly to a limited number of scholars.

As time passed, community leaders and scholars became concerned about the intellectual gap between the Jewish masses and their cultural leadership. The latter realized that the knowledge of most Jews regarding the essence of Judaism and its doctrines was scant: the beliefs of the masses were based on superstitions and they followed rules by rote. Furthermore, even had they wanted to, the masses had no access even to the most basic texts and did not understand their prayers and other works that were recited in the synagogue and in study groups, because these texts were in Hebrew and Aramaic. This led several Jewish scholars to conclude that in order to bring Judaism to the Jewish masses in the western Ottoman Empire it should be done in their own language, Ladino—which males could read, as it was written in Hebrew script (Lehmann 2005, pp. 33–48).

This major initiative was launched in 1730 with the printing of *Me-’am lo’ez* (Lehmann 2010c), which is a thorough commentary on the Bible in Ladino. Culi (circa 1689–1732)<sup>9</sup> started this enterprise (which was completed later by other scholars), with the printing of the first volume, on Genesis (Lehmann 2010b). This undertaking was carried out by Jonah ben Jacob Ashkenazi (Bornstein-Makovetsky 2010), who was the preeminent Hebrew printer in Istanbul at the time: between 1710 and 1778 his press printed close to 190 out of approximately 210 books printed in Hebrew type in Istanbul. Of these, some fifty works were printed in Ladino over the course of fifty years, compared to just six during the previous 230 years (Lehmann 2005, pp. 38–51). The printing of *Me-’am lo’ez* marked the emergence of large-scale printing activity in Ladino in the western Ottoman Empire in general and in Istanbul in particular. By the late nineteenth century, printing in Ladino comprised the majority of printing activity in the Hebrew alphabet in Istanbul as well as in other centers of Hebrew printing in the western parts of the Ottoman Empire.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sections of *Me-’am lo’ez* for several other Biblical books were printed in Ladino (specifically, the entire Pentateuch, Ecclesiastes, the Book of Esther, and the Song of Songs)—some of them appearing in more than one edition. It was felt necessary to make these “basic texts” and their commentaries accessible for everyone, in order to raise the level of Judaic knowledge among the members of the Jewish community. Soon after the printing of the first part of *Me-’am lo’ez*, Abraham Assa’s translations of the Bible to Ladino started to appear (1739–1745).<sup>10</sup> (On Abraham Assa, see Yaari 1933, pp. 378–380; and Lehmann 2010a.) Assa (1710–circa 1780), who

<sup>8</sup> These books included the Pentateuch in Hebrew: one with a translation in Greek in Hebrew type (1547), benefiting the Romaniot Greek-speaking Jews, and another with Saadia Gaon’s Judeo-Arabic translation and a Judeo-Persian translation (1546), intended apparently for Jews in Arabic and Persian regions of the Middle East. The book of Job was also printed with a translation in Greek in Hebrew script (1576).

<sup>9</sup> Lehmann (2010b).

<sup>10</sup> Yaari (1967) lists nine entries translated by Assa, which were printed in Istanbul.

brought major Hebrew classics closer to the Jewish masses, was the main translator from Hebrew to Ladino during the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the entire Hebrew Bible with a parallel Ladino translation was printed again, as were several editions of the Psalms either solely in Ladino translation or in Hebrew with parallel Ladino translation.<sup>11</sup> The Haggadah was usually printed in Hebrew, though in 1823 it was printed with a Ladino commentary<sup>12</sup> and around 1932 it was printed by Sebat Matbaası in Hebrew and Ladino—in Latin transcription in both languages, however, in the wake of the 1928 language reform in the Republic of Turkey (Yaari 1967, p. 227, no. 746).

Jewish law was another topic that was made more accessible to the Jewish masses thanks to publications in Ladino. Thus, some fifteen books on Jewish law were printed in Ladino in Istanbul, starting as early as 1733 with a compilation of regulations and laws by Assa (Yaari 1967, p. 180, no. 343). Other compilations included regulations relating to the Sabbath (1748) (Yaari 1967, p. 205, no. 418) and selections from the important code of Jewish law, the *Shulḥan 'arukh*, selected and translated by Assa (1749) (Yaari 1967, p. 206, no. 421), who also translated books of homiletic interpretation (Midrash). Another popular topic was ethics (*musar*), of which some ten books were printed in Ladino, including major ethical works translated from Hebrew. The first prayer books with Ladino translation, some by Assa, were printed in the second quarter of the eighteenth century: the first one in 1739 (Yaari 1967, pp. 190–191, no. 376) and one for the High Holidays in 1768 (Yaari 1967, p. 219, no. 462).

Increasingly during the eighteenth century, stories about Jewish saints and famous persons were another category of books in Ladino. This genre was not new and a Ladino translation of a work on holy places in the Land of Israel, *Libro intitulado Yihus ha-sadiqim*, was printed in Istanbul as early as the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The Ladino titles on this topic included works about the Patriarchs (including stories in verse) and Moses, as well as Nahmanides, the Jewish Ottoman physician Moshe Hamon, and the famous mystic the Ari (Yitshak Luria Ashkenazi). While some of these books were originally written in Ladino, others were translations, like an 1895 study on Maimonides.<sup>14</sup>

Another prominent genre was Ladino poetry, with the first work, *Koplas noevas*, printed in Istanbul in 1778 (Yaari 1967, p. 223, no. 475–476). The most frequently printed books in this category were Purim poems; others included religious hymns and ethical poems for brides and mothers. By the beginning of

<sup>11</sup> This was done both by Jewish printers and, during the nineteenth century, by missionary societies, who hoped to gain access to the Jewish community by providing them with important Jewish texts, while at the same time offering Christian publications free of charge.

<sup>12</sup> According to Yaari (1967, p. 227, no. 489), it was printed by the Armenian Arapoğlu and his sons.

<sup>13</sup> Printed circa 1593 in Istanbul in the press of Doña Reyna (Yaari 1967, pp. 32, 140, 142, no. 229).

<sup>14</sup> Originally written in Hebrew by Kalman Shulman and printed in Ladino by the Armenian Saik Negogosyan (Yaari 1967, pp. 57, 248, no. 593).

the twentieth century, patriotic poetry praising the Ottoman Empire, liberty, and the homeland (*vatan*) began to appear in Ladino.<sup>15</sup> This was in line with attempts by some Jews to strengthen patriotic feelings among Ottoman Jews and broaden their knowledge about the empire and its history.

Communal leaders came to realize that in order for community members to follow communal regulations, they needed to be able to understand them. Thus, starting in 1750—when the regulations of the burial society of Izmir were printed in Istanbul—communal regulations began to be printed in Ladino (Yaari 1967, p. 207, no. 424).<sup>16</sup> This process continued during the nineteenth century, when several other books of regulations were printed in Ladino, including those of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (1875) (Yaari 1967, p. 241, no. 552), the Society for Helping the Poor (1879) (Yaari 1967, p. 242, no. 559), the Grand Rabbinat of Turkey (1903) (Yaari 1967, p. 254, no. 633), the bulletin of the National Jewish Hospital in Istanbul (1923) (Yaari 1967, p. 264, no. 706), and the regulations (in Ladino and French) of the Grand Rabbinat of the Republic of Turkey (1925) (Yaari 1967, pp. 264, 268, no. 732).

By the end of the eighteenth century, fifty-four books in Ladino had been printed in Istanbul (out of a total of 478), most of them during that century, and their percentage among publications in Hebrew type kept growing. While books in all of the aforementioned categories continued to be printed during the nineteenth century, some categories increased, as was the case with religious law (*Halakhah*), ethics, biblical commentary, lives of the sages, and poetry. New categories emerged, some of them eventually becoming prominent. Thus, several history books were printed: while the first two history titles had already been printed in the eighteenth century (these were Jewish classics translated from Hebrew<sup>17</sup>), those printed in the nineteenth century included both Ottoman and Jewish history, mostly translated from Hebrew and French.<sup>18</sup> Among the books on Ottoman history were studies on the early Ottoman kings: one that came out in 1767 (Yaari 1967, p. 218, no. 459) was originally written in Hebrew in the early seventeenth century and another, dating from 1910 (Yaari 1967, p. 258, no. 660), was written in Ladino. Other history books were on the siege of Rhodes, translated from French (1873) (Yaari 1967, p. 241, no. 548); the history of Turkey written in Ladino (1900) (Yaari 1967, p. 251, no. 611); and the reign of Abdülhamid II and the secrets of the Yıldız palace (two books, 1909) (Yaari 1967, p. 255, no. 639,

<sup>15</sup> E.g., *La Sharki Vatan Hürriyet*: Turkish with Ladino translation (Yaari 1967, p. 254, no. 638).

<sup>16</sup> Until 1838 all printing by Hebrew presses in Izmir was done in the Hebrew language (Yaari 1958, p. 113).

<sup>17</sup> *Sefer Ben Guryon hu Sefer Yosifon* (1743) and *Sefer Eldad Hadani* (1766). See Yaari (1967, p. 197, no. 93, and p. 216, no. 449, respectively).

<sup>18</sup> Among the books on Jewish history were *World Jewish History* in eleven volumes (1899–1928), which was originally written in Ladino, concluding with the Amora'im (Yaari 1967, pp. 249–250, no. 604); *The Life of the Jew according to the Talmud*, translated from Hebrew (1905) (Yaari 1967, p. 254, no. 634); and *Jewish Mothers during Biblical Times*, translated from Hebrew (1913) (Yaari 1967, p. 259, no. 668).

and p. 256, no. 649). These titles, along with biographies that appeared in the twentieth century, point to attempts by Jewish authors, translators, and printers to make Ottoman Jews more cognizant of Ottoman, world, and Jewish affairs. Among the biographies that were printed in Ladino in Istanbul was an autobiography of Alfred Dreyfus (1901) (Yaari 1967, p. 252, no. 625), the life and works of the Ottoman statesman Midhat Paşa (written by his son and translated from French, 1909) (Yaari 1967, p. 256, no. 646), and two books on Jewish journalists from Istanbul: David Fresco (the editor of *El tiempo* [The Time]) (Yaari 1967, p. 257, no. 654)<sup>19</sup> and Elia Carmona (the editor of the humorous journal, *El jugeton* [The Clown]) (Yaari 1967, p. 269, no. 738; published in 1926).

Just as several editions of Jewish communal regulations were printed in Ladino, so were some state and municipal laws and regulations. This trend started in the late nineteenth century, with publications translated from Ottoman Turkish to Ladino. These included several basic Ottoman legal documents, including the Ottoman constitution in 1877 (Yaari 1967, p. 242, no. 556), as well as ones specific to Istanbul and commercial issues.<sup>20</sup>

Attempts to modernize Ottoman Jews and acquaint them with secular subjects, following similar trends in the Ottoman Empire as a whole, resulted in scientific and scholarly topics being printed in Ladino from the mid-nineteenth century. These included dictionaries and books on language, such as works on Hebrew grammar; several dictionaries of Ladino, including a Turkish-Ladino one (1903) (Yaari 1967, p. 254, no. 632); and Ladino language study textbooks. General textbooks, mainly on arithmetic and math, were also printed. Other works relating to science included books on astronomy (1850 and 1881) (Yaari 1967, p. 237, no. 525, and p. 244, no. 567) and studies on the calendar, with appendices of calendars for multiple years (1877 and 1897) (Yaari 1967, p. 242, no. 554, and p. 248, no. 596).

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of Jewish periodicals published in Istanbul: of over eighty periodicals, more than half were in Ladino.<sup>21</sup> The first was a popular science monthly, published in 1855 by the

---

<sup>19</sup> The biography, which was published in Ladino in 1910, was originally written in Hebrew by Nahum Sokolov.

<sup>20</sup> Among these were the regulations of the municipality of Istanbul (1868) (Yaari 1967, p. 240, no. 542); the penal law (circa 1870) (Yaari 1967, p. 240, no. 544); parts of the *Dustur* (the collection of Ottoman laws) (1881) (Yaari 1967, p. 243, no. 564); the regulations of the Istanbul chamber of commerce (1882) (Yaari 1967, p. 245, no. 570); and the stamp law (1894) (Yaari 1967, p. 247, no. 588); as well as the constitution of Bulgaria in Hebrew and Ladino, translated from Russian and Bulgarian (1879) (Yaari 1967, p. 243, no. 562), possibly for the benefit of the large Sephardi community of Bulgaria

<sup>21</sup> On the role of Ladino periodicals in the modernization of Ottoman Jews see in depth: Stein (2004). The first Jewish journal in the Islamic World was the Ladino weekly *La buena esperanza* printed in 1842 in Izmir (Stein 2004, p. 4). On Ladino periodicals in the Ottoman Empire see also Borovaya (2010). For periodicals published in Istanbul to the present, see Simon (2010a, pp. 67–74): most periodicals were in Ladino, followed by Turkish (mostly in the twentieth century) and French; only one was solely in Hebrew, *ha-Mevašer*.

Anglican Mission, *El manadero* (Yaari 1967, p. 237, no. 237). However, after 1860 (starting with *El telegrafo*) all were published by Jews. Periodicals aiming to instruct, modernize, and entertain their readers became a very influential genre. Their frequency ranged between one to three times weekly to monthly, and their editorial content was devoted to politics, literature, and science—though some also described themselves as humorous or “for the whole family.” Some periodicals were short lived, whereas others were published over periods of several decades. Examples of the latter include *El telegrafo* (1860–1914) (Yaari 1967, p. 238, no. 531; Stein 2004, pp. 67–68, 79) and *El tiempo* (1872–1930) (Yaari 1967, p. 240, no. 545; Stein 2004), both also serving as printing houses for Ladino books.<sup>22</sup> By the early twentieth century, a Zionist periodical was also published in Ladino and Hebrew: *El Judeo* (1910–1924) (Yaari 1967, pp. 256–257, no. 653). Following the language reform in the Republic of Turkey and the adoption of the Latin script for Turkish (1928), some Ladino periodicals started to have sections printed in Latin type and later omitted Hebrew type altogether.<sup>23</sup> This was due to changes in educational policy in Turkey, with its emphasis on Turkification as part of nation building, resulting in growing numbers of Jews becoming fluent in Turkish and familiar with Latin script at the expense of Hebrew script, though many still conversed in Ladino among themselves (Rodrigue 2010). Altogether, some forty-five periodicals in Ladino (sometimes in combination with French, Hebrew, and later with Turkish) appeared in Istanbul, about one third of them after 1940.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a new genre emerged among the Ladino publications: the novel, both original and translated (mainly from French). Thus, between 1880 and 1940, sixty original Ladino novels were published and forty-one appeared in translation. It is sometimes difficult to tell what the original foreign title was, due to the absence of the author’s name in the work, where it was stated merely that the book was a translation. It is possible that some “translators” were in fact adapters or even the actual authors, who hoped that their books—labeled as translations of famous foreign works—would gain popularity and prestige. Similarly, it is possible that some of the “original” novels were in fact translations and adaptations.<sup>24</sup> During these sixty years, belles lettres became the majority of books printed in Hebrew type in Istanbul (approximately 100 out of some 160 titles).<sup>25</sup> Most of these were love and adventure stories, accessible not only to men but also to women, and very

<sup>22</sup> On Ladino periodicals serving as printing houses between 1873 and 1926, see Yaari (1967, p. 57): *El telegrafo* (12 books published), *El tiempo* (7 books), *El nasyonal* (4 books), *El Judeo* (7 books), and *El Jugeton* (13 books).

<sup>23</sup> Examples include *La boz del Oriente* (1931–1939) and *La tienda di Yaakov* [Ohel Yaakov] (1932–1933). See Yaari (1967, p. 270, nos. 745 and 747).

<sup>24</sup> These practices were not unique to publications in Ladino, but were common also among Turkish books.

<sup>25</sup> Of 189 Ladino titles printed in this period, twenty-eight were journal titles.

likely geared toward them. To make these publications even more affordable, printers often printed and sold them in installments, at times in as many as thirty parts.<sup>26</sup> Another development characteristic of this genre was that several printing houses established special series, such as “the family library,” “the library of fine novels,” “the garden of stories,” and “the garden of novels.”

During the nineteenth century, some missionary societies realized the potential of printing in Ladino to gain access into the Jewish community and they took advantage of this tool in order to advance their cause. To this end, the missionaries had their own printing houses, which seldom printed in the Hebrew language. Their publications were usually distributed free of charge, and included Jewish and Christian texts. Thus, in addition to translations of Biblical books, mainly the Pentateuch and the Psalms, as well as books on Jewish history, they published the New Testament or parts of it, Protestant prayer books, catechisms, and books about Jesus, all in Ladino. Eventually, several Hebrew printers used missionary printing houses, as well as Armenian and Greek ones, to print their own books, due to the decrease in the number of printing houses owned by Jews.<sup>27</sup> This trend began in 1823, when Isaac ben Abraham Castro printed books in Ladino “in the palace of the English” (which belonged to Anglican missionaries), opposing Christianity and missionary activity (Yaari 1967, p. 54).<sup>28</sup>

The language reform in Turkey (1928) brought about changes in the field of Jewish printing. With growing restrictions on communal-religious schools, Turkish became prominent in the decreasing number of Jewish schools, and an increasing number of Jewish children studied in Turkish state schools. Thus, Jews gradually became much more comfortable with Latin script than with Hebrew script, and Turkish became their main language. In addition, most Ladino writers also started to use the Latin alphabet (Rodrigue 2010; Stein 2004, p. 210). As a result of these developments, a gradual increase in Ladino publications in Latin type took place at the expense of Hebrew type. This was followed by a gradual move to publish in Turkish, as in the case of periodicals which were published at first in Ladino, then in Ladino and Turkish, and then mainly in Turkish with some Ladino (e.g., *Şalom*) (Tarabulus 1993; Erbahar 2010).

---

<sup>26</sup> This practice was also common in other genres.

<sup>27</sup> See Yaari (1967, p. 57), who lists ten Christian presses in Istanbul printing Ladino books in Hebrew script: Alfred B. Churchill (from 1854 printing books for the Anglican mission), A. H. Boyajian (Armenian, 1872–1888), Artin Minasyan (Armenian, 1868), Antuin Maksoris i Variyos Filipides (Greek, 1889), Karabit Biberyan (Armenian, 1895–1897; printer of novels, mostly translated from French), Saik Negogosyan (Armenian, 1895; printer of the life of Maimonides), Bizantis di Polikritis (Greek, 1897–1898; printer of novels translated from French), Al. Nomismatides (Greek, 1895–1925; printer of religious and secular books), Aristobulus (Greek, 1899; printer of fiction translated from French), and Tomaides (Greek, 1910; printer of a novel).

<sup>28</sup> On books against the mission see Yaari (1967, p. 236, nos. 520–521).

All in all, between 1493 and 1940, approximately 260 books and thirty periodicals<sup>29</sup> were printed in Ladino in Istanbul (most of them printed after 1730), out of a total of 758 publications in Hebrew type. As we have noted, early Ladino publications focused on religion: Biblical commentary and texts, religious law, ethics, and prayer books. These topics continued in the nineteenth century, but the majority of publications in the later period were belles lettres, history and biography, sciences, and communal and state laws and regulations. Of special social and cultural importance since the second half of the nineteenth century were Ladino periodicals, which also served as publishers of books in Ladino. Having initially aimed to “Judaize” the Jews, the objective of Ladino publishing in the later period was to modernize and entertain them, while at the same time attempting to spread Judaic knowledge.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*EJIW* *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010).

## SOURCES

- Ben Naeh, Yaron (2001). “Hebrew Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire,” in Gad Nasi (editor), *Jewish Journalism and Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2001), pp. 35–82.
- Bornstein-Makovetsky, Leah (2010). “Ashkenazi, Jonah ben Jacob,” *EJIW*, vol. 4, pp. 271–272.
- Borovaya, Olga (2010). “Journalism. 2. Ottoman Empire,” *EJIW*, vol. 2, pp. 39–41.
- Erbahar, Aksel (2010). “Şalom (Shalom), Istanbul,” *EJIW*, vol. 4, pp. 218–219.
- Lehmann, Matthias (2005). *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Lehmann, Matthias (2010a). “Assa, Abraham Ben Isaac,” *EJIW*, vol. 1, pp. 277–278.
- Lehmann, Matthias (2010b). “Culi (Ḥlli), Jacob ben Me’ir,” *EJIW*, vol. 1, p. 693.
- Lehmann, Matthias (2010c). “Me’am Lo’ez,” *EJIW*, vol. 3, pp. 373–375.
- Posner, Raphael; Ta-Shema, Israel (editors) (1975). *The Hebrew Book*. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1975.
- Rodrigue, Aron (2010). “Turkicization of Jewish Education,” *EJIW*, vol. 2, p. 125.
- Simon, Rachel (2000). “Between the Family and the Outside World: Jewish Girls in the Modern Middle East and North Africa,” *Jewish Social Studies* 7:1 (Fall 2000): 81–108.
- Simon, Rachel (2010a). “Jewish Journals in the Islamic World,” *EJIW*, vol. 5, pp. 77–80.
- Simon, Rachel (2010b). “Printing and Printers,” *EJIW*, vol. 3, pp. 100–112.
- Stein, Sarah Abrevaya (2004). *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Tarabulus, Nana (1993). “‘Shalom’—the Only Jewish Newspaper in Turkey Today” [in Hebrew], *Ḳeshet* 13 (1993): 53–56.

<sup>29</sup> Between 1855 and the early twenty-first century, some forty-five Ladino periodicals were published in Istanbul. See Simon (2010a, pp. 67–74).

- Vinograd, Yesha'yahu (1995). *Otsar ha-sefer ha-'Ivri*. Jerusalem, 1993–1995.
- Yaari, Abraham (1933). “Liḳuṭim bibliografīyim,” *Ḳiryat sefer* 10:3 (Tishre 694 [1933]): 372–380.
- Yaari, Abraham (1958). “ha-Defus ha-'Ivri be-Izmir” [Hebrew Printing in Izmir], *Areshet* 1 (1958): 97–222.
- Yaari, Abraham, (1967). *ha-Defus ha-'Ivri be-Ḳushṭa [Hebrew Printing in Constantinople: Its History and Bibliography]*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967.