

WHAT'S IN A COVER?

by

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Every human action, no matter how insignificant, is a reflection of the human condition and of the heritage, the glory and the burden of civilization. In principle, therefore, just as for Calvino's Signor Palomar, it would be sufficient for any keen observer to examine in detail any material remnant of any past or present life to understand everything that can possibly be understood about the world. It is just a matter of choosing one particular starting point to unravel the tangled skein of human existence. So, why not a cover?

From Iraq to New Zealand and to Canada

My friend and colleague, Professor Ghazi Karim, in addition to his world renown in the fields of combustion and alternative energy sources, is an avid collector of Middle Eastern stamps, with special attention to the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Equally, or even more, important than the stamps themselves are the envelopes or "covers" to which they are affixed. While on a trip to New Zealand, Professor Karim came across and purchased the cover shown in Figure 1. The first line is clearly in Arabic, but it was the second line that prompted him to ask me whether it was in Hebrew. At first sight, I was not able to read this line and rashly concluded that it was not Hebrew but some other language or script. On further inspection, however, and vaguely remembering something that I had once read, I decided to investigate whether this might be an alternative Hebrew script, similar to the so-called "Rashi script" of the Middle Ages.

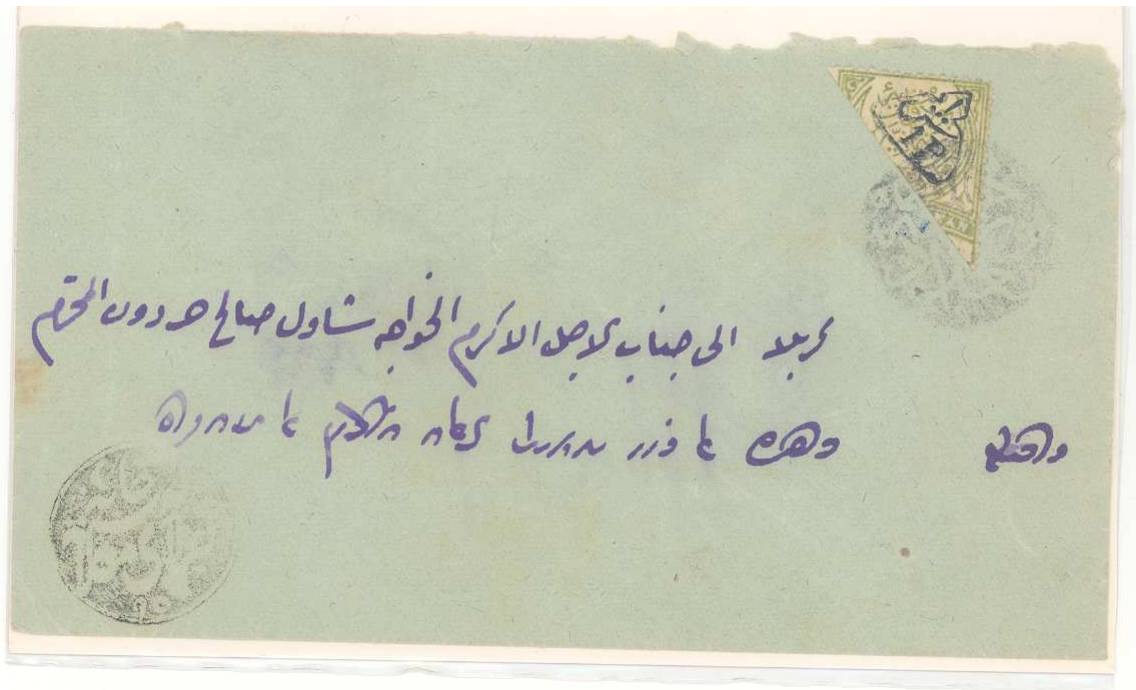


Figure 1: The Karbala cover

A first look at the cover

Postage stamps were introduced in Turkey and throughout the Ottoman Empire in 1863. Stamps issued by the Ottoman authorities up to the fall of the empire (at the end of the Great War and, officially, with the Treaty of Sevres in 1920) constitute a philatelic subspecialty of great historical interest. For us, however, the main objective is to try to place the origin and date of the triangular-shaped stamp appearing at the upper right corner of the envelope. This triangular shape arises from a common practice in those days consisting of bisecting a stamp of a given face value to produce two stamps of half that value. The monetary unit throughout the Ottoman Empire was the piastre (also known as kurush). A piastre was divided into 40 paras. Figure 1a shows a stamp recently sold in an internet auction (see <http://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/turkey-iraq-1890-bisected-stamp-piece-129900952>). It is described as a “Turkey in Iraq 1890 bisected stamp on piece, Bagdad”.



Figure 1a: Bisected Ottoman stamp, Iraq 1890

The value of the stamp is clearly indicated by an overprint stating the value in Turkish (1 kurush) in Arabic characters and in Roman characters P1. In the case of our envelope, we also find the same inscriptions, with some minor differences. Only an expert, however, could date our stamp with greater precision, but the designs became more elaborate at the beginning of the twentieth century, so that we may assume that our stamp is most probably part of the so-called Empire issue lasting between 1876 and 1892.

Proceeding now to the handwriting, the first line is quite clearly written and can be read by anyone familiar with the standard Arabic script. It reads (from right to left, of course) as follows:

كربلا الى جناب لاجل الاكرم الخواج شاول صالح حردون المحترم

The phonetic transliteration is:

Karbala ila janab liajil al-akram al-khawaj Shaul Salih Hardoon al-muhtaram

The first word clearly identifies the city of destination: Karbala. This city was the site of a historic battle that took place in the year 680. It is one of the holiest cities for Shia Muslims who commemorate yearly the death of Imam Hussein son of Ali. The words following the name of the city mean roughly: To His Excellency, to the most noble sir Shaul Salih Hardoon the honourable. All these titles show extreme respect rendered to an important citizen. These titles, however, as well as the proper names and, most especially, the Turkish word “khawaj” are an indication that the addressee is not an Arab. The names Saul and Saleh are, indeed, typical first names used by Iraqi Jews and the family name Hardoon is that of a distinguished and once wealthy Iraqi Jewish family. Fortunately, the Hardoon family, one of whose most illustrious members was Silas Hardoon (who lived in Shanghai during the period 1874-1931), keeps a well-documented website. Through the courtesy of Mr. David Hardoon, I was able to obtain a photograph (Figure 1b), showing four members of the family, taken probably at the turn of the 20th century in Iraq. It shows, from left to right, Shaul, Saleh and Abraham Hardoon. The boy on the bicycle is Ezra Hardoon.



Figure 1b: Members of the Hardoon family in Iraq

The second line of writing is most interesting, as it is written in a now uncommon Hebrew script. Before proceeding to its detailed reading, we will indulge in a tour of various Hebrew scripts and, more particularly, their use in historical documents written in foreign languages.

Foreign languages in Hebrew script

The modern Hebrew script is almost identical to that of the Dead Sea scrolls, some of which date back to the second century BC. Figure 2 shows the opening lines of the scroll of the Book of Isaiah, as found in the caves of Qumran, and Figure 3 shows the same paragraph in a standard present-day edition of the Masoretic text. Apart from a few embellishments introduced by the printing press, the two scripts can be seen to be identical.



Figure 2: The opening of the Isaiah scroll

חזון ישעיהו בן-אמוץ אשר חזה על-יהודה וירושלם בימי עזיהו
ותם אחז יחזקיהו מלכי יהודה : שמעו שמים והאזיני ארץ
כי ה' דבר בנים גדלתי ורוממתי והם פשעו בי : ידע שור קנהו
וחמור אבוס בעליו ישראל לא ידע עמי לא התבונן

Figure 3: The modern text of the same passage

It is incidentally interesting to note that this is not the most ancient of Hebrew scripts. According to tradition, this “Assyrian” or “square” script was adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian exile (sixth century BC) and used subsequently for all civil and religious documents down to the present day. Between the years -1000 and -600 (approximately) the dominant power in Mesopotamia was the so-called Neo-Assyrian Empire. Assyrian (and then Aramaic) was the official language. The main city, Nineveh, fell to the Chaldeans (Babylonians) in -612, only to succumb to the Persians half a century later. The Assyrians were expansionist and constituted a veritable Middle-Eastern empire. The Northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in -720. Its inhabitants were dispersed

and became known as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The Hebrew Bible contains a wealth of detail about this period, with alliances in the international stage then dominated by Mesopotamia to the East and Egypt to the West. After the fall of Nineveh, Babylonia became the new capital. In -586, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Southern kingdom of Judah, destroyed Solomon's temple and deported the Jews (the remaining two and a half tribes) to Babylonia. The Babylonian exile had a foundational effect on Judaism. The institution of the synagogue probably started there. Some researchers think that Judaism as we know it today can be traced back to this period. With the fall of Babylonia to the Persians, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. So, technically, the Babylonian exile lasted only about 70 years. But in fact the return took place in at least two stages (the second one under the leadership of Ezra the scribe) and was never complete. History repeats itself.

An interesting recurrent phenomenon has been that, while living in the context of dominant civilizations, whose languages were widely used, the Jews tended to write these "foreign" languages using the Hebrew script. Thus, when the Aramaic language, also called Chaldean, was adopted for some parts of the Hebrew bible (such as the Books of Ezra, Daniel and Nehemiah) and, later, for the Babylonian Talmud, the Zohar and other important religious texts, it was written phonetically using Hebrew characters.

More interesting for us is the fact that during the glorious period of the Islamic caliphates of Baghdad and Granada and, in fact, throughout the Muslim world, Jewish philosophers, such as Saadya Gaon bin Yusuf al Fayoumi and Maimonides, wrote their main works in Arabic using Hebrew characters, a device that came to be known as Judeo-Arabic. Muhammad died in the year 632 leaving no male heirs. During the next 30 years four caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali), all related to Muhammad (the first three were his fathers in law, the last his cousin and son in law) consolidated and extended the Muslim empire. The capital was still Medina. At the death (by assassination) of Ali (the first Imam of the Shia sect) the caliphate passed to a member of the Umayyad clan (to which Uthman belonged) named Muawiya. He had been the governor of Syria, and so it was natural that he moved the capital to Damascus and inaugurated the Umayyad dynasty, which lasted from 661 to 750. It was during this period that the empire was extended farther into North Africa and Spain. A rebellion took place in 750 and all the members of the Umayyad dynasty were murdered, with the exception of Abd al-Rahman, who escaped to Spain and founded there the dynasty of the Spanish Umayyads. Elsewhere, the Muslim empire was ruled by the new dynasty of the Abbasids (so called because they had rebelled in the name of a descendant of Abbas, an uncle of Muhammad's). The Abbasids moved the capital to the Mesopotamia, where they founded the city of Baghdad. This name is not Arabic but Persian (i.e., Indo-European: think of the Latin Bac-data, namely, given by Bac where, for example, Bog = God in Russian), an indication that this dynasty was greatly influenced by non-Arab Muslims, mostly Persian. The Abbasid dynasty lasted for five centuries. The move to Baghdad took place during the reign of the second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (reigned 754-775). He was the founder

of the city in 763. Other famous Abassid caliphs were Harun al-Rashid [786-809] and al-Ma'mun [813-833]. These enlightened rulers converted Baghdad into the new Alexandria, or the new Athens. A massive translation of scientific and philosophical works from Greek, Persian, Chinese and Sanskrit was commissioned. Houses of learning and discussion between members of all religions and sects proliferated.

The discovery in the late 19th century of the Cairo Genizah, or rather the recognition of its importance, opened up a treasure trove of hundreds of thousands of documents ranging from the ninth century AD to the early 19th century. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, the Cairo Genizah documents comprised the oldest extant Hebrew manuscripts. Figure 4 shows an early copy of the beginning of a treatise by Saadya Gaon on the issue of ritual slaughter of animals. Saadya was born in Egypt in 882 in the town of Fayyum (hence his Arabic appellation). He spent part of his youth in Tiberias, where he wrote his *Agron*, the first Hebrew-Arabic dictionary. He went on to become the Gaon of the Academy of Sura in Babylonia (modern Iraq). His treatise (“The book of doctrines and beliefs” = “sefer haemunot vehadeot” = “kitab alamanat walitqadat”) is perhaps the first attempt within Judaism at reconciling religion with (Greek) philosophy. He was also the author of a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Arabic. He was an active participant of the cultural life of Baghdad, then the capital of Islam under the illustrious Abbassid caliphs. Among them al-Ma'mun, the son of the famous Harun al-Rashid of Sheherezade fame, contemporary of Charlemagne, established the Bayt al-Hikma (House of Knowledge), a kind of continuation of the great library of Alexandria. Islamic theology (Kalam and its various branches) was thriving and open dialogue could be heard between Jews, Christians, Moslems, Zoroastrians, Manichaeans, and atheists. There were also the Karaites, who constituted an important Jewish sect that denied the validity of the Rabbinic (oral) tradition and adhered to the strict letter of the Torah only. Saadya was a great opponent of karaism, and spent much of his life fighting it. Some Karaites exist to this day. Saadya died in Baghdad in the year 942. The first thing that strikes us looking at this manuscript is that it is written in Hebrew script. Saadya's name is written in the third line (“lerabenu Saadya Gaon z'l”) of the first page (namely, the page to the right). The next two lines are particularly interesting. They spell: “Nasakhahu kitab alafahu ras almatibah alfayyumi...” This is Arabic for: “translated the book written by the head of the Matibah, alfayyumi...” The word “matibah” is Aramaic for the Hebrew “yeshiva”, namely, a house of higher learning. There are some Hebrew elements, to be sure. The second line, for example, contains the title of the work (“shekhitah”), the Hebrew word for slaughter of animals. The first line of the second page (namely, the page to the left) contains a quote from Leviticus 11:3 (“...gerah babehemah otah tokhelu”, the famous cornerstone of kashrut). But the rest is written in Arabic using Hebrew characters, a common device used by Jews many times in their history when coming in contact with other cultures, as already remarked. Notice also the invocation on the very first line (“beshem rahmana natkhil”), reminiscent of the Moslem counterpart (“bismillah arrahmani-rrahimi”). This treatise, as it deals with religious matters, was written by Saadya originally in Hebrew and then translated into Judeo-Arabic. But Saadya's main philosophical work was written originally in Judeo-Arabic.

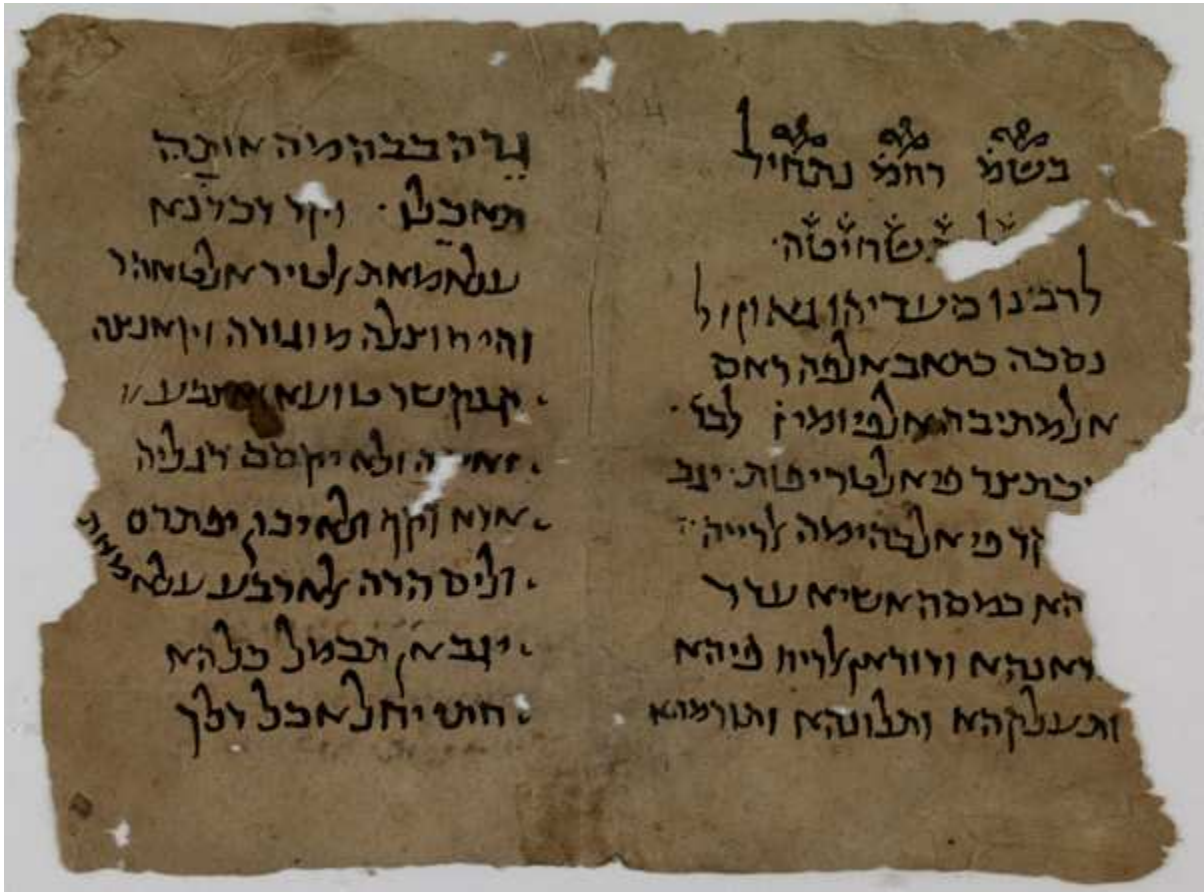


Figure 4: A treatise by Saadya translated into Judeo-Arabic

A less common, but equally striking, device was the counterpart of Judeo-Arabic, namely, the writing of Hebrew in Arabic characters. Some Karaite manuscripts were found in which the Pentateuch is written in Arabic letters. Figure 5 shows a page of a Karaite bible. It is a passage from the book of Numbers (Bamidbar), chapter 14, verses 30-33. It is placed side by side with a modern Hebrew version. Notice some extra signs under some of the Arabic letters, probably to convey some differences (just like in Judeo-Arabic dots are placed over some Hebrew letters to convey Arabic sounds that don't exist in Hebrew).

בן-יפנה ויהושע בן-נון:
 וטפכם אשר אמרתם לבז
 יהיה והביאתי אתם וידעו
 את הארץ אשר מאסתם
 בה: ופגריכם אתם יפלו
 במדבר הזה: ובניכם יהיו
 רעים במדבר ארבעים שנה
 ונשאו את-זנותיכם

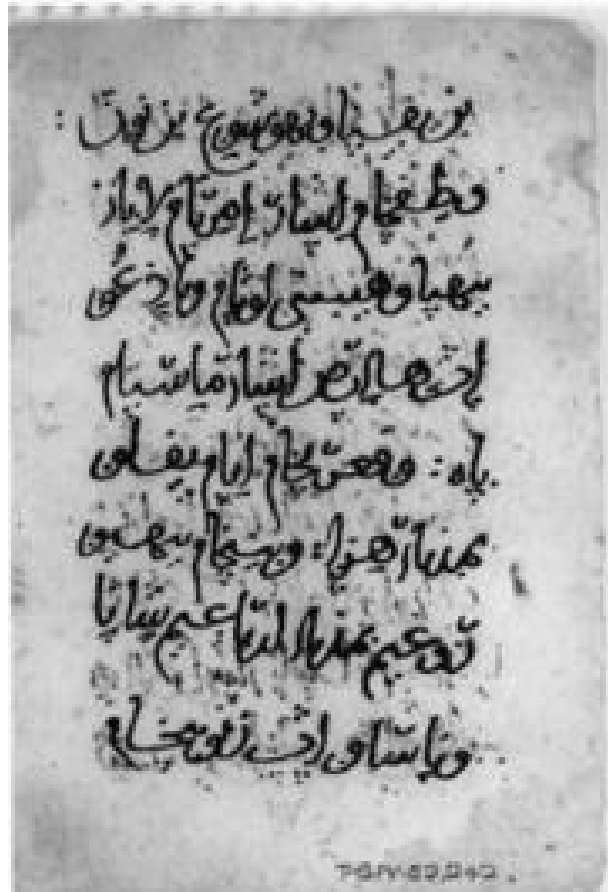
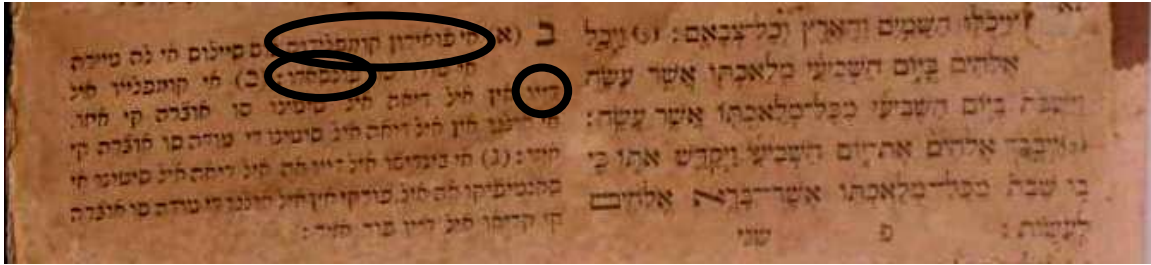


Figure 5: Hebrew in Arabic characters

Both Medieval German and Medieval Spanish were written by Jews in Hebrew characters, the first giving rise to the Yiddish language (a mixture of German, Hebrew and Slavic languages) and the second to Judeo-EspaZol (or Ladino). After the decree of expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in 1492, the Spanish Jews carried this language to faraway places, such as Turkey, where they spoke and wrote Judeo-EspaZol until very recently. Figure 6 shows a page from Genesis of a Ladino bible printed in Turkey in the late 19th century. It was for sale on e-Bay a few months ago. It was probably sold for a couple hundred dollars. The right column is the original Hebrew and the left column is Spanish written in Hebrew characters. If you happen to know Spanish and if you are familiar with the Hebrew letters, you can read this quite well. To provide a meaningful sample, we compare this version with the Ladino version (but in Roman characters) of the Bible of Ferrara (1553), reproduced in the lower part of the figure. The only difference between this version and the Ferrara one is the use of “atemaron” instead of “fueron cumplidos” (twice). The word atemar is an Arabism, apparently. It comes from the Arabic (and also Hebrew) root “Tamma = he completed or was completed”. Notice the word “fonsado” which is now obsolete but still appears in the dictionaries (“army”). Notice that Ladino uses Dio instead of Dios (to avoid the possible plural implication).



2 [1] Y atemaronse los cielos y la tierra, y todo se fonsado [2] Y atemo el Dio en el dia el seteno su obra que hizo, y holgo enel dia el seteno de toda su obra que hizo. [3] Y bendixo el Dio a dia el seteno y santifico a el que enel holgo de toda su obra que crio el Dio para hazer.

Figure 6: A passage of Genesis in Ladino

A small detail to be pointed out is the use of the so-called “Rashi” script in Ladino works. This is a misnomer for a semi-cursive script introduced in Hebrew in the 15th century (Rashi was a Bible commentator who lived in Southern France in the 11th century, and whose works are typically printed in this script, unknown to him). This script differs from the Assyrian script in a number of characters, but it is still quite easily recognizable for anyone familiar with the standard Assyrian script.

Cursive Hebrew scripts

The date and place of the emergence of the earliest cursive Hebrew scripts is a topic of specialized research. The one used presently is based on that used by German Jews in the 19th century, but many other versions circulated in different regions since the early Middle Ages. The table exhibited in Figure 7 is taken from the Jewish Encyclopedia (1901-1906 edition). It shows a variety of cursive scripts, some of them radically different from others. It is this table that allowed us to decipher the second line of the Karbala cover. The most useful columns were, not surprisingly, those labeled as “Eastern forms”. Comprehensive as this table is in its spatial and temporal scopes, it is certainly not exhaustive. One glaring omission is the Solitreo¹ script, prevalent among Ladino users, which may be considered as the cursive form of the Rashi script. We will, therefore, explore both the usefulness and potential limitations of Figure 7 by using it to decipher a text of whose meaning we have independent knowledge. Figure 8 shows a Ladino translation of a Jewish Festival Prayer Book written in Oriental cursive hand in the 18th century. The original is at the New York Public Library, but we obtained this

¹ The term Solitreo can, however, be applied to any of the cursive scripts.

image from the following website: www.fathom.com/course/72810016/2_01.htm. The characters do not correspond exactly to any of the columns listed in Figure 7. Nevertheless, the table is very helpful in identifying certain crucial letters. Thus, the letters “bet”, “dalet”, “he”, “vav”, “yod”, “lamed”, “mem”, “nun”, “pe”, “kof”, “resh”, “shin” and “tav” are recognizable from various entries in columns 2 to 5. The letter “bet” is used for both the sound “B” and “V”, in which case a dot is placed on top. At the end of some words, the combination “dalet-he” is joined into a single composite symbol. Some letters (such as “ayin”) are not used in the Spanish to Hebrew-character transliteration, since there is no need for such a sound in Spanish. There is, however, one instance of use of this letter in the second word (always starting from the right) of the very first line. This is in fact the Hebrew word “amidah” (namely: “standing”), which is the name of a collection of daily prayers recited while standing. In this isolated instance, the initial “ayin” is clearly discernible. The remainder of the first line does not pertain to the prayer, but is the running title: “Amidah de Rosh Hashanah y Kippur”. The second line starts in the middle of a sentence (from the previous page). The whole document reads as follows, when written in Spanish spelling (but keeping the old spellings, such as “muestra” for “nuestra”):

“... siervo y ordinacion de candela a hijo
de ISHAI tu untado de prisa en nuestros
dias. Y por estos justos veran y
se alegraran y derecheros se agozaran y
buenos con cantar se agozaran y la tortura
cierra su boca y la malicia toda ella
como el fumo se atemara, que haras
pasar podestate de sobervias de la
tierra. Y enreinaras tu H’ nuestro
Dio de prisa sobre todas tus hechas en monte
de SION morada de tu honra y en Yerushalaim
ciudad de tu santuario como esta escrito
en palabras de tu santidad. Enreinará
H’ para siempre tu Dio de ZION para
gerenancio y gerenancio. Alabad a H’.
Santo tu y temeroso tu nombre y non
Dio aparte de ti como esta escrito. Y ...”

CURSIVE WRITING.

	EASTERN FORMS.								WESTERN FORMS.					
	Babylonian, 7th cent. ?	Egypt 12th cent.	Constantinople, 1506.	10th century.	Spanish, 1480.	Spanish, 10th cent.	Provençal, 10th cent.	Italian, 10th cent.	Greek, 1375.	Italian, 1461.	Italian, 10th cent.	German, 10th cent.	[German], 1515.	German, 1900.
א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א
ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב
ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג
ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד
ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה
ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו
ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז
ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח
ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט
י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י
כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ
ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל
מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ
נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ
ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס
ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע
פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ
צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ
ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק
ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר
ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש
ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת
col.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Figure 7: Hebrew cursive scripts

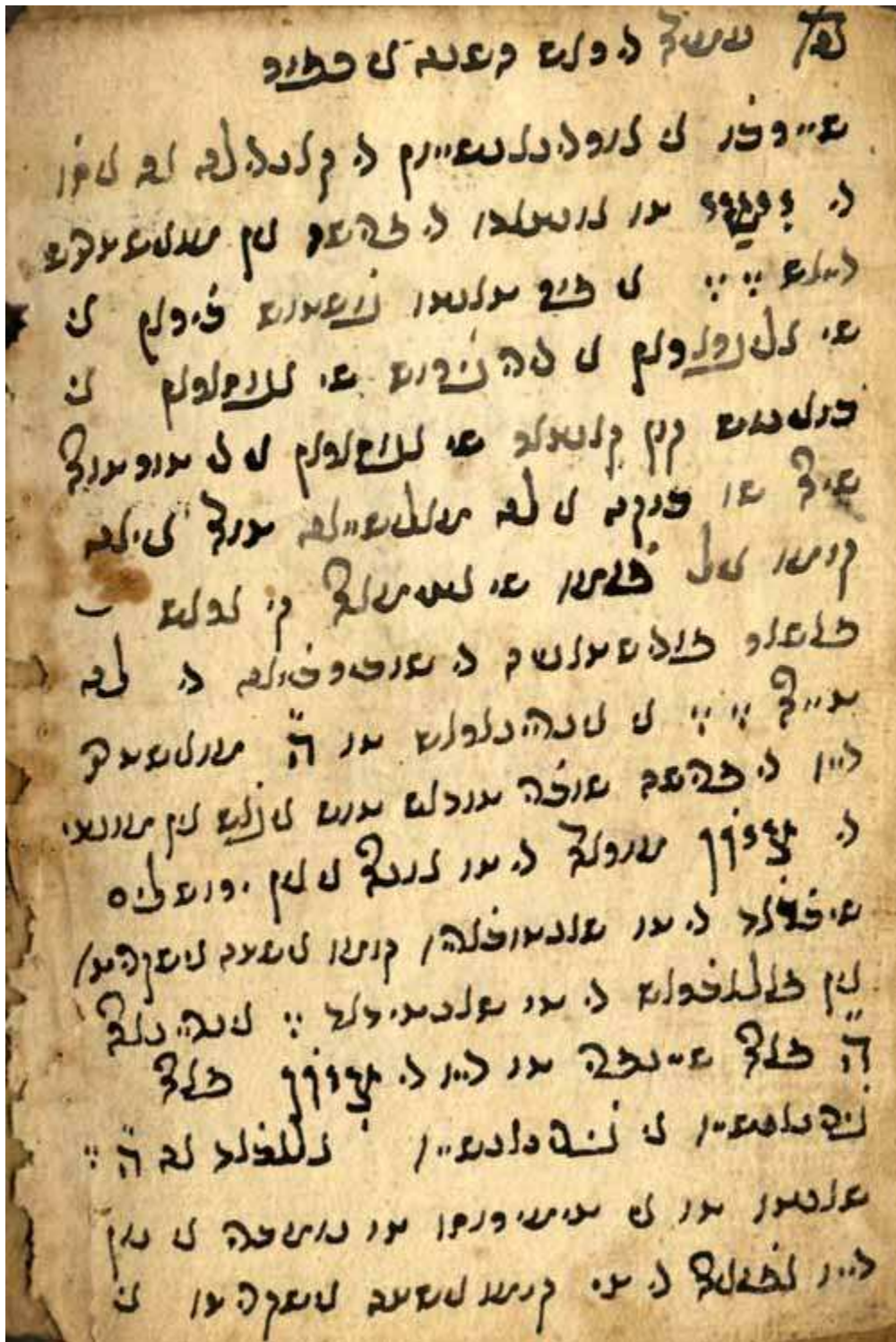


Figure 8: Ladino prayer book written in Oriental cursive

This corresponds word by word with the prayer as it is recited today. As already noted in a previous example, the verb “atemar” (taken from a Semitic root) is used here too. Apart from a few deviations in spelling, this text (written in Medieval Spanish) can be understood by any modern Spanish speaker. The writing was deciphered almost entirely

with the help of the table of Figure 7. Naturally, the fact that this is a common prayer was of great help, and this is precisely the reason of our interest in this passage.

Another interesting document is the 18th century *Cantar de las Flores*, a traditional Sephardic Jewish “copla” written in Ladino. It is a song in which various flowers have a verbal dispute about their preferred status in praising God. Figure 9 shows a fragment of a manuscript. The first two lines read:

Alabar quiero a Dios ‘ que es grande
de loores ‘ que crió para los hombres ‘

קאנטאר די לאס פלוריס

אראבאר ק"ו אה ליום קי אים נבאנע
די גולדונס קי קבאלו פארט לום אונטערס
שענעלם שאנעלם די פלונס לי מורלאס סון
די פרינעס אין קולונס אין אין גולונס מעבר
מורלאס לאס עיבונס איל אלשימקל נועי מעבר
מורו אים די אלזבלק אה אלל מי צונע שולטיס

אכונטארונסין לאס פלונס לואנע אה
ליום אה אונע קי לאס
קבאלו מאל אינעוואס לינדלס סין פאלטע אין
געניש דיסין בכוכ און איליאס קוטו דיסין
אין אה לוע אס דיסין קלע אונע נואט
עיבונ קי עי מעבר מורו אים די אלזבלק
אה אלל מי צונע שולטיס

סאלטו אה נוסק לי דיכוי מורלאס קי קבאלו
און לארו אה עי עי מוקק אלזבלק

ריססונדיין אה אלזבלק קוטו עי אה
לארס קי די סו צונע לי עי עיקר
קינא עי קימטאלים אה עי קימטין אכונט
קוטו נילום די שיעאל קוטו אלל גיסאלו סין סאל
סין אה נוסק סון עי מעבר מורו אים די אלזבלק
אה אלל מי צונע שולטיס

לך אסטינ קימו קאנעאל אה אונע קאנעיק
באלאק אה עי מוקק קי סוי נוסק די
כינעאל עי אה עי אונע קימטין קאבילינעס אין
לאס נאלאק אה לי עי קולונ אים עוי בולויש
קימי גיסטאלין קון עי סוכי מורו אים די
אלזבלק אה אלל מי צונע שולטיס

אחי אכעל איל אלליאס טין קון סו בלונעאלע
אלעק אה עי מוקק אלזבלק עיקר אין
עי עי פאלטע עי קולענו קולענו די דינע
עי קולונ די אונע לי פאלטע קולענו איל סול
סאל סאל לאס באלאסיס די עי סוכי מורו
אים די אלזבלק אה אלל מי צונע שולטיס

עזר נעלה טעק נעסקו ביז טוי צב אום
עעלג אין אלזבלק אכענוי
בעינס עי עיקר ויענע מי פיער טוכן סוק
צב אל מי בעל כן עטק נעטק לוחי פקע אה

We are now ready to return to the Iraqi cover.

Deciphering the second line in the cover

After this adventure through various Hebrew scripts, the second line is ready to be read. It turns out to be somewhat disappointing in the sense that it is essentially a repetition of the first line. On the other hand, considering the puzzling situation at the beginning of this trip, a sense of satisfaction is amply justified. In modern Hebrew characters, the transliteration of the second line is:

כרבלא כרבלה(?) אל כ" שאול צאלה חדרון אל מחתרים

Reading from right to left, the first word (on the margin) clearly reads Karbala. The next word seems to be a repetition of the city name but with a somewhat different spelling. Or it may be that I am mistaken and it is a different word altogether. Then follows the word "el", meaning "to" and corresponding exactly to the Arabic "ila". The next word seems to be the letter kaf followed by a double prime, a common abbreviation of the word "kvod" ("the honour of"). The name Shaul is clearly spelled, followed by the name "Saleh", although the spelling here appears to use the letter Tsadi (corresponding to the Arabic Sad) rather than the Hebrew Sameh. The family name Haroon seems to have been transposed to "Hadroon", where a certain hesitation and self-correction on the part of the writer are clearly discernible. Finally, we have the combination "al muhtaram", which is a direct transliteration of the respectful address ("the honourable").

This ends our journey.