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# Language of the Sephardim in Anglo-America

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## *Introduction*

At the end of the fifteenth century, when the Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, Castilian was still in the formative process that would eventually crystallize in its modern configuration. It was that language, with its irregularities of pronunciation and spelling, some of its archaic grammatical forms and structures, which was transported into the Diaspora. Subsequent changes occurred in the Spanish of the Sephardim, depending in part on their geographic proximity to Spain, as in North Africa and Holland or the Ottoman Empire, but the fundamental traits remained static, and innovations generally came from the languages to which each community was exposed.

When the first twenty-three Jewish arrivals to the so-called New World reached New Amsterdam in 1654, the Spanish or Portuguese they spoke was not unlike that spoken in the Iberian Peninsula. Their ancestors had taken refuge in the Netherlands at the time of the expulsion and subsequently. The frequent contact with Spain in particular, to which many traveled under Hispanic and Portuguese names, although some assumed their Jewish names and maintained a kind of dual identity, helped to keep them abreast of linguistic changes and to maintain a highly literary form of expression. The playwright Miguel (de) Barrios, also known as Daniel Levi and as a combination of both names, serves as a good example. Travelers pursued commercial enterprises and often served in diplomatic missions. A very important factor is that they had access to peninsular publications. That these Jews, first in Antwerp, then in Amsterdam, read Spanish literature in the original is attested to by the fact that some of them cultivated the same genres and had their works published locally. These were read not only in the Diaspora but in Spain as well.

The first Jewish immigrants to North America, as is well known, settled, after a harrowing voyage and considerable difficult negotiations with Peter Stuyvesant, in what is now New York City and, shortly thereafter, in the thriving commercial community of Newport in Rhode Island. They had been Dutch settlers in Brazil when Portugal overtook their colony. In a frustrated attempt to return to Holland, they finally landed in another Dutch colony. These people, educated and hard-working, were backed by rich merchants in the motherland. They assimilated quickly, amassed fortunes, sponsored many philanthropic activities, gained the respect of their neighbors and, gradually, the rights of citizenship even before some of their European and Ottoman coreligionists. While most clung to their Judaism, it was naturally harder to preserve their Iberian heritage at such a great distance from its source, amid a vastly different emerging culture. As a consequence, the first streams of early settlers in the seventeenth century, while they retained their given and family names and their self-image as Sephardim, soon lost most other identifying traits, especially their language, with a very few exceptions which we can determine from their wills and tombstones. It is not of them that we shall speak in the pages which follow, but of the language brought by the larger influx of immigrants who came in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially before and after World Wars I and II.

### *Linguistic Background*

Linguistic evolution is a very slow process, as we can realize if we consider that the Romans first introduced Latin into the Peninsula in the second century B.C.E. Once conquered, the local populations, except perhaps for the Basques as far as language is concerned, were heavily influenced by the invaders, who came with advanced organizational abilities as well as a hierarchical social structure, codified laws, engineering skills for constructing roads, aqueducts, etc., and a language which became that of the church when the Romans were christianized. We should also take into account the fact that the new Romanic language emerged from the everyday Latin the soldiers spoke rather than from the more cultured written language. Thus the

early forms of speech of the peoples under Roman dominion were known as Vulgar Latin, that is, the common and colloquial language used by the populace.

Naturally, there was also some evidence of the languages which had been spoken previously in the Peninsula, such as Iberian, Celtic, and Basque. The development continued into the early centuries of the Christian era under the domination, between the fifth and eighth centuries, of the Goths, Visigoths, and Barbarians who came from the north. The presence of these hordes left relatively few traces on the language, except for a small vocabulary and some names.

It was during this period that Vulgar Latin, acquiring its own particular regional forms in the Peninsula, became known as *romance* (pron. in three syllables: *ro-man-ce*). In spite of its geographic isolation from the rest of Romanla, the Latin derivative tongue was preserved, but because of that isolation and lack of exposure to more modern Latin, it remained rather archaic and also developed peculiarities of its own in the following centuries, especially during the long Moorish invasion and the period of Reconquest.

By the eleventh century a primitive form of Spanish emerged which was a mixture of pre-Roman words, popular Latin, Gallicisms introduced by French pilgrims on their way to Santiago and the tomb of Saint James, and *romance*. This early tongue was also called *ladino*, from the Latin *latinus*. Thus, *faolar en ladino* came to signify "to speak clearly, in a straightforward manner," i.e. intelligibly. Among Jews *ambezar la Torah en lashon y en ladino* was "to learn the Pentateuch in Hebrew and in *romance*."<sup>1</sup> A speaker of medieval romance, such as a translator or interpreter, who expressed himself clearly and directly, could be known as a *ladinador* or a *ladinante*. The transitive verb *ladinar* meant "to render into medieval 'Spanish' from another language" such as Arabic. The Bible and prayers were also translated, most often by Jews, into Latin and pre-expulsion romance.<sup>2</sup>

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the regional dialectic variants took shape: Castilian in the central plains, Gallego-Portuguese on the Atlantic coast, Asturian-Leonese in the northwest, Navarro-Aragonese in the northeast, Catalan (and its variant Valencian) on the Mediterranean coast, and Andalusian in the south. The spread of Castilian loosely followed the Reconquest of the Peninsula

by the Christians against the Moors throughout the Middle Ages to the fall of the last Moorish kingdom, Granada, in 1492.

The archaic "Spanish" was characterized by many irregularities as well as phonetic instability and hesitation. While Latin continued to be used for what was considered "serious" writing in prose, poetry, viewed as a more frivolous genre and meant for entertainment, could be and was rendered in the vernacular, spoken form of the language. Except for translations of Arabic narrative prose and some politico-moral catechisms and clerico-didactic prose, it was not until the second half of the thirteenth century that *romance* prose emerged, during the reign of the scholar-king Alfonso the Wise. Its development continued throughout the fourteenth century, as it was cultivated by learned noblemen who pursued a life of letters, such as Don Juan Manuel.

Before the Jews were expelled, the transition from this medieval "Spanish" to the pre-classical form had already taken place, so that structure was fairly solidified. But classical Spanish, which reached its peak in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, would elude most of the Jews, except those near enough to have frequent contact with the living language, either through clandestine visits to Spain or through visitors from Spain. It was primarily the Sephardim of the Netherlands and North Africa who reaped the benefits of these contacts. For example, Jews from those areas adopted the use of *usted*, the polite form of 'you', derived from *vuestra merced*, in lieu of the third-person *él, ella*, commonly used by other Sephardim: 'How are you?' asked of an elderly lady, is rendered *Cómo está ella?* Those in the Mediterranean countries and the Ottoman Empire were more isolated and, therefore, more conservative. We shall have occasion to follow these two very diverse general groups into the New World, where their histories—linguistic and social—are very different from each other.

Although we must recognize that living languages are always in subtle flux, it is sufficiently accurate for our purposes to say that during the seventeenth century the transformation took place in the oral tradition, sounds became pretty well fixed regionally, and written prose reached new heights of eloquence. What remained to be standardized was the spelling, but that would not occur until the Royal

Academy of the Language was created in 1713. One of its first major undertakings was the publication of the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, 1726–1739. This was followed by *Ortografía* (“Spelling”), 1741 which reflects the changes in pronunciation, and *Gramática* (“Grammar”), 1771. The Academy then proceeded to publish certain major works in accordance with the new standards. Some minor vacillation—*s* for *x* before a consonant, for example—continued into the nineteenth century, but later editions of the Dictionary and the Grammar continued to establish norms which are followed today in almost all parts of the Spanish-speaking world.

### *The Medieval Language*

The differences in the pronunciation of typically romance words between Sephardim and speakers of modern Spanish can best be understood by an examination of the spelling of some medieval texts, always recognizing that these do not necessarily provide unquestionable evidence. Unfortunately, few original medieval Spanish manuscripts are known to exist, so that what manuscripts we do have are those of scribes of a period later than the original, where individual errors and norms can be found. If, however, we limit ourselves to frequently used words which show the same traits in many manuscripts, we can be fairly certain of their validity. We will quote several passages from works which appeared between the eleventh and late fifteenth centuries.

1. Dixo el cid, el que en buen hora nasco:  
Graçias, don abbat, e so vuestro pagado.

Dues fijas dexo niñas, e prendetlas en los braços;

.....

dellas e de mi mugier, fagades todo recabdo.<sup>3</sup>

2. Aun otro miraclo vos querría contar  
Que fizo la Gloriosa, non es de olvidar.  
Fuent perenal es ella de qui mana la mar,  
Que en sazón ninguna non çessa de manar.<sup>4</sup>

The narrator of a work introduces a couplet with the moral of the tale in some variant of “Et porque don Iohan tovo este por buen enx-



many European languages preserved the sound (Italian: Chicciotto, French: Quichotte, etc.), while English preserved the spelling (Don Quixote) and changed the sound.

The medieval silent fricative sound *sh* has been preserved by the Sephardic communities until the present time. In Anglo-America, wherever there are speakers of Judeo-Spanish, this and other archaic forms can still be heard. It is one of the most distinguishing characteristics together with the voiced africcate *g* (*dj*) as in 'general,' where modern Spanish has a written *ja, jo, ju* or *ge, gi*. From this we may hypothesize that in the archpriest of Hita's stanza 309 (see above) the word for 'Jews' was probably pronounced with its acute accent, as Sephardim still say it and the voiced *g* (*dj*) *judiós*. Equally idiosyncratic is the Judeo-Spanish voiced fricative of French *je* or the *s* of English 'measure', which also appears as a written *j* in Castilian before *a, o,* and *u* or as a *g* before *e* or *i* (i.e., *hija, ija; ajo, ajo; mujer, mujer; diriqir, dirijir*). Another sound which readily identifies the Judeo-Spanish speaker is the voiced fricative *z*, as in English 'dazer, days, these, lazy', which no longer exists in Castilian in an intervocalic position, although in some regions we may hear an *s* followed by certain consonants pronounced as a voiced consonant. Judging from old written texts, we see that *romance* distinguished between a single *s* and a double *ss* or *ç*. Words such as *passar, braços* 'arms', *naçe* 'is born', *çessar* maintain the silent *s* sound and give us *pasar, brasos, nase, sesar*. On the other hand, words written with a single *s* or *r*, which are now pronounced the same as the silent *s*, in Judeo-Spanish are voiced, so that we have *dezir* 'to say', *azer* 'to do', *caza* 'house' and *ermozo* 'beautiful'.

Related to the consonantal variations, we are not surprised to come upon cases of metathesis similar to those encountered today in rural areas and among the less literate in Spain and Hispanic America. The group *rd* easily becomes *dr* (*acodarse, acodarse* 'to remember', *borde, bodre*, 'border', *gordo, godro* 'fat', *tarde, tadre* 'late, afternoon', *verde, vedre* 'green'). *Prove*, as was said in old Spanish and is still heard today, continues to be the form used in Ladino for 'poor'. The group *-rede* becomes *-dere*, as in *alrededor, alderedor* 'around'; and *cuidado* is rendered *cudiado* 'care'.

While the above represent the most striking holdovers from medieval *romance* that distinguish Ladino from modern Castilian,

there are other differences which are exemplary of the pure state of some stressed vowels which in Spanish subsequently either evolved into or from diphthongs. The most frequently used radical changing verbs, such as *pensar*, *pienso* 'to think, I think', *querer*, *quiero* 'to want, I want', or *dormir*, *duermo* 'to sleep, I sleep', are generally rendered as *penso*, *quero*, *durmo*, although we find that *tener* 'to have' is conjugated as in modern Spanish *tengo*, *tienes*, *tiene* 'I have, you have s/he has'. An undiphthongized *o* is maintained in *scola* for *escuela* 'school', *sola* for *suela* 'sole'. In contrast, we occasionally encounter a reversal of this phenomenon among people, aware of diphthongization, who apply it by analogy to infinitives, giving *quierer*; other verb forms, such as *puedemos* for *podemos* 'we can', *sietiré* for *sentiré* 'I will regret'; *siervo* for *sirvo* 'I serve'; and nouns such as *bieroo* for *verbo* 'verb or word', *bandiera* for *bandera* 'flag', *lutio* for *luto* 'mourning', or the adverb *adientro* for *adentro* 'inside'. Diphthongs formed with the semi-vowel *w* (i.e., *au*, *eu*, *iu*) tend to maintain their archaic form (*av*, *ev*, *iv*): *cavsa*, *causa* 'cause' and by analogy *cavso*, *caso* 'case'; *Evropa*, *Europa*, *devda*, *deuda* 'debt'; *civdad*, *ciudad* 'city'. We should keep in mind that engraved *u* appeared as *v*, and that the confusion was transmitted in printing, along with the further complication that the bilabial *b* and the labiodental *v* were, in fact, pronounced in the same way, depending on their position in the word. We do not need the support of the graphic form to explain the oral survival of the labiodental *v*, since so many other archaisms remain, and the phenomenon appears in scattered regions of the Hispanic world as well.

Finally, as far as the phonics are concerned, it should be noted that Ladino belongs to the large family of Spanish speakers whose pronunciation of words written in Castilian with a double *ll* is equivalent to that of the fricative palatal *y* or *hi* followed by *e* (*ayer* 'yesterday', *yerva*, *hierba* 'grass', *yelo*, *hielo* 'ice') and thus we see *yamar*, *llamar* 'to call', *eva*, *ella* 'she', *cavayo*, *caballo* 'horse', etc. Since there is no rule without its exceptions, we can find a limited number of instances where the lateral palatal is preserved, as in *talya*, *talla* 'figure, form,' and a few in which the *ll* is replaced by a single lateral sound, as in *caleja*, *calleja* 'street' or *luvia*, *lluvia* 'rain'.

In light of the general adherence to old *romance* and to variants that are not uncommon in the rest of the Hispanic world, it is striking that

many, if not most, Sephardic dialects have lost the very characteristic distinction between the simple vibrant *r* and the multiple *rr*. In the areas which were geographically closest to Spain or where frequent travel to the Peninsula was involved for commercial and other reasons, the trilled or multiple vibrant *rr* is preserved and there is no confusion between *pero* 'but' and *perro* 'dog' or between *caro* 'dear, expensive' and *carro* 'car, cart', as happens in the speech of other areas.

### B. Syntax

As we continue to describe the language which was to make its way to the New World, a few observations on syntax and morphology are in order. Basically, the grammatical structure of the sentence, which was already established by the end of the fifteenth century, is maintained with a few variants common to many parts of the Hispanic world. Some medieval carryovers remain, such as the order of pronouns found in combination. Modern Castilian has resolved to place an impersonal reflexive pronoun before a personal pronoun when both are used: *Se me olvidó, te olvidó* 'I forgot, you forgot', whereas Judeo-Spanish still says *Me se olvidó, te se olvidó*, although the modern order occurs in the third person (*Se le olvidó*) and in the plurals. In the instances where we have a direct and an indirect object pronoun ('Give it to her' *Dáelo*), the Castilian order of indirect before direct prevails, as it did in old *romance*: 'I gave it to him' *Se lo di*.

Another case where a medieval form persists, as it does in many places and, especially among children, by analogy with similar constructions is the combination of the preposition *con* 'with' and the singular prepositional pronouns. Correct modern usage is *conmigo, contigo, consigo* 'with me, with you, with her, him, you (polite)! Judeo-Spanish, in accordance with all the other prepositional pronouns, says *con mí, con ti, con él, con eya* (cf. Latin *mecum, tecum* . . .).

Adjectives and adverbs present no peculiarities, although Judeo-Spanish does not often avail itself of the fine nuance in meaning achieved by placing an adjective before a noun rather than after, as is more usual. Verbs and tenses function fundamentally as they do in contemporary Spanish. The subjunctive has maintained its place in the language with minor distinctions, such as the general use of the imperfect subjunctive form in *-ra* rather than that in *-se*: *avlara*,

*comiera, escriviera*. At times this imperfect subjunctive is avoided in favor of the imperfect indicative: instead of the conditional statement 'If it weren't so late, I would wait for them', Castilian *Si no fuera tan tarde, les esperaríá*, Ladino gives *Si no era tan tadre, los esperaríá*.

In lieu of the future of probability ('It is probably 3 p.m.' *Serán las tress de la tarde*) we often find *Deven de ser las tres de la tadre*. The Judeo dialects conserve, as might be expected, a number of grammatical constructions common to regional and folk speech retained in some cases from the medieval language. Such is the case of the double gerundive: 'As, while I was walking, As I went walking along, I met my cousin' *Estando caminando, encontrí a mi prima*; 'As she traveled around, along, she met many people' *Indo viajando, conosió a muncha djente*. Intensive action is expressed as in popular Castilian: *avla que avla, gritan que gritan* 'he talked and talked, they shouted and shouted'.

Other verbal phenomena include the occasional transformation of a reflexive verb into a transitive one: *Se nos pasó el dolor > Mos pasó la dolor*; the use of the auxiliary *tener* in the present perfect: *Le he dicho que no venga > Le tengo dicho que no venga*, while preserving *haber, aver* in other tenses, sometimes interchangeably with *tener*; and the preservation of the old Spanish impersonal *aver* where Castilian now employs *hacer*: *Hace dos días que se fue > Ay dos días que se fue*.

Prepositions and conjunctions are generally used as in Castilian, although there is confusion in the distinction between *por* and *para*, as often happens to this day among native Spanish speakers. Also, Ladino-speaking people limit themselves to the two basic forms for 'and' and 'or', which are the conjunctions *y* and *o*, even as the average speaker does, eschewing *e* and *u* where the phonics calls for them.

### C. Morphology

On the subject of morphology there is somewhat more divergence than in syntax, albeit Ladino remains in its fundamental character a part of the greater Spanish-speaking world. Encounters between Spaniards or Hispanic Americans and Sephardim immediately produce a sense of recognition and affinity. After all, many of the differences, as we have noted, can be attributed to the conservation of archaic forms, a phenomenon common in other parts of the Hispanic world as well.

Such is the case, for example, of words ending in *-or*, which are masculine in Castilian (*el calor, el color, el sabor*, etc.) and feminine in most instances in Ladino (*la calor, la color, la sabor*, etc.), although some exceptions are *el vapor* 'boat' and *el amor*. Other old feminines are *la mar*, very widespread in Castilian rural, rustic, and poetic speech, and *la fin*. Furthermore, those nouns beginning with an unstressed *a* are also feminine in Ladino, while some may be masculine in Castilian (*el azúcar, la asúcar* 'sugar', *el alfiler, la alfinete* 'pin'). This use of the feminine article also occurs with feminine words beginning with a stressed *a*, which in Castilian take the masculine article in the singular to avoid the double *a* (*la agua*).

Plurals are formed in the same way as in Castilian, with a few exceptions. One is the use of the Hebrew plural ending in *-m* or *-im* either in Hebrew words or in words related to religion and the Sephardic tradition. Therefore, we find *sefardim, haverim* 'partners', *hahanim* 'rabbis'. Another Hebrew ending which finds its way into an occasional Hispanic noun formed from an adjective is *-oth*, as in the old word for 'lazy', *haragán*, which gives 'laziness' *haraganuth*.<sup>12</sup>

One area in which we recognize the impoverishment of the language is in the reduced number of diminutive suffixes, in which Spanish is so rich. The most prevalent ending is the old *-ico, -ica*, and in some Mediterranean and Mid-Eastern dialects it is the only one. Even in these, though, there remains a trace of *-ito, -ita* in double diminutives such as *chiquitico* 'tiny' and *poquitico* 'very small amount'. In other dialects *-ito, -ita* is more common, either because of the proximity to Spain or because it has been picked up from contemporary Spanish. With proper names we also encounter *-ucha* for women and *-achi* for men, as terms of endearment. While augmentative endings are not frequent (the preferred form is the use of the Turkish adjective for 'large' in some areas: *kodjá*, with the noun), the endings *-in, -ona*, and *-anca* do exist.

Collective suffixes are *-ado, -ada*, as in *vezindado* 'neighborhood', *calderada* 'potful'; *-dero, -dera*, as in *gritadero* 'great shouting', *voradera* 'crying spell'; *-oria, dientoria* 'crowd' and *-ería, ropería* 'bundle of clothes'. Many suffixes denoting place of origin are similar or identical to the Castilian, with the frequent *-ano, -ana* also applied to some forms which Castilian renders in different ways. One of the most

prevalent suffixes in this category, reserved primarily for Sephardic people of the Mid-East, is *-lí, -lía* (*izmirlí, izlmirlía, saloniclí, stambolí, chanacalí, monastirlí, castorialí, adjemlí* 'Persian', etc.). Other occasional endings are *-és, -esa* (*francé, inglés*); *-ezo, -eza* (*milanezo, maltezo*); and *-ino, -ina* (*maroguino, turguino*).

Most of the days of the week bear strong resemblance to Castilian or are identical. Such is the case with 'Monday', 'Tuesday', 'Wednesday', and 'Friday' (*lunes, martes, miércoles, and viernes*). 'Thursday' is only a phonetic variant of *jueves* (*djugueves*); and 'Saturday' *sábado* is rendered as in the Hebrew from which it comes (*shabat* or *shabá*). The only really divergent day is 'Sunday' (*domingo* in Castilian, from Latin *dominus*), which comes from the Arabic *alhad* or *alhá*. Cardinal numbers retain the Spanish forms closely, except for some pronunciations, but the ordinals present variants: after 'third' the remaining numerals up to 'tenth' end in *-eno* (*cuar teno, cinqueno, etc.*). After that it would be *j* (*la de onze, dodje, etc.* This last is also an alternative form for numbers 'second' through 'tenth'.

While one could detail many traits of the pronunciation, usage, and unique forms of pronouns, we will limit ourselves here to a few outstanding features. Immigrants who arrived before World War II brought with them the use of the third person as a polite form of address. This is probably still the case among the few older people who remain in North America as well as in Europe and the Mid-East. Respect toward parents and between spouses was, until a generation or so ago, expressed by the use of *vos*, as was once the case in Castilian. At the present time most speakers, except the very old, have reduced all second-person pronouns to the familiar *tú* and its plural *vozotros*.

Ladino preserves only two forms of demonstrative pronouns and adjectives, as in English: one for 'this, these' *este, esta, estos, estas*, and one for 'that, those' *aquel, aqueya, aqueyos, aqueyas*. Castilian distinguishes between that which is near the person to whom one speaks and that which is far from both speaker and addressee: the former being *ese, esa, esos, esas* and the latter *aquel, aquella, aquellos, aquellas*. The interrogative pronouns are similar to Castilian, if we allow for slight variations in pronunciation not uncommon in the Hispanic world. However, Ladino treats *cuál*, 'which one' as a masculine form, using

*cuálo* for the feminine (plurals: *cuáles*, *cuálos*, *cuálas*) and *cuála* for the neuter. *Cuál*, *cuáles* are the only forms in Castilian, and there is no neuter, for that is rendered by *qué*. Also unlike Castilian, which has a differentiating indefinite pronoun for persons (*alguien* 'someone', *nadie* 'no one'), Ladino uses *alguno*, *-a*, *ninguno*, *-a* for persons as well as for inanimate objects, and also to indicate 'one' or 'none' of a group of persons or objects, as in Castilian.

With regard to verb forms, as for other parts of speech, the basic rules that pertain are the same as in Castilian, with some variations. Once again, we will not go into differences in pronunciation. Perhaps the most prominent trait is the application to first-conjugation verbs (*avlar* 'to speak') of the preterite endings common to the second (*comer* 'to eat') and third (*bivir* 'to live') conjugations, ending in stressed *avlí* for *hablé* 'I spoke', etc. This does not occur in the preterite of irregular verbs, which follow tradition (*dishe*, *dije* 'I said', *pude*, *pude* 'I could'). However, some archaic forms, common also to rural areas of Spain, are conserved. Thus we have *trushe* 'I brought' for *traje*, and *vide* 'I saw' for modern *vi*. The imperfect of the verb 'to see' *ver*, which in Old Spanish was *veer*, has lost its initial *e* and is rendered *via*, as also occurs in medieval *romance*.<sup>33</sup> It is an instance in which the dialects and rural speech, normally so conservative, drop an old form still preserved in modern Spanish. This phenomenon also applies to the verb *leer* 'to read', but it, at least, still maintains both *e*'s. The Judeo-Spanish dialects rarely use this verb, preferring *meldar*, of Hebrew extraction. It should also be mentioned that like *veer* the verb 'to be' *ser* was originally *seer*, but its conjugations are irregular in both imperfect and preterite, and Ladino conforms to the Castilian.

Another feature of the various Judeo-Spanish dialects which they share with regions of the Hispanic world is the prefix *a* before many verbs: *rascar* 'to scratch' becomes *arascar*, *limpiar* > *alimpiar* 'to clean', *bajar* > *abashar* 'to descend', Other examples are *alevantar(se)* 'to raise, pick up, get up', *arazgar* 'to tear', *aremendar* 'to mend', *asentar(se)* 'to seat, be seated', *araviarse* 'to get angry'. One curious instance is that of *amatar* 'to extinguish' as opposed to *matar* 'to kill' (see above, example 5).

#### D. Vocabulary

In order to give some sense of the linguistic patchwork that has woven itself into the basic Spanish language over five centuries and which survives to this day, we include a sampling of words from the languages which have left a lasting mark on Judeo-Spanish. Any of these words may appear in any of the dialects from North Africa to Istanbul, especially the Hebrew, most of which are basic to the life of Jews. Of course, one can expect more Arabic in North Africa and little or no Turkish there, while the Mid-East communities use more Turkish. Words which exist in Castilian are not included. We have chosen as an example to list words all of which appear in the dialect originally from Izmir and now spread throughout North America. Other words, Serbo-Croatian in Monastir, more Greek in Salonica, for instance, pepper those dialects. Concentrating a bit on the configuration in one area will illustrate the mosaic well.

#### HEBREW

*aftahá* - hope, confidence  
*balabay* - male head of household  
*beemá, behemá* - animal  
*berahá* - blessing  
*birith* - ceremony of circumcision  
*cahal* - synagogue  
*cavod* - respect  
*gaviento* - proud  
*haber* - news  
*haftoná* - spanking

*hamor* - donkey, stupid  
*haver* - partner  
*hohmá* - wisdom  
*kehilá* - synagogue  
*lashón* - language, chatter  
*mijpahá* - family  
*muel* - circumciser  
*seclet* - worry, trouble  
*sedacá* - alms, charity  
*sehorá* - pain, disillusionment  
*tanith* - fast  
*tifilá* - prayer

#### FRENCH

*adreso* - address  
*amator* - amateur, lover of  
*antica* - antique  
*azardo* - chance (cf. It.)  
*arivada* - arrival  
*arivar* - to arrive  
*berber* - barber  
*bijuc* - jewel  
*botoniera* - buttonhole,  
 boutonnière

*casqueto* - cap  
*cordela* - ribbon  
*cuvierta* - blanket  
*dandjerozo* - dangerous  
*dantela* - lace  
*data* - date  
*dezabiyé* - woman's loose  
 garment  
*engagé* - arm in arm  
*englutir* - to swallow

*envelop* - envelope  
*espondjar* - to sponge  
*factoría* - factory  
*furnitura* - furniture  
*gravata* - necktie  
*mashina* - machine  
*mashinistro* - machinist  
*matmazel* - young lady,  
     mademoiselle  
*mostarda* - mustard  
*pantuflas* - slippers  
*parada* - parade  
*pelerina* - cape, cloak  
*polís* - policeman

## ITALIAN

*achetar* - accept  
*adío* - goodbye  
*avocato* - lawyer  
*capache* - capable  
*carosa* - carriage, coach  
*carosero* - coachman  
*djaqueta* - jacket  
*Djermania* - Germany  
*djermano* - German  
*empidegado* - employee

## GREEK

*bamia* - okra  
*bizel* (also *pizel*, *pinzel*) - pea  
*bira* - beer (cf. It.)  
*bleta* - pleat  
*chanta* - handbag, purse  
*chapura* - carp (ichth.)  
*fildjân* - cup (cf. Turk.)  
*foresiá* - suit  
*fustán* - dress

*postier* - postman  
*propozar* - to suggest, propose  
*pruna* - prune  
*puđra* - face powder  
*refusar* - to refuse  
*regretar* - to regret  
*reushir* - to succeed  
*sharpa* - scarf  
*sezón* - season  
*vacansas* - vacation  
*validja* - suitcase, valise  
*visaví* - closet with full-  
     length mirror

*forqueta* - hairpin  
*grizo* - gray  
*lavoro* - work  
*peto* - lapel  
*pirón* - fork  
*posta* - mail  
*putana* - prostitute (cf. Fr.)  
*salata* - salad (cf. Gr.)  
*sigareto* - cigarette  
*valuta* - value

*gravata* - necktie (cf. Fr., It.)  
*horó* - dance  
*indiano* - turkey  
*maimona* - monkey  
*nicocherà* - housewife  
*patrioti* - patriot  
*perdé* - curtain  
*prasa* - leeks  
*quinezó* - Chinese

## GREEK (cont.)

*reclama* - advertisement (cf. Fr.)  
*sardela* - sardine  
*scara* - spit (cooking)

*soy* - lineage, family  
*spirto* - match

## TURKISH

*aharvar* - to strike, spank  
*ahchí* - cook  
*amán* - interjection  
*apansiz* - suddenly  
*arabá* - cart, wagon,  
     wheelbarrow  
*aversís* - ugly  
*bacal* - grocer  
*bahchován* - farmer  
*batal* - idle  
*beguenear* - to accept  
*bezer* - tired  
*bicliador* - meddlesome  
*bicliar* - to meddle  
*bilbil, bilbul, bulbul* -  
     nightingale  
*bilibiz* - pea, garbanzo  
*boy* - size  
*boyá* - paint  
*boyadjí* - painter  
*buchuc* - twin  
*buz* - ice  
*buzaná* - freezing, icy  
*calabalic* - crowd, to-do  
*capac* - pan lid  
*carar* - amount  
*carpuz* - watermelon  
*casap* - butcher  
*chadir* - umbrella  
*chalum* - airs (to put on airs)  
*chamashir* - undershirt

*charshí* - market  
*chíní* - plate  
*chízmez* - boot  
*churap* - stocking  
*clapá* - lapel  
*colay* - easy  
*condjá* - rose  
*condjero* - rosebush  
*cuchunduría* - beets  
*cushac* - belt  
*cutí* - box  
*daúl* - tambourine  
*dest* - trouble  
*djam* - window pane  
*dolap* - closet  
*dumán* - smoke, vapor  
*enbenear* - to mount  
*farashaná* - dust pan  
*findján* - cup  
*furcha* - brush  
*hair* - profit, benefit  
*hal* - problem, trouble  
*hiram* - blanket  
*hodjá* - master  
*kióstec* - chain  
*kirikic* - peanut  
*libric* - Turkish coffee pot  
*meraclí* - neat, fastidious  
*musafir* - guest  
*mushamá* - oilcloth, linoleum  
*mushterí* - client, customer

## TURKISH (cont)

*nishán* - scar, sign*pachá* - leg*pailón* - large pot*patladearse* - to burst*peltec* - tongue-tied*saraf* - moneylender*sekiliar(se), secliar(se)* - to worry*shacá* - joke*shadriván* - fountain*shamatá* - noise*sharsheo* - dizziness*shushulera* - diarrhea*tahtás* - flat slippers*tavá* - tray*taván* - ceiling*tashtiriar* - to mix, stir*tendjeré* - tin*tifsín* - oven pan, tray*trushí* - pickles; *en* - pickled*utí* - iron (for pressing)*yelec* - vest

## ENGLISH

*adrés* - address*bel* - bell*djanitor* - janitor*envelop* - envelope*farma* - farm*farmero* - farmer*fridjider* - refrigerator*vedjiteble* - vegetable*yok* - egg yolk

## ARABIC

*alhad* - Sunday*alminara* - candle holder

## SLAVIC

*rizá* - handkerchief

## Conclusion

We have attempted to provide an abbreviated analysis of those features which, in one degree or another, characterized the speech of the Sephardic people when they immigrated to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To a large extent, the newcomers seem to have gravitated to many of the same places as those who arrived in colonial times. While the latter no longer preserved the language of their heritage, except where it may have been assimilated into the Sephardic ritual, they seem to have blazed a trail for the later arrivals, by making their way south and west for commercial reasons in the seventeenth century, as participants in the War of Independence and in the Civil War, or in search of fortune during the Gold

Rush. Many forged on northward into Canada seeking commercial opportunities and a better life, first in the East, later in the West. It should be noted, however, that early settlements and congregations tended to develop along the coasts, where seaports favored entrepreneurial activities. Those centers received the first Jewish immigrants from Germany, Austria, and other parts of Europe. Even though the newcomers were not Sephardim, they initially joined the Sephardic congregations. These Ashkenazim eventually outnumbered the Jews of Iberian origin and founded their own congregations.

The earliest communities were formed in Newport, Rhode Island, in what is now New York City, and in Philadelphia. The former, which still maintains the oldest Sephardic synagogue in North America, was gradually depleted by migrations to Massachusetts, notably the Boston area, and other parts after the 1812 war with England ended the prosperity of the community. Before the Revolutionary War the colonies already had three other congregations in Richmond, Savannah, and Charleston. In the early nineteenth century Judah Touro had left Newport and established himself in New Orleans, where he amassed a large fortune and was an important participant in Andrew Jackson's defense of that city in 1814-15.

By the mid-nineteenth century we also find affluent communities of merchants, manufacturers, and developers in Montreal. Although congregations remained small, since there were never very large numbers of Sephardim, they continued to organize in Canada and the United States in Atlanta, Louisville, Los Angeles, Seattle, and other cities. In some cases brotherhoods and sisterhoods were established according to the city of origin, but even when immigrants from one area dominated, there tended to be a mixture of Sephardim from various communities abroad. There are, indeed, a few cases in which a whole group was settled in one locale, and their linguistic and cultural features were best preserved.

In reviewing the language of the Spanish Jews across North America, two factors stand out which underlie their entire history from the time of the expulsion five hundred years ago. First and foremost is the amazing capacity to preserve their linguistic heritage and, second, the gradual and unobtrusive absorption of features of the local and contemporary cultures in which they lived. Pronunciation was never

much influenced by exposure to a new language; it was mainly vocabulary that infiltrated. The same pattern is found to be true in Anglo-America. All the Spanish, Hebrew, Turkish, Greek, Serbo-Croatian, etc., which the immigrants brought with them, remained. To that were added some new words, which those who live in heavily Hispanic neighborhoods will recognize as having filtered into the speech of the local Hispanic population as well, such as *grosería* 'grocery store'.

While there are still speakers of the various Judeo-Spanish dialects, it must be noted, with sadness, that Ladino is rapidly disappearing as a living language. Extraordinary efforts are being made to record it, and there is a revival of the folklore, in particular the music, of which there are now many recordings. But the strength of English for second- and third-generation Americans has been great to overcome. The language is disappearing likewise in other parts of the world for different reasons, such as the ease of adapting to modern Spanish in the Hispanic countries and the ease of adapting to the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew in Israel. That is why it is essential to recognize and record, not only the significance of this well-preserved heritage to scholars of Spain and Portugal, but the great wealth of history, lore, music, and language which seeped into the cultures of all the scattered areas which the Sephardic passage has touched.

### Notes

1. In modern Spanish *ladino* refers to any foreign language (*hablar en ladino*), and in Latin American countries it denotes Indians who speak Spanish.

2. The adjective *ladino*, *ladina* was used in the fifteenth century to describe works written in a cultured, artistic language close to educated Latin. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, when Castilian was fairly stabilized, the adjective had acquired the quality of a personal characteristic, moving from "artful" to "artificial," from "cultured" and "Latinate" to "clever" and "crafty," until it took its present acceptance of "astute, foxy, sly."

3. *Cantar de Mío Cid* (12th cent.), paleographic edition of Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid, 1946), pp. 916-917. "The Cid said, 'Thank you, Sir Abbot, and I am your debtor'" (v. 248). "I leave two small daughters, and take them into your arms" (v. 255). "Take every care of them and of my wife" (v. 257).

4. Poem by Gonzalo de Berceo (13th cent.), ed. C. Carroll Marden, *Revista de Filología Española* 9 (Madrid, 1928). "I would like to relate another miracle—which the glorious Virgin performed, that shouldn't be forgotten. / She is the eternal foundation from which the sea emerges, which at no time ever ceases to flow" (p. 45).

5. Don Juan Manuel, *Libro de los Enxemplos del Conde Lucanor et de Patronio* (13th cent.), ed. J. M. Blecua (Madrid, 1969). "And because Don Juan considered this a good lesson, he had it written in this book and composed the verses which say. . ." (p. 176). "Don't be upset because of complaints, for the one who is patient always conquers" (p. 112).

6. Juan Ruiz, archpriest of Hita, *Libro de Buen Amor* (14th cent.), ed. Raymond S. Willis (Princeton University Press, 1972). "As the wise man says, it is a hard and difficult thing to get free of custom, fate, and fortune" (pp. 52-53). "From great wrath and anger, Saul, who was king, the first that the Jews had under their laws [religion]" (pp. 91-92). "When the lame man stopped speaking, the one-eyed one said . . ." (pp. 128-129). Other examples of *judíos* with acute accent appear in strophes 1063 (p. 293), 1193 (p. 327), 1657 (p. 447).

7. Other examples of *muncho* for *mucho* appear in lines 1262, 1270, 1320, and 1385. This alternates with numerous cases of *mucho*.

8. Santob de Carrión (Shem Tob ibn Arduziel b. Isaac), *Proverbios Morales* (14th cent.), ed. Ignacio González Llubera (Cambridge University Press, 1947). "In the same way you were left by him, to last a long time / And to do what he longed to carry out" (p. 64). "The fire which is extinguished brings life to the smoke" (p. 101). "Pay attention to the king, take an example from him: / He toils more for the people, than the people for him" (p. 104).

9. Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Coplas de Vicios Virtudes, in Generaciones y Semblanzas* (14th cent.), ed. R. B. Tate (London, 1965). "David was saintly and praiseworthy, wise and chivalrous, as well as noble and glorious, one must not speak of it . . ." (p. 76).

10. Iñigo López de Mendoza, marquis of Santillana, *Proverbios* (15th cent.), in *Páginas Escogidas*, ed. Fernando Gutiérrez (Barcelona, 1939). "I lost my honor when I spoke ill and heard worse" (p. 266). "You've discovered where the noise is coming from. / (Now you've uncovered the truth.)" (p. 266). "I'm neither coming nor going; but the brains I had give me the head I have" (p. 268).

11. Fernando de Rojas, *Comedia de Calisto* (1499, 1502), ed. R. Foulché-Delbosc (Barcelona and Madrid, 1902). "Little fool madcap, angel, little gem, simpleton . . . / May a terrible tumor kill you" (p. 23).

12. Note that *h* is now silent in Castilian. It is used in our text to represent sound in Ladino.

13. Analogic forms are as common in Judeo-Spanish as they are in the larger Hispanic community in the speech of rural dwellers, of people with little formal education, and of course, of children. Thus it is that on the pattern of some irregular forms in the first-person singular of the present tense (e.g., *traigo* 'I bring'), we find *creigo* 'I believed', *veigo* 'I see', *fuygo* 'I flee', *destruygo* 'I destroy', *riygo* 'I laugh', *friygo* 'I fry', and the corresponding present subjunctives which are formed like the present indicative. In the case of *ir* 'to go' the irregularity is limited to the present subjunctive *vaiga*, while the present indicative is *vo*, as in medieval *romance*, for *voy* in Castilian (cf. also *so* for *soy*). A similar case is that of *aiga* for *haya*, the present subjunctive of *aver*, *haber* 'to have', very common among Spanish speakers.

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