

Saver es Bueno

The Writings of İsak Eskinazi

Articles in Judeo-Spanish published in Şalom and El Amaneser, 2019–2025
English edition · compiled by his family · 2026

To our father / Babamıza

Our dear father always lived his life to the full. He loved reading, learning and sharing what he knew. He kept this way of life and this philosophy going, without pause, in his years as a tour guide, in his Masonic lodge, in B'nai B'rith and in his retirement.

Everything interested him; whatever caught his curiosity he absorbed in depth and then passed on, in the simplest words, to the people around him. Writing in Ladino was, for him, a pursuit on a par with solving a puzzle: if a word did not exist, he invented it.

The pieces that follow are a collection of the articles our father wrote over the years on many different subjects.

We miss you with all our love. Rest in peace.



Jakop, Anna, İsak and Riva — August 2025

Değerli babamız hayatını her zaman dolu dolu yaşamıştır. Okumayı, öğrenmeyi ve bildiklerini paylaşmayı severdi. Bu hayat tarzını ve yaşam felsefesini rehberlik hayatında, mason locasında, B'nai B'rith'te ve emekliliğinde aksatmadan sürdürdü.

Ona her şey ilginç gelirdi; merak sardığı her konuyu derinlemesine özümseyip en sade biçimde etrafındaki kişilerle paylaşırdı. Ladino yazı yazmak onun için bir bilmece çözmekle aynı ayarda bir uğraş olmuştu; bilmediği bir kelime varsa onu yaratırdı.

Aşağıdaki yazılar babamızın yıllar içinde değişik konularda ürettiği makalelerden derlenmiştir.

Seni çok sevgiyle özlüyoruz, huzur içinde yat.

Ben Genç İken

A poem İsak wrote in Turkish shortly before he died (March 2026)

Türkçe

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Zor gelirdi bana uyanmak.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Zor geliyor bana uyumak.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Endişem sivilcelerimdi.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Endişem ise kırışıklıklarımda.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Birinin elini tutmayı özlerdim.
Bugün seksenlerimdeyim,
Birinin elimi tutmasını özlüyorum.

Ben yirmilerimdeyken,
Ebeveynlerimin beni yalnız bırakmalarını isterdim.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Yalnız kalmaktan endişeleniyorum.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Bana öğüt verilmesinden nefret ederdim.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Etrafımda konuşacak veya öğüt verecek kimseyi arıyorum.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Güzel şeylere hayrandım.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Etrafımdaki her şeyde güzeli görüyorum.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Sonsuz olduğumu hissederdim.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Pek yakında sıramın geleceğini biliyorum.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Her anımı kutlardım.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Ancak anılarımla avunuyorum.

Ben yirmilerimde iken,
Yürek yakan biri olmak isterdim.
Şimdi seksenlerimdeyim,
Kalbimin her an durabileceğini bilip,
endişeleniyorum.

English

When I was in my twenties,
It was hard for me to wake up.
Now I am in my eighties,
It is hard for me to fall asleep.

When I was in my twenties,
My worry was my pimples.
Now I am in my eighties,
My worry is in my wrinkles.

When I was in my twenties,
I longed to hold someone's hand.
Today I am in my eighties,
I long for someone to hold my hand.

When I was in my twenties,
I wanted my parents to leave me alone.
Now I am in my eighties,
I am afraid of being alone.

When I was in my twenties,
I hated being given advice.
Now I am in my eighties,
I look for someone around me to talk to
Or to give me advice.

When I was in my twenties,
I admired beautiful things.
Now I am in my eighties,
I see the beauty in everything around me.

When I was in my twenties,
I felt I was endless.
Now I am in my eighties,
I know my turn will come very soon.

When I was in my twenties,
I celebrated every moment.
Now I am in my eighties,
I find comfort only in my memories.

When I was in my twenties,
I wanted to be someone who set hearts on fire.
Now I am in my eighties,
Knowing that my heart could stop at any moment,
I worry.

About this book

İsak Eskinazi (Istanbul) wrote for many years in Judeo-Spanish (Ladino). His articles appeared on the Judeo-Espanyol page of the newspaper **Şalom** and, under the heading **“Saver es Bueno”** (“Knowing is good”), in **El Amaneser**, Şalom's monthly Ladino supplement published by the Sephardic Center of Istanbul.

This book collects every piece we were able to find: **73 columns from Şalom** (July 2019 – November 2025) and **36 “Saver es Bueno” columns from El Amaneser** (January 2020 – April 2025) — 109 articles in all, grouped by topic. This is the English edition: 109 articles have been translated so far; the others are given in the original Ladino until their translation is ready. The translations follow the originals closely, keeping his examples, asides and the Turkish and Hebrew words he liked to use. A Ladino edition and a Turkish edition of the same book exist.

How to move around. Every entry in the Contents is a link; each article ends with a “Contents” button, and the PDF's bookmark panel lists all sections and articles. The source line under each title links to the original article online (El Amaneser issues require a subscription to the Sephardic Center).

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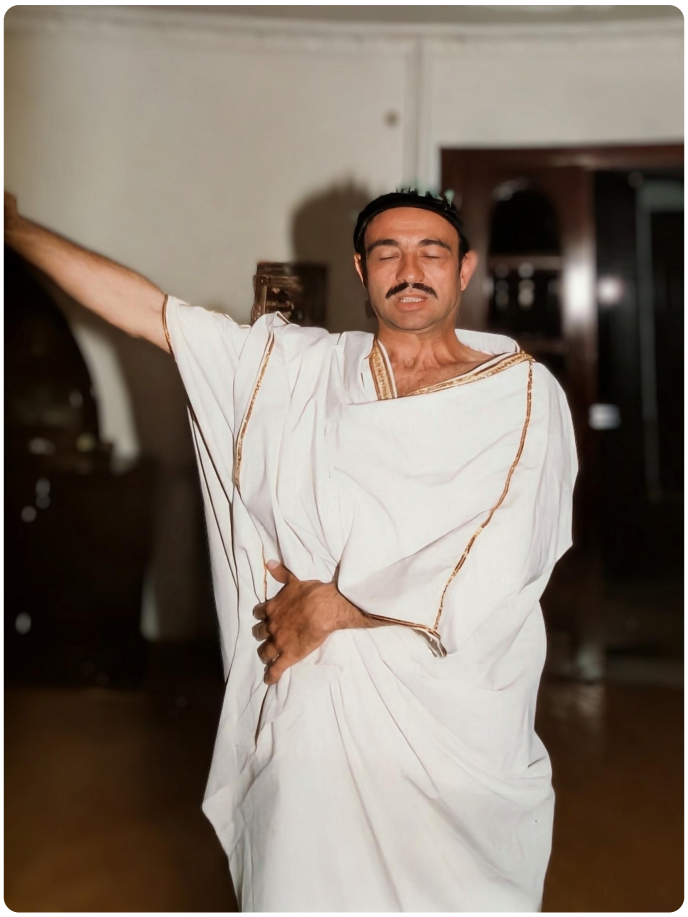
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The Name of Jerusalem

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 31.7.2019 · original

According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, a 2,100-year-old inscription is probably the first to contain the word Jerusalem in its full form (as it is pronounced today).

A column recently discovered, before the first stones of the road near Binyaney Ha'uma, the convention centre, were laid, carried the inscription in its original form. The stone column, from a Roman structure of the first century BC, reads in Aramaic: 'Hanania Ben Dodalos Mi Yerush-alaim' (Aramaic was the lingua franca of the region in that period). It means: 'Hanania son of Dodalos of Jerusalem'.

The archaeologists are not at all sure about the identity of Hanania and Dodalos. It is also possible that the two were workers in a pottery where cauldrons were made, because the ruins were very close to the column.

What is remarkable is that the inscription tells us exactly where they lived: Jerusalem.

In that period Jerusalem must have been written with one 'yod', whereas today we write Yerush-alayim with two 'yods'.

The column is now on display in the Israel Museum, in the Second Temple hall.

(Article from Haaretz)

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The Market of Ashkelon — Buy Cheap, Sell Dear

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.8.2019 · original

The name Ashkelon comes from shekel.

Shekel is the name of Israel's currency. The word shekel has the same root as lishkol, which means to weigh.

In earlier times goods were paid for with things of equal weight. That is why some names of currencies are also names of weights.

Drachma–dirhem; pound means both a currency and a weight (about half a kilo); libra–lira; peso–peseta comes from pesar, to weigh.

Ashkelon was thus a centre of buying and selling, with an important trade. If archaeologists want a place to study the economy of antiquity, Ashkelon is the best one. In that period Ashkelon had the largest port on the Mediterranean.

2,700 years ago Ashkelon had between twelve and fifteen thousand inhabitants inside its walls. With the little land Ashkelon had to plough and sow, it was impossible to feed so many people. But Ashkelon knew how to trade. Sadly, Ashkelon and Jerusalem would both be destroyed at the end of the Iron Age by the new world power, Babylon.

Some thirty years ago excavations were carried out in Ashkelon and a market resembling today's supermarkets was found, which helped us understand the economic activity of the Middle East. The details that were found taught us how a market worked in those days. The way of thinking that had not existed before was what we call today 'girişimcilik' — entrepreneurship: the ability to start a new business.

In Kanish, a great Assyrian trading centre near Kayseri, clay tablets were found. Kayseri has the same name as Caesarea in Israel. To this day the people of Kayseri are known as very sharp in buying and selling. In Kanish the Assyrians sold cloth for clothing in exchange for the gold and silver that came from Bolkar, the mountain between Mersin and Niğde, part of the Middle Taurus range. These mountains rise to 3,500 metres and are the continuation of the Alps.

On the clay tablets we read about taxes, customs duties, supply and demand, transport, and the difference between cost and price. All these details make us think of today's commerce.

Two Phoenician ships that sank near Ashkelon were discovered in 1999. These two ships show the mastery of the Assyrians in 'logistics', the science of planning in the best way. They knew very well how to load a ship with oil or wine without damage. They also knew who gave the best price, so as to sell the goods at the highest value. Ezekiel (27:5-7) tells us that from Tarshish (Tarsus) came iron, tin and lead. From Beth-Togarmah (Cappadocia) came the famous horses and mules. Products such as wheat, honey, oil, wine, wool and much more. All of it would sink to the bottom of the sea (prophecy of Ezekiel 27:27).

Neither the Assyrian writings, nor the Phoenician ships, nor the prophecy of Ezekiel, however, can give us the economic picture of those times. After weights and scales were found in a certain street, it became known that silver was weighed there to pay for services and goods. Professors Mordechai Kislev and Ehud Weiss examined grains of wheat from that period and found that the grain came from Egypt. Besides grain, the market yielded meat, fish, dishes in which egg was eaten with fish, and ceramic plates imported from Yavan (Greece). So almost everything

needed for daily life was in the famous market of Ashkelon — a market where retail and wholesale were sold in the same place.

All these things found in the archaeologists' excavations give us an idea of how people lived and what the economy of that time was like.

The star of Ashkelon went out with the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar.

Adapted from the article by D.M. Master and L.E. Stager

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The Flood of Babylon

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 30.10.2019 · original

The stories of the Flood (tufan) that were written in Babylon closely resemble the one written in 'Bereshit' (Genesis), though with many differences.

There are some three different writings about the FLOOD: the legend of the Sumerians, the epic of Gilgamesh, the legend of Atrahasis, and what is written in 'Bereshit'. Among the Sumerian legends the best known is the epic of Gilgamesh, one of the first texts written in cuneiform (çivi yazısı), discovered in 1872 by George Smith in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in Nineveh (today next to Mosul in Iraq). Apart from this tablet, Nineveh yielded other tablets written 1,000 years before the one we are speaking of. These were written in the language of the Sumerians, who lived in the second millennium before our era.

The other Babylonian epic, that of Atrahasis, is the most recently discovered. It was compiled in full in 1956, and it is not well known whether the story of the Flood in this epic was influenced by the Sumerians or was written directly in Akkadian (the lingua franca of that period), the Semitic language of Babylon, in the years 1650/1600 before our era.

Let us not forget that we have a similar text in Bereshit (3/15), but we should not compare the epic of Gilgamesh with the parasha of Bereshit. The Flood described in Gilgamesh is built on the search for immortality. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh that he became immortal because the gods chose him to build an ark (a boat), and explains that the god Ea asked him to put inside the ark seeds of every living thing; and a week after the Flood, when everything had been destroyed, he sent out a dove, a swallow and a raven. The dove and the swallow returned to the ark, but the raven, sent out later, did not come back. That is how Utnapishtim understood that he was near land.

Utnapishtim does not say why the Flood happened. What he wants to show is that one does not reach immortality the way he did.

In the epic of Atrahasis, the hero, called Ziusudra, became immortal after surviving the Flood. Comparing the reasons for the Flood with those in Bereshit, the ones in this epic are very similar, contrary to what is told in Gilgamesh.

The solution is to punish man for behaviour contrary to morality. This epic of Atrahasis makes us think about how the world changed. What is very clear in the case of Noah is that the blessed God told Noah and his sons not to kill human beings. This is repeated in the Ten Commandments. A human life is sacred. Whoever saves one human being saves the whole world.

Adapted from an article by Tikva Frymer-Kensky, professor at the University of Chicago.

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The Education of Children in Antiquity (1)

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 6.11.2019 · original

It seems to us that in antiquity only the scribes (soferim) knew how to read and write. Educating children in schools and preparing them for life was a duty for those who lived in the big cities. In the countryside, children helped their parents as they grew up.

When the children became young men they took the place of their father, who was considered the patriarch. Only the sons benefited from this education. The daughters were prepared to marry, have children and look after the home.

Among the children who were born, baby girls had little chance of surviving. They were often left in the street to die of hunger if the parents did not have enough income to support them.

In ancient Greece the sons of wealthy families went to schools where as much importance was given to the training of the body as to the training of the spirit. But on the island called Lesbos (Midilli), a woman named Sappho wrote many poems. She said: 'A man is handsome when you look at him, but the wise man is always more handsome and good.' 'Gold is the child of Jupiter. Neither moth nor worm can harm gold, which so marvellously quickens the intelligence of mortals.' She wrote poems that were very feminist and progressive for her time.

The intellectuals of Plato's era said that education should serve to form those who would govern the country. Moreover, only men could be citizens; women had no right to govern or to vote. Let us not forget that even France gave women the vote only after the Second World War, and Switzerland much later, in the 1970s.

The children who received an education were the sons of rulers or of the aristocracy. Besides physical training, they had to learn the laws of respect towards their parents, the gods and strangers.

The young men dreamed of being like the heroes of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, of mastering intelligence and morality.

In the century of Socrates, the philosophers were the best teachers to give this instruction to pupils aged 16 or 17. The young men also had to prepare themselves to be good soldiers. Today too, the soldiers who defend a country are young men with hot blood! The education received at home came from their mothers, their grandmothers, the nannies or the slaves.

The head of the family was the father, who had no part in the work of the house but above all busied himself with politics or military life. When the father's friends came to the house, they had to gather in a private part of it, like what we used to call the 'selamlık'. Only men could be in that part of the house.

School began when the child was 6 or 7 years old (almost as in our day). Of course there were no public schools as there are today. Families came together to form a school. Those who ran these schools were called 'paidagogos', pedagogues. It was often an elderly man or a slave who taught good manners of living: how to walk along the road, how to dress, how to sit correctly, how to keep quiet, and so on.

(to be continued next week)

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The Education of Children in Antiquity (2)

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 13.11.2019 · original

The teaching staff fell into three categories:

(1) the 'grammatistai', who taught how to speak correctly in words and grammar; (2) the 'kitharistai', who taught music; (3) and the 'paidotribai', who taught physical training.

Besides these, the masters gave classes in arithmetic, literature and ethics (morals).

The kitharistai taught musical instruments such as the 'lyre' (almost a small harp) or the 'whistle', which was the flute.

Physical training was compulsory, and games such as 'wrestling' (güreş) took place in the palaestra (the sports halls of today). This basic education for boys ended at 14 to 16 years of age.

The richer families allowed their sons to go on to secondary school, where they learned rhetoric, the science of speaking well, of finding the right word, of knowing how to converse. These families could pay the sophist philosophers, who were more expensive than the others who gave classes and private lessons.

At the end of their studies, at the age of 18, the young men had to do their military service, which was compulsory.

In the time of Plato and Aristotle these young men went either to Plato's 'Academy' or to Aristotle's 'Lyceum' (lise).

In Mesopotamia the mentality was different. First of all, sons were the guarantee of their parents' old age. The father had absolute authority over his children. He could sell his children as slaves, or give them to another family as orphans. Even so, having a son was very important; one had to praise the gods and make offerings so that they would be born and grow up in health, and the custom was to give them the names of the grandfathers or grandmothers (as was our own custom until a few years ago).

If there was no birth, the man could take a second wife. But all this was regulated by law. Giving a son an education belonged only to the rich families. Among the Sumerians the schools were called 'the Tablet House'. The school had to be next to the temple. Pupils had only 3 days of rest a month, plus 3 more days of rest for the festivals.

The schools taught not only the professions of the rich but also mathematics, grammar, geography, botany and zoology. But the most important thing was knowing how to write on the tablets. To write on tablets they had to learn it from early childhood, when they were small.

It seems that not much changed in the technique of teaching and learning over 4,000 years. Only that in our day, with computers, I believe everything will take a new road at the speed of lightning.

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Important Products of Antiquity (1)

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 20.11.2019 · original

To manufacture something, to offer a product to the world, is the very subject of economics. Economics was always one of the reasons for invasions, wars, robberies and even discoveries in human history.

The ambition to obtain rare and expensive things meant that the economy of antiquity rested on certain products such as copper, salt, silk, cedar trees (sedir ağacı) and saffron.

Copper began to be used more than 7,500 years ago. It was a product used even as a raw material, that is, in its primitive form, as it was extracted from the mine. Copper was the first metal to be melted, some 7,000 years ago, and the first metal to be poured into a mould, 6,000 years ago. It was also the first metal to be mixed with tin (kalay) to obtain bronze.

The word copper comes from the island of 'Kıbrıs', which is 'Cyprus' in Latin. Ancient copper jewellery, such as rings and bracelets, is found in Egypt, Persia and Anatolia.

Copper pipes (borular) were used as an industrial element, and this was copied from the Egyptians. A copper sanitary installation can be seen under the lava of Vesuvius that completely covered the ancient city of Herculaneum.

In Turkey, at Çatalhöyük (Konya), needles, hooks and earrings of pure copper were found. The 3 copper needles of Çatalhöyük are the oldest metal objects in the world.

Making copper dishes is still today an important craft in Turkey. In Istanbul we have a market called 'Bakırcılar Çarşısı', between the Grand Bazaar and the Beyazıt mosque. Today none of those artisans who worked copper with a hammer is left. The sound of the hammer was like music. I am speaking of 30-40 years ago.

Another product that steered the economy was salt. For more than 8,000 years salt has played an important part in human life. Not only for the Jews but in China, India, Egypt, ancient Greece and the Roman Empire people struggled hard to obtain salt. A moderate quantity of salt is necessary for health. To preserve meat and fish when transporting them from one place to another, salt is essential. Eating salted fish was already known more than 4,000 years ago, and at the same time the Phoenicians were already trading in salt. This product paid better than anything.

The Romans had a particular interest in salt. The road 'Via Salaria' was built solely to carry salt from Rome to the Adriatic Sea.

The price of salt was fixed by an official called the 'saltinator'. There came a time when workers, officials and soldiers were paid in 'salt'. That is where the word 'salary' comes from.

In the Sahara desert, a weight of salt was worth the same weight of gold. Until the middle of the 20th century salt was used as money in Abyssinia (Habeşistan), today's Ethiopia.

This money was in the form of salt bars called 'amoleh', weighing about half a kilo. Today, in certain parts of Sudan, salt is still money. Salt was the cause of wars and massacres, such as the French Revolution of 1789: the people reacted to the high tax the King put on salt. Gandhi began to free his country, India, from the English by throwing a handful of salt into the air.

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Important Products of Antiquity (2)

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 27.11.2019 · original

A third product of the economy was silk. History tells us that silk began to exist in China more than 4,000 years ago, and the Chinese kept this monopoly for many thousands of years. If a foreigner tried to carry the secret of silk out of China, he was killed at once.

The Chinese exported silk along a road that left China, passed through the countries of Central Asia, either north of the Black Sea or via Constantinople, and reached Europe. This road became known as 'the Silk Road'.

Silk was always a very expensive article. Only kings and emperors had the right to own anything made of silk.

In China silk had the same value as gold. The Chinese knew so well how to make silk paper that only the king could use this silk paper for writing.

An interesting thing discovered in the tomb of one of the Pharaohs of Egypt, some 3,000 years old, in the 'Valley of the Kings', was a silk garment imported from China.

We know that in antiquity silk was something that could be exchanged for gold, ivory and even horses.

In the Roman Empire silk was a great craze, selling for 300 denarii, which was a commander's pay for a whole year.

It is said that the Roman Empire learned the secret of silk in the 6th century, in the time of the emperor Justinian, who built the famous Santa Sophia (Ayasofya), Santa Irene (Aya İrini) and the Sunken Basilica Cistern (Yerebatan Sarnıcı), and who sent two monks to China to learn the secret of silk. The monks returned from China hiding cocoons inside their staffs, so as not to be caught by the guards, who carried out a very serious check.

We also know that the Japanese learned this secret from Chinese slave girls who were taken to Japan in the 4th century, and India in the 5th. But in the Roman Empire silk was made not only in Bursa, which was the centre of the mulberry trees; they took the technique from the Sassanids of Persia, who in turn had learned almost everything from India, and made silk in the east.

Silk, as is known, is obtained from the saliva of the silkworm, which in contact with the air condenses and turns into fibre. In spring the worm's egg wraps itself in a cocoon that will give the moth. To use the fibres, before the moth is born, the cocoon is put in hot water, and that is how silk is made, by feeding many fibres onto the spinning wheels. To obtain one kilo of silk 10 kilos of cocoons are needed, and for 1 kilo of cocoons at least 500 or 600 cocoons.

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Important Products of Antiquity (3)

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 18.12.2019 · original

Another important product of the economy was the cedar tree (sedir ağacı), found in abundance in Phoenicia (Lebanon), a tree already known more than 5,000 years ago. This tree had a spiritual meaning in many of the old cultures of the Middle East. For the Sumerians it was regarded as the 'Tree of Life', which also symbolized power, secret wisdom, mysticism and immortality.

For the nations of Mesopotamia the cedar was the tree of belief, of intelligence and of magic.

Cedar was exported to countries such as Egypt, Greece and others across the Mediterranean. The resin of this tree was used to mummify the Pharaohs of Egypt.

Cedar is very famous for its aroma and its resistance, because it does not rot and resists worms.

Ships and important buildings were made from this tree. The Beth ha Mikdash (Temple) was built with this tree, which King Hiram of Tyre sent from Phoenicia to King Solomon.

The Romans used this tree above all in the important buildings of the Empire. The famous Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, was also built with it. In history, cedar oil was known as a medicine for coughs, for urinating, for calming the nerves, for the stomach, against the smell of sweat and for massage. Today cedar honey is also sold at quite a high price.

Finally, an article that was important in the economy of antiquity was saffron. Its trade began 4,000 years ago.

It is said that to obtain one kilo of saffron at least 150,000 flowers are needed for their stamens, which is why it was and is sold very dear.

The Greeks and Romans of antiquity used saffron as a deodorant and for offerings to the gods. The Persians used saffron as a dye and as medicine, and it is said that it could serve as an aphrodisiac.

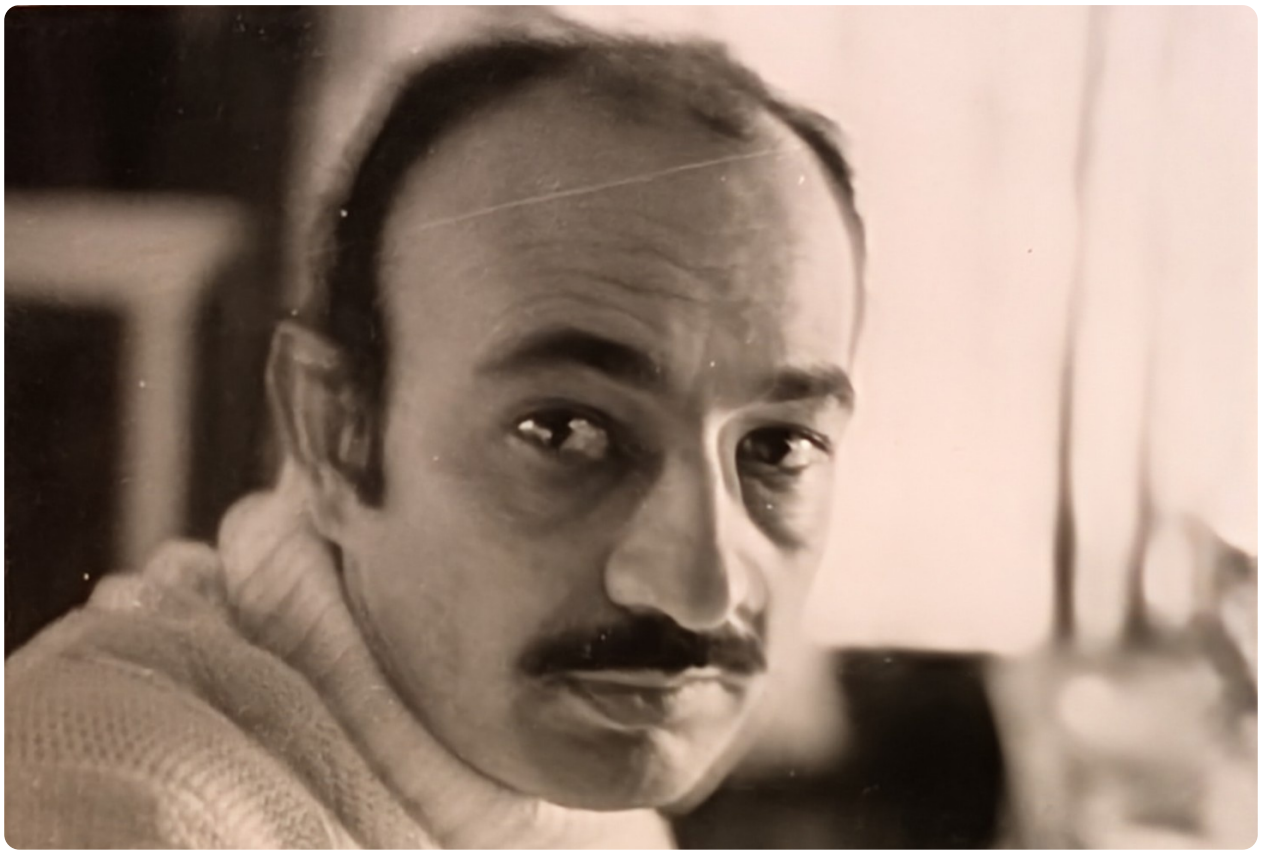
The word saffron comes from the word for yellow, which in Arabic is 'asfar'.

The saffron plant, which is yellow, is called 'zaferan' in Arabic. In Mardin there is a monastery of the Assyrians (Süryanis), still active today, called 'Dar ül Zaferan' (the yellow house).

The French called 'asfar' safran, and safran was adopted by many countries as the name of this plant.

Safranbolu is the name of the town in Turkey where saffron is grown. The town is also famous for its typical wooden houses.

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The New Year in Antiquity

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 22.1.2020 · original

When the Jews were exiled to Babylon, they found there a festival called Akitu. It was celebrated at the New Year. The festival began on the first day of the month of Nissannu and lasted 12 days. That first day corresponded to the spring equinox, which is 21 March in today's calendar. In certain towns of Mesopotamia the festival was celebrated both in Nisan and in Tishri, the autumn equinox.

At the Akitu festival the King of Babylon led the celebration, and this was the beginning of a yearly cycle. The new year corresponded in theory to the beginning of the universe and the cosmos. The festival began at the Ishtar Gate (the name Esther comes from this goddess; a small part of the remains of this gate is in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, and a very large part in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin) and ended at the Temple of Akitu. When King Cyrus conquered Babylon, the festival was celebrated no more.

The new year in Egypt began when the rains of Ethiopia caused the floods of the Nile, which filled the river bed with the silt that gave Egypt life. The Egyptians had a fixed sign: when the star Sirius disappeared from view and reappeared 70 days later, that was the start of the new year, and getting thoroughly drunk they celebrated it joyfully. The date corresponded more or less to the middle of July. If the Nile floods were small there was famine, but if they were too great they caused destruction.

What is interesting is that the Egyptian calendar says we are now in the year 6259 from the beginning of the world. This differs little from our own calendar, which says we are in the year 5780 from the beginning of the world. Only remember that the Egyptians built this calendar not like ours, on the lunar system, but on the solar system, taking into account that the earth goes round the sun in 365 days. They said these 365 days were made up of 12 months of 30 days each. The 5 additional days formed another month called 'the short month'. That is why they counted not 13 but 12 months. This calendar is used today only by the Copts, in their churches.

The Romans began by celebrating the new year in the month of March. They worshipped the god Janus, whose name meant 'gate' and who has 2 faces, one looking right and the other left. This symbolized the beginning and the end. In the year 153 BCE the Senate decided that the year should begin on the first day of the month of Janus, or January. Caesar modified the calendar, which is why it is called the 'Julian calendar'. Later a pope named Gregory made another modification in 1582, and so the calendar came to be called the 'Gregorian calendar'.

Today a few countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nepal and Saudi Arabia continue with their own calendars.

According to the famous Sumerologist Muazzez İlmiye Çiğ, among the Turks before they became Muslims the new year celebration went like this: the sky was divine, and day and night fought each other. Since 21 December was the shortest day and the longest night of the year, they held celebrations using a branch of pine they called 'AKÇAM', 'the White Pine', and placed little gifts under the branch, tying small things to it so that Heaven would bring goodness to the world. Mrs Çiğ also says that 'Father Christmas' is a Turkish figure, because his clothes closely resemble what the Turks of Central Asia wore, and that this figure entered the Western tradition by way of the Huns.

What Our Fathers Ate

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 12.2.2020 · original

Food, more than a means of survival, brings peoples together in community, creating a sense of family and brotherhood with its wealth of colour, flavour and culture.

One could even say that food is one of the pillars of nationalism. Food has also served as culinary art, as passion and as profession.

The way food is prepared, we believe, has not changed much since the time when man lived in caves and roasted meat on the fire.

What we call today 'türlü with meat' was made more than 8,000 years ago. We see it in the story of the wedding of Isaac our father with Rebecca. The lentil dish has been known for more than 2,000 years.

We have recipes from the Roman period that speak of fish dishes or stewed lamb. Food made with dough stuffed with vegetables was made more than 4,000 years ago. Not to mention bread, known since humanity began.

Cheese has been eaten since man began drinking milk. Making different dishes and even sweets with cheese was already known more than 5,000 years ago. Archaeologists think the oldest cheese sweets known come from the island of Samos, just opposite Kuşadası. This sweet was given to the athletes who ran in the first Olympiad, held in 776 before our era.

In the book of Athenaeus, written in the year 230, we also find a recipe for a cheese sweet in which egg was added to puréed cheese.

Rice under the name pilaf comes from Persia, where vegetables, meat or fish with many aromatic herbs were put beside the rice. Pilaf is eaten a great deal in India, where they called it 'pulaka', meaning 'ball of rice'. Rice is known to have been eaten in China more than 13,000 years ago. From there it passed to India and then to Persia, where the Sanskrit 'pulao' turned into 'pilaf'. In the 7th century of our era they began adding saffron and more aromatic herbs, and today we call this dish 'buryan'. This rice also gave birth to the Spaniards' 'paella'.

Leaving fish in salt and eating it raw was also known long before. The Byzantines called this salted fish 'garum'. Archaeologists found jars full of 'garum' in Pompeii, buried by the eruption of Vesuvius, near Naples.

It seems to me that the name of our tasty 'garato' is very close to the old name 'garum'.

Today the oldest food recipe reaches us from the time of Hammurabi, king of Babylon, who lived 3,750 years ago. On one of the clay tablets we find 40 different recipes. The explanations are in cuneiform.

May we have good health, appetite and good humour to enjoy the tasty dishes of our cuisine.

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Immigrants with Blue Eyes

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.4.2020 · original

Thousands of years ago, immigrants from today's Turkey and today's Iran came to the north of Israel, to the Galilee, and the arrival of these immigrants changed the culture of these regions. New studies tell us that these people brought new cultures and also changed the genetics of the local people, giving them blue eyes, something unknown in this geography.

From the DNA of the 600 bodies in the tombs of 6,500 years ago, archaeologists recently discovered the changes these historic peoples made. DNA analysis showed that the bodies kept in these tombs were different from the peoples who had lived in the region. Certain genetic differences corresponded to the peoples who live in Anatolia and in the Zagros mountains, which are now partly in today's Turkey and largely in today's Iran.

What is now Israel, formerly called Galilee, belonged to the region known as the Levant. The Levant today is considered the east of the Mediterranean, and between the years 4500/3500 before our era this region saw many changes. The strongest change was in the cave of 'Peki'in'. Peki'in is a village in Israel, between Akko and Nahariya, on a mountain called Mount Heron. Druze live in this village today. In his book 'The Jewish War' the famous Jewish historian Josephus speaks of this village. The cave measures 17 m by 8 m. There they found jars and offerings for the dead with hundreds of bodies more than 6,000 years old. DNA studies were made from the bone dust of certain bodies, and so it was learned that this DNA corresponds to what is found today in the Zagros regions. They showed that the genetics found belonged to people with 'blue eyes'.

The studies also showed that all those who have blue eyes belong to the same ancestors, living in Jordan, Turkey and Denmark. This line comes from women, that is, the maternal line, and this shows us that 49 per cent of the population of the Galilee have blue eyes.

All these studies make us think that the world always changed through successive migrations.

Adapted from Live Science

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On the Archaeological Ruins of Synagogues

El Amaneser no. 184, p. 5, 3.6.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

I think it must be interesting to know how the synagogues we had nearly 2,000 years ago were built. Archaeology gives us signs of the existence of synagogues built in Turkey, since we know that Jews lived here right after the Babylonian exile. The presence of Jews in many other countries is noted in the cemeteries, from the tombstones. From tombstones we can learn a little about family names and the profession of the deceased. A short time ago the remains of a synagogue of the Roman period were discovered in Germany, in the region of Cologne (Köln). What makes one think it may be a synagogue is that the ground plan shows the hall ending in a semicircular part to the east, and to the north of the hall there must have been something like a small pool, which could be the mikveh.

As these ruins are not very well preserved, it is thought that the building was probably a synagogue. In Sardis, the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, where for the first time in human history coins were minted, the Jews who lived there built a synagogue right next to the gymnasium, where the young Romans did physical exercise naked and went into the pool just beside it to wash and clean themselves after the games. This synagogue of Sardis consists of a single large hall. A synagogue of a similar period was found on the Greek island of Delos, near Athens. That synagogue had a wall separating men and women.

But in the synagogue of Sardis there is no trace of a wall. One side of the synagogue is attached to the gymnasium; on the other side, a wall where there must have been a market, one can see the names of the shop owners. These names are typical, well-known Jewish names. Another synagogue of the same period is at Priene. Priene is an ancient city of Ionia that had a port on the Aegean Sea. With time, through the silt of the river Maeander (Menderes), the port filled up and the city was left 7 km inland, just like Ephesus. The city of Priene was built by the famous architect Hippodamos. He planned the streets in a grid, and each block of houses formed a group of 8 houses.

Many European cities are like that today. We are not used to speaking of blocks, but that is how the ancient cities of our country were. Priene is between Kuşadası and Miletus, where Hippodamos was born. The city is built on a hill, one could almost say a mountain. The city's planning was so well done that today one can clearly see the clay pipes that brought water into the city. The other drainage pipes, which emptied the dirty water into the river, look as if they were new, recently made. The synagogue of Priene is on the terrace below the commercial market (Agora). In this market all food articles were found: meat, vegetables, fruit, etc.

Priene also had another market, the Public Market, the 'Agora of the State'. The synagogue was very small, almost like a little house, and on the walls one can see marks where there must have been benches to sit on. In the gymnasium one sees the basins as in a hamam, and in each basin graffiti the young men wrote. When you visit this gymnasium you really feel you are in a gymnasium with the young, joking athletes. In the wall of the synagogue facing east one notes something like a niche, which must have been the 'Aron ha-Kodesh'. A block of marble bears the monogram of the Menorah. (I believe the Vandals broke this marble block.)

A mikveh, not very big, is beside the entrance. One should know that the synagogues of the Diaspora (outside Jerusalem) did not have to follow the same plan as the 'Beit ha-Mikdash'. The word synagogue means 'place of assembly'. The same definition holds for the word church, or

cami. The synagogue of Myra, a small town very near Finike, is very well known because it is said that 'Aya Nikola', 'Father Christmas', lived there. The Americans call him 'Santa Claus'. The church where he was buried is visited by many tourists. Later, in the Middle Ages, the Italians carried the tomb of Saint Nicholas to Bari, in Italy, near the Adriatic Sea.

In this synagogue of Myra the archaeologists found pieces of marble blocks, on one of which can be seen the Menorah and the shofar, and on the other the Menorah and the lulav. The mikveh can also be seen very well, receiving rainwater from the roof and emptying it into the river. This synagogue must date from the 5th to 7th century of our era, that is, from the Byzantine period. We hope that in the future (after the Corona era) we shall find other excavations of synagogues in Anatolia, because Jews lived in many places on these lands.

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The Beer of the Jews

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 24.6.2020 · original

Brewing beer has been known for more than 3,000 years. In the pyramids of Egypt we see figures showing how beer was made. The code of Hammurabi, from the 18th century before our era, speaks of beer. Ancient Greece learned the way of making beer from the Egyptians and brought the drink to Europe. In Judea, the name of the Jewish country in antiquity, wine was preferred to beer. After the exile to Babylon, the Jews took a taste for beer and adopted the drink into daily life. The Talmud, it seems, speaks of different kinds of beer: barley beer (pirzuma), date beer (shekhar), fig beer (taini). Beer is known to have been one of the fermented drinks that man used to satisfy himself.

The word beer comes from the Latin bibere, meaning to drink. We are used to adding a little 'hops' (şerbetçi otu) to beer, which gives it the attractive flavour we know.

Our fathers told us that drinking alcohol in moderation brings joy and pleasure, but that drinking with 'goyim' (people who are not Jews) could be dangerous. The Shulchan Aruch also tells us not to drink with goyim. Until the 1800s the Jews in Germany were not allowed to brew beer, but they traded in hops, the product indispensable for brewing. Until 1930 the Jews controlled 70% of the production of this plant. The Jew generally drinks on Shabbat eve, to welcome and gladden Queen Shabbat.

In the 18th century nearly 80% of the Jews of Poland worked in this industry and also in the tavern trade. Although in the 1800s Jews were forbidden to live from the income of this trade, many Christian owners had Jewish masters to run the work, because the Jews had centuries of experience. The famous German feast or festival called 'Oktoberfest', where beer is drunk to the point of deadly drunkenness, was invented and organized by young Jews to promote beer. The famous decorated jugs or steins for drinking beer are also a Jewish invention. The famous brand Löwenbräu was confiscated from the Jewish family of Joseph Schülein, and his son died in the concentration camp of Dachau.

Some famous brands in the United States, such as 'Messiah', 'Menne', 'Jewbilation', are Jewish productions.

Today in Israel many beers are made with recipes surviving from the 4th century, using dates, pomegranate and etrog to give them a particular taste of excellence.

Drinking in measure is wisdom, elegance and gastronomic knowledge.

It is said that a friend is known on journeys, at card games and above all at a merry table where alcoholic drink is taken.

Adapted and adjusted from the article by Yvette Alt Miller

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The 'Cupping Glass' of Masada

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.7.2020 · original

At the Olympics held in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, spectators noticed that the famous swimmer Michael Phelps, who won the gold medal, had round marks on his back. The marks were left by the cupping glasses applied before he swam. Cupping is a form of medicine used for thousands of years. Michael Phelps, with 8 medals, broke the record of Mark Spitz, who had 7.

In 2009 a cupping glass used more than 2,000 years ago was found at Masada. Bell-shaped cups were much used in ancient Israel as medical treatment. The first cups we know of are found in the Ebers papyrus, an Egyptian medical document of 3,500 years ago, which said that to cure pains hot cups were placed over the part that hurt. The papyrus took the name of the German professor Georg Ebers, the Egyptologist who in 1874 gave the document to the library of the University of Leipzig, where he taught.

I remember that my grandmother (may she be in Paradise) placed a burning wick on my back and, over the wick, the glass cup. The wick burned until no oxygen was left inside the cup, and this lack of oxygen made the blood rise to the level of the skin, which turned red. At that point the pain calmed and was cured. This form of treatment was also written down by the famous Hippocrates, on whom all doctors have sworn their oath to be good doctors and cure illness for more than 2,000 years.

The bronze cupping glass of Masada was found at the level of the destruction of the fortress in the year 73, when the Romans defeated the Jews. It was Yigal Yadin who found the cup, together with some coins of that time. There were two ways of using the cup: dry and wet. In the dry method the cup was heated over a flame and, with a little oil, placed on the back of the sick person. When the cup cooled, the lack of air created a pressure that drew the blood up. In the wet method a small incision was made and the hot cup was placed over it; as it cooled, the blood rose to the skin in the same way. The process left marks on the skin for some time.

It is interesting to know that even today, in many countries, cupping is used as complementary medicine.

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The Name of Israel in History

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 19.8.2020 · original

We read the name Israel in the Torah, but we should also look for whether other peoples, other writers, mentioned this name in their writings.

The great writers we know, such as Hesiod or Homer, wrote epics and mythologies about the gods they created, based on human psychology. Every act, every feeling, every human character was worked into legends, tragedies or human stories. That is why the name of Israel is not found in the works they wrote. Apart from the texts of the Tanakh, we find the name Israel for the first time on a stele [a carved stone on which texts, announcements, treaties or memorials were written], 1200 years BCE. The Pharaoh Merneptah, in one of his inscriptions, speaks of the military campaign in which he defeated Israel and the other kingdoms and nations of the Levant.

Another, Moabite, stele, known as the Mesha Stele, bears an inscription of Mesha, King of Moab, in the ninth century BCE. The inscription mentions his victory over Omri:

'Omri was king of Israel and he oppressed Moab for many days, and his son also wanted to oppress Moab. But I, Mesha, was able to defeat Israel, which became a ruin.'

An Israeli tour guide, Avinoam Ben Dor, says that the first appearance of the name of Israel was probably that of the Hellenistic priest (in the time of Alexander the Great) who lived in Egypt at the time of the translation of the Torah. Manetho writes the story of the lepers and adds that the Israelites invaded Egypt because they were not allowed to live there. Thus this priest falsified history, saying that the Israelites stayed there until the Egyptians drove them out of their lands.

In the second century BCE an Egyptian writer, Lysimachus, wrote his own version of the lepers, saying that when the Jewish people were in the desert, Moses proposed to invade and conquer the land of Israel, driving out its inhabitants. The historian Lindsay Hall says that writers such as Josephus or Philo, who were Jews, used the name Israel, but the Greek writers of antiquity did not know what Israel was, although they knew Jews who lived in Sardis, Halicarnassus (today's Bodrum) or Smyrna (today's İzmir).

For this region they speak of the Hittites, but not of Israel. In the Tanakh Greece is called Yavan, a word that must have referred to Ionia. On the other hand Harriet Flashenburg, professor of history, says that Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians knew very well about the Israelites, and copied from them their way of learning and living. Priests of ancient Rome and rabbis studied together. Many Greeks and Romans adopted the way of life of the Jewish world.

The Jews were better educated than the others because they had had to leave their country. The Jewish people had to learn how to live in every society in order to survive. Now Israel is the home of all Jews.

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The Library of Alexandria

El Amaneser no. 188, p. 20, 14.10.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

When Alexander the Great died in the year 323 before our era, the dynasty of the Ptolemies began to control Egypt. King Ptolemy I established the capital at Alexandria and began to build the famous library, which held thousands of books. In the year 415 of our era, Cyril of Alexandria, the famous bishop of that time, killed Hypatia, the famous woman philosopher, mathematician and astronomer, who was butchered like an animal in the church of the city. Even if Cyril was not directly the one who killed her, he was responsible for the killing, because Hypatia was an intellectual who sought the truth and was not afraid to say what she thought.

She was the first woman interested in mathematics and philosophy. Let us not forget that without mathematics it is not easy to understand philosophy. Hypatia was a great scholar and gave advice to the rulers, including King Ptolemy, who was not on good terms with Bishop Cyril. Hypatia was a pagan, but most of her pupils were Christians. She had great tolerance for them and had become the symbol of feminism and of 'women's rights'. Bishop Cyril was very jealous of Hypatia because she was more honoured than he in the Eastern Roman Empire. She took this virtue from her father Theon, who was also a professor of philosophy and science in Alexandria.

It was he who predicted the eclipse of the sun and the moon of the year 364. Alexandria had been a very important cultural centre since Alexander the Great, who gave the order to build a centre called the 'Museion', or Sanctuary of the Muses (Muses = fairies of inspiration). It was this sanctuary that became the largest library in the world of those days. It was a centre like a university of today, with dictionaries, encyclopaedias, instruments of science and astronomy and everything a researcher, a seeker after science, could need. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided among three commanders: Seleucus, Antigonus and Ptolemy.

Seleucus took the eastern part of the Empire, with Babylon as capital; Antigonus Monophthalmus (one eye) took Macedonia, Greece and Anatolia; and Ptolemy was the governor of Egypt, making Alexandria his capital and bringing the tomb of Alexander the Great to the capital. The city was laid out in a very planned manner. Ptolemy's largest project was the construction of the great library from the year 306 before our era. From the start he gathered immense riches from Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece, Rome and Egypt. Until it burned in the year 642 of our era, this library was the sole centre of culture and learning and the sole philosophical and spiritual force behind the world of Judaism and Christianity.

In the first centuries after 306, the library was the centre of influence of the philosophers Aristotle and Plato. In the first 150 years of our era the library was influenced by the famous Jewish philosopher Philo. Afterwards came the influence of what is called the 'School of Alexandria', until it burned, dominating the intellectual world. Ptolemy brought from Athens a professor named 'Demetrius of Phalerum' to direct the project. In this project there was room not only for books but also for a university for studies. A marvellous thing was the library's catalogue, called the 'Pinakes'. The full title of the Pinakes was: 'The Tables of the marvellous works of all Greek civilization'.

In Greek, Pinakes means 'tablet'. This catalogue alone, the Pinakes, was made up of 120 scrolls in which all the work of the library was registered with discipline, with a good description of each work. All the works were identified by their titles, the name of the author, the author's birthplace, the names of those who influenced and taught the author, a short biography and some

other works by the same author, and the sources of knowledge of the work. Thus this catalogue was the first in Western civilization, like the Bible that Gutenberg printed in the 15th century. Thus the rules of a good catalogue were fixed for ever. In that period the library had 500,000 books, and 2,000 years ago the books rose to nearly 1 million.

One of the directors of this library was the famous philosopher Eratosthenes, an expert in mathematics, geography, astronomy, philology, history and poetry. He was known as the wise man after Plato. It was he who invented the way to measure the circumference of the earth. Another director of the library was Aristophanes of Byzantium, a brilliant man who could memorize everything he read like a photograph and recite on the spot what he had read. He was invited to become director of the other famous library, at Pergamum (Bergama), and Aristophanes accepted. But out of jealousy King Ptolemy V put him in prison so that he would not go to Pergamum, because there was great rivalry between the two libraries.

Ptolemy, so as always to be the best, did not permit the export of papyrus, the leaves of the plant on which they wrote. But the city of Pergamum, in order to be able to write, invented 'parchment', which is what we call 'parşömen', cow or goat skin worked very fine. The Torah scrolls are also written on parchment. In the last centuries of the Roman Empire and the first centuries of the Byzantine Empire, until the arrival of the Arabs, the political rulers were not at all capable of maintaining the intellectual level that had made the glory of the library, because these later rulers abandoned 'Reason' and plunged deep into 'Religion', even though people like Philo and Hypatia lived in that period.

Philo Judaeus belonged to a very important Jewish family of Alexandria. His brother was the president of the Jewish community of the city. For this reason Philo was able to write many books. We know all this thanks to the Jewish historian Josephus, who lived in the same period. He had great enthusiasm for Greek art and civilization. It is believed that Philo studied in a gymnasium where there was no Jewish education. He was interested in the great writers such as Sophocles and Euripides, and above all in philosophy, mathematics and the theatre. In the debates between Jewish 'Halakha' and Greco-Roman law, he was on the side of the latter.

He supported the Essenes, who lived in solitude and rejected wealth. He was the president of the delegation that carried complaints to the emperor Caligula after the pogrom against the Jews in Alexandria, in which many of the rights they had were abolished. When the Arabs conquered Egypt, and of course Alexandria, the Arab commanders took away most of the books of the Library before burning it. Thus the works of Aristotle, Plato and more were translated... And it was the Crusaders who learned all this from the Arabs and transmitted it to the world.

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The Tree of Life

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 4.11.2020 · original

In the mythologies, many things were considered sacred. For many peoples the tree symbolizes 'life', with roots that go down to our ancestors and branches that symbolize the generations.

This 'Tree of Life' appears more and more in the art of painting and sculpture, in certain archaeological works and in various other fields.

Because of its size the tree was also an object of prayer. Among many other things it symbolizes immortality. In winter most trees lose their leaves, and in summer they are born again.

In many cultures the tree takes on a divine role, and certain people tie threads or rags to it to have their wishes come true. For some peoples the tree has a cosmic force, that is, it gives you the feeling of uniting with the cosmos, the spiritual universe.

The tree with its branches was the first experience of making fire; the tree served to hold the cocoon that gives silk; it gave us fresh and dried fruit; it served for building houses and boats. So it had a multitude of uses that man drew on for centuries and continues to draw on in our day.

The tree is also symbolized in the Menorah and the Hanukkiah. With its 7 branches it gives light to humanity, and with 9 branches it reminds us of freedom.

'The Tree of Life' serves to help you towards a virtual union with Heaven — the Heaven that also symbolizes 'Gan Eden'.

The tree, with its roots under the earth, its trunk above the earth and its branches reaching towards the sky, symbolizes the past, the present and the future.

In Greek mythology Apollo falls in love with Daphne, a very, very beautiful young girl. Apollo wants to seize her and she flees from him with all her strength. Daphne, seeing there is no way to save herself from Apollo, begs Zeus to save her. Zeus helps Daphne and turns her into a tree. In the same mythology the oak (meşe) is the symbol of the Tree of Life. And Daphne is the tree (defne, the laurel) that gives its leaves to make the crowns of emperors — leaves that are also aromatic and medicinal for certain ills.

In 'Bereshit' we find the 'Tree of Life' standing beside the tree of 'Knowledge of Good and Evil'. These two trees are in 'Gan Eden'. So one can say that this notion of the 'Tree of Life' is in our culture too.

The trees that can be compared with the 'Tree of Life' are those that stay evergreen, the trees that are large and live through winter and summer, such as the cypress (selvi), the pine (çam) or the plane tree (çınar). These trees symbolize eternity, the sacred and the divine.

The importance of eternity is also noted in the names of certain synagogues, such as the synagogue of Ortaköy, called 'Etz ha-Hayim', which means 'Tree of Life'. Man always had this hope of resembling the 'Etz ha-Hayim'.

The 'Tree of Life' symbolizes 'hokhma' (wisdom), serenity and peace. It symbolizes creation and the roots of life. It symbolizes rebirth and the development of man. It symbolizes generosity, offering its fruit, its sap, its wood. Its branches give a feeling of safety and its trunk symbolizes protection. It symbolizes the strength and beauty of Nature. It symbolizes the continuation of Humanity.

The Figures on the Rocks of the Negev

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 1.12.2021 · original

The civilizations of Sumer and Egypt fed on observations of the sky. They relied on the events of the sky to know the future of those on earth. The sun, the moon and the stars were the centre of the study of astronomy and also represented the gods in different civilizations. Israel, being the smallest neighbour, borrowed these myths and began to carve them as symbols on the rocks of the Negev desert, just as the first humans did before they knew writing.

Some of these figures on the rocks symbolize the four important days of the year, the days of the equinoxes and the solstices — that is, the days when the sun changes place: 21 March, 21 June, 21 December and 23 September. These four days of the year were very important because they were days of pilgrimage to the places considered sacred. On these days they celebrated festivals such as the beginning of the new year, the harvest (hasat), fertility, and they probably made figures on the rocks to commemorate and pass on their wisdom and knowledge to the new generations.

The art of rock figures is not a fine art, but it is the oldest language for transmitting the emotions and the wisdom of the people who lived in these places. Most of these figures reflect the cycle of the moon, of the planets or of the sun, and are connected with astronomy. The worship of the sky can be seen very well in archaeological excavations, as in a tomb. Although the figures look like drawings made by children, or seem to have been done in a hurry to get it over with, the content is much deeper, because they reflect the belief of the artist.

Man was always fascinated looking at the sky. The stars and the planets always helped him to form a calendar. After many observations one could say what was going to happen, what the rhythm of life, of agriculture and of the religious festivals would be. The moon was what was best known in the observation of the sky, and of course a reason for establishing the calendar.

Most of the rock figures of the Negev show us the journey of the Moon, which lasts 28 days each month, as seen in the copy of the worm with 28 feet.

The wise old man who represents the Moon god is on another rock of the Negev, beneath another very important number, 28, which is the cycle of the Moon. Thus in almost all of Mesopotamia and the Middle East the basis of the calendar was always the Moon, which forms the lunar year of 354 days, compared with the solar year of 365 days. That is why our festivals do not always fall on the same date, and that is why our fathers added a month every 3 or 2 years in a cycle of 19 years. That is: 3+3+2+3+3+3+2=19.

Another figure in the rock art of the Negev is the wheel with 12 spokes, representing the 12 months.

The rock art of the Negev is not limited to astronomy; it also deals with fertility, which played a great part in the civilizations of antiquity. The sacred marriage of Father Sky with Mother Earth was… (the published text ends here)

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Roots of the New Year

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 19.1.2022 · original

In antiquity the new year was celebrated according to geography and astronomy. In Egypt the new year was the day the river Nile overflowed. In the Middle East it was on the days of the autumn equinox, that is, the end of September, or of spring, the month of April. The Persians celebrated at the spring equinox; in ancient Greece the celebration was at the winter solstice, that is, the end of December.

The oldest document we have is the celebration in Babylon, which lasted eleven or twelve days and was called the festival of Akitu — a festival with dances and songs to praise nature, which was already beginning to be reborn in spring. Let us not forget that according to the Torah the new year should begin in the month of 'Nisan', which is spring.

The first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar we owe to Julius Caesar, who wanted to begin the new year at the winter solstice and gave this month the name of the god Janus. Janus is the god of beginnings, of endings, of transition, of duality. Janus has two faces, one looking forward and the other looking back. January in English, janvier in French, enero in Spanish come from the name Janus. With his two faces he also represents the year that has passed and the year that is coming.

The Romans believed that if the first day of the year passed happily, the whole year would pass happily. So on this day they gave each other gifts, kissed, embraced, celebrated the day by decorating their houses with green branches of pine, held great feasts and amused themselves with games of dice. All this we know from what the famous Ovid wrote in his book 'Fasti', which is the description of the festivals.

Today, I believe, we are not very far from Ovid when it comes to celebrating the new year. Roads of milk and honey for a new year, with the hope of a universe full of innovations for peace and the well-being of humanity.

Source: E. Bingöl

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Hammurabi

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 9.2.2022 · original

On 5 December we commemorated the day when the right of women to vote and be elected was accepted in Turkey — a right that women in many countries obtained long after Turkey. In our country the law was accepted in 1934; in France in 1945, in Switzerland in 1971.

Today we live happily because we have laws that protect us. In antiquity the best-known law is the code of the king of Babylon, Hammurabi, who lived more than 3,800 years ago. His name means 'Great Family'. He wrote about labour contracts, landowners, family relations and much more. The 282 laws in all are engraved on a stele of diorite, in the Akkadian language, which was the lingua franca of that period. This 4-ton monument is in the Louvre museum in Paris, France. A tablet of the copies made in clay is in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, in the 'Ancient Orient' section.

What is interesting is that this monument was found in 1901 in Iran, in the region of Khuzestan, by Jacques de Morgan, a French mining engineer and archaeologist who wanted to excavate at Susa, the Elamite capital, 400 km from where Hammurabi lived.

Note that the law of Hammurabi is not the oldest law in the world, as many believe, because there are laws called those of 'Ur-Nammu' in Mesopotamia that were engraved more than 4,000 years ago. Some of Hammurabi's laws resemble those of the Torah. And many laws are of the category of 'laws of vengeance', such as 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. There are also progressive laws, such as the one giving the suspect the right to be innocent before being accused of his fault or crime. Another law says that if a married woman dies, the dowry she brought goes only to her children. At the beginning of the monument it is written that these laws were made to protect the oppressed from the violence of the strong and to protect the widow and the orphan. Even so, the code favours the man much more than the woman: a man's adultery is not counted a crime, while a woman's adultery ends with her execution.

Luckily today the law of vengeance is hardly seen in any country, but there are places where vengeance is taken directly, by killing, without going through justice, and there are places where justice arrives so late that it makes us say, 'better than nothing'.

The best thing is always to have a clean and clear conscience.

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Clothing in Antiquity

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 19.10.2022 · original

When we speak of antiquity, each of the peoples — the Egyptians, the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Romans or the Chinese — had different customs for wearing underwear and for dressing. From the frescoes we have, we see that Roman women, unlike those of other civilizations, used what was called a 'strophion', a band that covered the breasts and was tied at the back. Most other peoples wore what we today would call a kind of 'peştemal'.

Men's clothing was very rudimentary, like that of the mummy found in the Alps, between Austria and Italy, in a place called Ötztal at an altitude of 3,200 metres. For this reason the mummy was called 'Ötzi', and under the snow it stayed just as seen in the photo. The clothing was: leather, fibre, cloth uncut and unsewn, held together by some kind of brooch, and a cap.

For thousands of years the clothing of the Egyptians was of linen (keten). As the climate of that country is always hot, light, cool linen was very suitable. In Greece they used the 'chiton', a tunic formed by two rectangles of cloth joined at the shoulders. In the Roman Empire they wore the 'toga', a tunic, and put on 'sandals' as footwear. Clothing was of linen and, according to rank, of silk.

One can say that clothing is more than 150,000 years old. Apart from cold or heat, man dressed also to announce his social rank.

Coming to what we wear under our clothes, it is hard to know since when we have used it, because it surely began with the need for protection and health. Later the restrictions of the religions were added. One of the reasons for having underwear was also the conditions of changing climate. Even today we can see tribes who live completely naked.

Today clothing depends on fashion, especially for women, who wear skirts now long, now short. At the beginning of the 20th century a woman went into the sea fully dressed. Today it is a shame if she doesn't have a bikini or a light swimsuit.

Clothing is as we read in Kohelet: 'Nothing new under the sun.'

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Eating in Antiquity

El Amaneser no. 213, p. 14–15, 9.11.2022 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Man always needed to eat in order to live. It is known that every civilization had its own customs and traditions in the way of eating, the way of cooking, the mixing of vegetables, the meat of the slaughtered animal, and so on. Only, not much was left to us in writing from the Sumerians, the Egyptians or any other civilization apart from ancient Greece and Rome. Writers such as Aristophanes or Athenaeus left us enough material to know Greek cooking. In the first place, Greek cooking is very simple. Even at social gatherings where people reclined on one elbow on couches, the cooking was based on simplicity.

According to the writer Polyaenus, Alexander the Great mocked the richness of the food he found in Persia. Another writer, Pausanias, says: 'The Persians, having so rich a cuisine, came to steal the poor food of the Greeks.' Another important aspect of Greek cooking was that its base came from the Mediterranean, with the olive, wheat and the grape for wine. Meat was for the very rich. Slaughtering an animal to eat was very rare, because the edible animals served for other, more useful work — like the goat, which was never eaten so that its milk could be used. Calories came either from wheat or from barley, in the form of bread, pita or sweets.

Breakfast was barley bread dipped in wine, sometimes with a few figs or olives. The midday meal was taken at noon, again with bread dipped in wine, figs, salted fish (I don't know whether it was garato, çiroz or liparida), olives and cheese. The most important meal of the day was at nightfall. Then they ate eggs, fish, olives, cheese, all kinds of vegetables such as cabbage, carrot, cucumber and more... Fish was cooked in cheese; to the wine they added much water and garlic. Dessert was always a natural sweet such as honey or fig. Butter was used mostly in Thrace, the western part of Asia Minor.

Vegetables being very expensive in the big cities, the poor ate sun-dried vegetables and drank lentil soup. Men and women could not eat together. If the house was large, the slaves served first the men, then the women, and finally they themselves could eat. If the house was small, the women could eat after serving the men. Food was eaten from a bowl of dough or of clay (terracotta). As they did not know the fork, they carried the food to the mouth with a piece of bread. They already knew what spoon and knife were. In the Roman period, breakfast, called 'ientaculum', consisted of a little bread, honey and cheese.

The midday meal, the 'cena', was the richest because it had three courses. The first course was the starter, 'gustatio', with little things to make you laugh. The second was the substantial course, 'primae mensae', and the dessert was 'secundae mensae', made up of fruit. The poor, who were the majority, ate a barley gruel and, as they had no money for lamp oil, ate the 'cena' later and went to bed at dark. Bread was eaten with honey, with olives, cheese or egg. And they dipped the bread in wine. In Pompeii 30 ovens were found. This tells us the Romans ate a lot of bread, always accompanied by salt.

Butter they did not use. The aubergine became known with the attacks of the Arabs. Tomatoes and potatoes came from America. Vegetables such as celery, cabbage, radish, carrot, kuchunugurya, peas and cucumber were much consumed. The orange was unknown. The lemon came to the Roman table after the 5th century. The Romans preferred chicken to pork and beef. According to the writings, the Romans liked food with a sweet and sour taste, so they used much honey and vinegar. The rich ate quite a lot of fish, which was not the case for the middle

class, but everyone drank a lot of alcohol, because they considered that water could contain many bacteria and had an insipid taste.

The wine contained much alcohol, so they added much water. Sometimes they put honey in the wine and drank it hot. Apart from wine, the Romans also drank beer, which they called 'cerevisia', which today in Spanish is 'cerveza'. Coffee, so famous today in Italy, was known as the 'Muslim drink' because it began to be drunk in Yemen, and the European countries got to know it through the Ottomans. Tea came after the 17th century with the Dutch. The Romans used the knife, a large fork to hold the meat, a long-handled pan as today, a jug for measuring, a mould for shaping, a grater for grating, tongs both for the fire and for the meat, a tripod for draining.

These things were hung on hooks or on chains on the kitchen wall. Private kitchens could be seen only in the houses of the very rich. The middle class had a common kitchen that many families used. One more thing left to us from the Roman rulers was the 'taster', the slave who tasted the food and drink of the rulers, because poison, just as today, was much used to get rid of a ruler. The taster of the emperor Claudius, Halotus, became very famous in history because, having sworn to be faithful and to die for the emperor from any poison that might be in the food or drink, he himself poisoned Claudius.

It seems that even today this custom has not disappeared, because it is said that the presidents of the United States keep the tradition of having tasters. Some foods such as bread have not changed at all from the Stone Age until today. Another ancient food is rice, which we call 'pilav' in Turkish. The word pilaf comes from the Persian 'polof', and reached there from India, where they called it 'pulaow', spreading throughout Central Asia. When Alexander the Great conquered Samarkand, in Uzbekistan, he liked pilaf so much that he ordered this dish to be cooked throughout Macedonia. That is how Europe came to know rice, something already known in China more than 13,000 years ago.

With the arrival of the Mongols in India, pilaf was mixed with meat and called 'biryani', and this mixture gave rise to the famous 'paella' of Spain. SOURCE: Anya Leonard, Ben Potter, Victor Labate, Wu Mingren

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Rubbish in Antiquity

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 7.12.2022 · original

In antiquity man left very little rubbish. Today what we leave is mostly packaging, things that can be used only once, and what we peel from fruit and raw vegetables before cooking. In a city like Rome, capital of the Roman Empire, rubbish was thrown into the street. The rains, and often a monumental fountain, helped the rubbish go straight to the rivers or the sea. The other kind of refuse was used as fertilizer for the fields. Rome is known as a city of 7 hills, but with its broken pieces of pottery it got an eighth hill, called 'Monte Testaccio'. It is said that of the nine sewers of that time, 2 are still in use.

Some say the Romans and the Jews were the peoples who best managed their rubbish. We know that a person's rubbish says a lot about that person. Likewise a nation's rubbish says a lot about that nation. Romans and Jews had similar methods for handling and moving rubbish. The archaeologist Yuval Gadot of Tel Aviv University explains that a hill full of rubbish was found in Jerusalem. For the archaeologist, rubbish is not a waste of time; on the contrary, it teaches him many things about food, dietary customs and trade. This hill was found in what we call today the 'City of David'. The exploration tells us that this was not the work of one person but a public work, of the municipality or the state. The different layers of rubbish and earth explain that they buried the rubbish to avoid the bad smell and preserve public health. The archaeologists suppose that rubbish was collected from the houses and streets and carried to the hill in baskets on donkeys.

Cleanliness in the Roman period was not only for health; it was also a sanctity. With the new Christian religion, cleanliness changed form. The Roman baths, which were like a ritual for the citizens, a ritual of going every day, came to be considered a place of sin. Beside every Roman bath there could also be a gymnasium where the young trained to have a healthy body, as the saying goes, 'a sound mind in a sound body'; these too were considered another place of sin, because the young men trained completely naked. Roman streets generally began with a monumental fountain from which water flowed and cleaned the street. The end of the Roman baths and the monumental fountains was the beginning of pandemics and many diseases. Religion even forbade men to shave, saying it was contrary to belief. Without the drainage system we see today at Ephesus and other Roman cities of antiquity, the streets full of rubbish brought rats and diseases one after another. Instead of keeping wisdom, superstition and ignorance came.

Today we know very well the value of managing rubbish, and we remember the days when Istanbul too suffered from the mistreatment of its rubbish.

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Beauty in Antiquity

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.12.2022 · original

It is said that in life everything changes. The thing that does not change is change. The same goes for beauty. It changes in every age, but the concept never changes. We do not know whether in the Stone Age beauty was important, but in written antiquity we have many proofs of the notion of beauty.

In 'Bereshit' we have the story of Jacob, where it is written: 'Leah has tender eyes, but Rachel is beautiful of body and face.' King David fell in love with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, because she was very beautiful. In the 'Song of Songs' we read: 'You are so beautiful that you have no flaw.'

In ancient Greece a woman had to be a little plump and not tanned by the sun, but she was considered a badly made copy of the man. That is, beauty generally spoke of the man, because the man's beauty was the blessing of the gods. The beauty of a man's body kept the beauty of his soul. If a person is beautiful, that person is a good person. I believe the conception of beauty in that period was based on the nature of animals, for whom too beauty lies in the males and not the females: the lion and the lioness, the cock and the hen, the peacock with its enormous tail of a thousand eyes in a thousand colours, like a fan, which the female does not have. Women used vinegar to lighten their hair, which made them lose hair, and so they used false wigs. Long hair was much prized, but only women of the high aristocracy had the right to wear long hair.

In China women had to have very small feet; so they bound their feet from the age of 5-7. They shaved their eyebrows to mark them with a line of a different colour or with a black ink called Chinese ink. Their skin had to be very pale, as is the fashion in that country even today.

In Egypt the beauty of women was to be slender in the whole body. They were not to have any hair, and always wore a wig on the head.

The beauty of a man was to be slim and well formed. Fat men were considered a lower class. Having a beard and moustache was a shame and was considered impure. Having a mirror was a great fashion for men and women.

The make-up that men and women put around their eyes also served as protection against the bacteria formed by so much heat and against the very strong sunlight. As names of women who were examples of beauty in Egypt, we know Cleopatra and Nefertiti. We have no depiction of Cleopatra other than Elizabeth Taylor, who played her part.

But we know very well who Nefertiti was. Of her it is said that she had a very modern look, like a beautiful woman of today, a true art deco (the fashion of the 1920s...). She perfectly fulfils the dogmas of a beautiful woman of our era.

In the Roman Empire we know the Roman woman through the poet Ovid, who lived two thousand years ago. He says the Roman woman should be pale, with rosy cheeks, with black eyes, without perfumes on the body. They were to use make-up only to reinforce their natural beauty. Men had to have short hair, had to shave beard and moustache as in Egypt, and had to go to the Roman baths every day.

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Some Curiosities of Yesterday

El Amaneser no. 224, p. 18–19, 11.10.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

The woman of today is lucky because she can know at once whether she is pregnant or not. But before? What did they do to be sure? The women of Egypt 3,500 years ago, like those of today, wanted to know right away the sex of the baby that was going to be born. From the papyri we understand what they did. They took 2 dishes, putting barley in one and wheat in the other, and emptied their urine into these dishes. If the barley sprouted, it meant she would have a boy. If the dish of wheat sprouted, it meant the baby to be born would be a girl. There are more than 12 papyrus sheets that tell us of these tests by women curious to know the sex of the baby to come.

The papyrus fragments also tell us the other ways of knowing whether the baby would be a boy or a girl. If the future mother craves a lot of sweets, a girl will be born. But if she eats a lot of garlic and has a healthy look, it will be a boy, and if the pregnant woman's eyes grow larger, it will also be a boy. But if she gets spots, a girl will be born. The national health institute of Egypt confirmed in 1963 that 70% of the tests with barley and wheat came out positive. And this makes us think that the experiments of 3,500 years ago were almost correct. The ink of the ancient Egyptians tells us that they had a very advanced technology.

This ink contained copper and was not carbon-based, as everyone who studied the papyri until now believed. Researchers always believed that all ink was made only with carbon. What the Egyptian scribes (soferim) used was a discovery by the University of Copenhagen. Note that 'papyrus' gave us what we call today 'paper'. To make the sheets of the 'papyrus plant' they took the pith (ilik) of the plant, which also served to make boats, ropes, mats, sandals and baskets. The root of the papyrus served to make medicines and perfumes. The University of Copenhagen says it is thanks to the copper that the ink on the papyrus fragments did not disappear.

Dionysus was the god of wine. Dionysus in Greek means born twice. According to Greek mythology, Zeus fell in love with Semele. Zeus's wife, Hera, was very jealous. She went to Semele and told her to ask her lover, Zeus, not to change form when they were to meet, and to show himself to her as he really was. Zeus in his natural state was a lightning bolt (şimşek), and indeed Semele obliged Zeus not to change when he came to make love to her. Zeus did what Semele asked, and she vanished the moment Zeus approached her. A dramatic situation, because Semele was pregnant.

Zeus at once took the baby before it died and put it in his thigh, where it was incubated for some months. When the time came to be born, it was born from Zeus's thigh. That is how it took the name 'Dionysus', 'born twice'. Dionysus became the symbol of reincarnation, and reincarnation is the symbol of rebirth — that is, of spring. This is celebrated with dancing and drinking wine, almost like 'ad lo yada'. It is from this pagan tradition that we have today what we call 'Carnival': the Carnival of Rio, the Carnival of Venice, and more. And Purim falls in the same season. At the end of the Carnival they sacrificed animals to offer to the gods and afterwards judged the author of the sacrifice.

The author of the sacrifice was the sharpened knife that had served for the slaughter. To punish the knife, they threw it into the sea. So much for another curiosity of the past.

In the Roman period, when one was invited to eat at another's house, one had to bring a napkin to make a bundle in which to put the food left over, to give to the slaves of one's own house. If

the master did not bring back this bundle, the slave had the right to complain, because the slave was the master of the kitchen.

Something that seems curious to us today is the public 'latrines' (toilets) that men used. The 'latrines', more than out of necessity, also served for socializing, for talking with one's neighbours, learning the news of the day, giving one's opinion and meeting friends.

In Ephesus we have a very ornate latrine. Beneath the seat water always ran, cleaning the place. The goddess who watched over the latrines was the goddess Fortuna. So the men knew they were not going to fall ill.

Ostracism: a curiosity of ancient Greece was to expel a person believed to be against the state, or to prevent leaders who might in the long run become dictators. This was called ostracism and obliged the expelled person to stay 10 years away from his city or country. It was a way of avoiding a dictatorship. This ancient custom would be a good example if it were practised on certain rulers of various countries of our time.

Another curiosity is the famous army of ancient China, where all the soldiers, in the form of statues, were made of clay, and each of these thousands of statues of soldiers has a different form, no one resembling another.

Some are on horseback, others like infantry going on foot. These statues of soldiers, discovered in 1974, were all buried. The soldiers belonged to the emperor Qin Shi Huang, who lived around 210 before our era, in the city of Xi'an. The large statues represented the generals, meaning that each statue, depending on its role, had a different size (boy). There were even soldiers on war chariots, all made of terracotta, or clay. In total, more than 8,000 soldiers, 130 war chariots, 520 horses. The reason this army was made, it is said, was either to defend the emperor in the world of the dead, or that the emperor wanted to show his power and glory.

It is also said they were made in place of human sacrifices. Heads, arms, hands and feet were prepared and fitted one by one. Most of these statues are perfectly preserved.

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The Library of Alexandria

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 23.11.2023 · original

Among so much lost knowledge, the destruction of the Library of Alexandria, which was a gradual event lasting several successive centuries, was not as disastrous as popular culture leads us to believe. It seems we have many mistaken notions about this library, such as that the loss of many works of antiquity was due to the burning of the Library. Because the Library of Alexandria was not the only library of antiquity; many others, like that of Pergamon (Bergama) and those of the great cities of the Hellenistic world, were already known at the time. Certainly the Library of Alexandria was the most prestigious and the largest of them all. But that of Pergamon was very important because it was there that what we call parchment, or parşömen, was created. The Pharaoh Ptolemy V did not allow the export of papyrus outside Egypt, to prevent the other libraries from being better than Alexandria's. So they came up with parchment, which comes from the skin of the cow, the sheep or the goat, and of other animals too. The skin, after removing the hair and the fat with the flesh, is worked so that it is much finer and cleaner for writing on. It is known that ink can last many centuries on it, compared with papyrus, which is destroyed much faster.

We believe that most of the texts of the Library of Alexandria were copied by scribes writing on parchment, and these copies must have been found in many other libraries beyond Pergamon. What happens is that as the ink disappears, the writing is lost. What they did in the Christian monasteries was to copy these texts by hand, until the way of printing was invented thanks to Gutenberg. Since copying by hand takes a lot of time, few texts of antiquity have survived to this day.

Another thing we forget is that although it is said that the Library burned or was destroyed suddenly, in reality its fall lasted many centuries. It all began in the year 145 BCE when Ptolemy VIII, the fat one — because he ate a lot — gave the order to expel all the foreign intellectuals, who were Greeks, and with them the director of the library, Aristarchus of Samothrace (Semadirek, a Greek island between İmroz and Dedeağaç), an intellectual of world fame. In his place the king put one of his guards, Kydas, who did not know how to run a library. Alongside ignorance, the lack of funds to maintain the building was another reason for the decline. Finally, the lack of interest in Alexandria as a city was added to these reasons for the library to lose its fame. The fire that broke out while Julius Caesar was trying to take Alexandria burned very few documents, says Strabo, the geographer who passed through there.

The final destruction of the library happened in the year 272 CE, when Queen Zenobia of Palmyra and the Roman emperor Aurelian made war before Alexandria.

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A Woman Doctor in Antiquity

El Amaneser no. 228, p. 20, 14.2.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

One day in the 4th century BCE, a woman of Athens named Agnodice was brought before the Areopagus, made up of men full of anger, and began to undress with great calm. The Areopagus was the council of elders that governed the city of Athens. The thing is that Agnodice was dressed as a man, and they accused her because, it seemed, she was seducing the women of Athens. By undressing she showed that she was not a man, and so began her story as a woman doctor. In reality, whether the story of Agnodice is true or not is not well known, because the academics have not agreed on it.

What is true is that she is known as the first woman doctor and gynaecologist in written history. From childhood she had noticed the high mortality of babies and mothers in childbirth, and this made her take an interest in medicine in general and gynaecology in particular. But the laws of Athens at that time did not allow women to involve themselves in medicine, still less in gynaecology — something punished with the death penalty. What is ironic is that it had always been women who were the midwives, or relatives who helped at the birth of a baby, with thousands of years of experience.

But in Athens the men, a little jealous of seeing women so capable, in that century made this senseless law, basing themselves on the teachings of Hippocrates, considered the father of medicine, and allowed only men to practise this profession. Thus the midwives could not work in that century, for fear of the death penalty. The lack of midwives meant that many births ended in the death of the baby or the mother. And many pregnant women, whether out of shyness or for the honour of the family, did not want to be examined by a strange man during childbirth.

So Agnodice, who had set her mind on preventing death and saving pregnant women, cut her hair, dressed as a man and went to Alexandria in Egypt to study medicine with the doctor Herophilus of Chalcedon (Kadıköy – Haydarpaşa) (335-280 BCE). Herophilus was a disciple of Hippocrates and the founder of the medical school of Alexandria; he is also considered the father of anatomy and was apparently the first to take the pulse into account as a medical examination and the first to discover the ovaries. Agnodice, staying as a man and after learning many things about medicine and gynaecology, returned to Athens.

One day in the street she heard the cries of a woman in labour. She entered the woman's house to help her. The neighbours, seeing a man who wanted to enter the room of a woman in labour, began to mistreat her. She at once undressed and showed what was necessary so that they could see she was a woman. So she was accepted and saved the woman from death. And so the fame spread through the whole city of Athens of a man working as doctor and midwife whose help all women, pregnant or not, wanted. This made the men of Athens suspect that a seducer was entering the houses to seduce the wife, the sister or the daughter, who were pretending to be ill in order to be examined by this man, and that is why they brought her before the Areopagus, where she began to undress to show she was a woman.

The crime of being a woman and a doctor carried the death penalty. The angry men of the jury condemned her, giving her the death penalty, and fixed a date for the execution. The women of Athens protested so strongly against this decision, saying they would rather kill themselves than be seen naked by male doctors, that the men changed the law and allowed women to study

medicine on condition that they treated only women and not men. Agnodice gained the fame of being the first woman doctor and the first woman gynaecologist, and with this she became the symbol of equality with men and of the creativity of women.

As said above, it is not well known whether this story of Agnodice is true or not. The only time her name appears in writing is in the book of Gaius Julius Hyginus (64 BCE – 17 CE), 'Fabulae and Poetic Astronomy', a book full of stories, some mythological, others seeming true. Fabula means story. This story, myth or not, teaches us that woman aspires to control her own body; the will of the oppressed to fight against the threats of authority; the importance of being a group in order to fight. Note that if the women had not all agreed, the laws of the city would not have changed.

That is why Agnodice is a source of inspiration for the women of today. Source: N. Saldarriaga

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On Qumran

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.6.2024 · original

Khirbet Qumran (in Hebrew just Qumran; khirbet in Arabic means ruins — in Turkish we have the word 'harabe', from the same root) is surely one of the most discussed places in the Middle East, because it was there, more than seventy years ago, that one of the scrolls we call the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' was found for the first time. This place has played a great part in people's imagination as general culture: many articles were written, many documentary and sometimes sensational films were made, interesting a wide public, and it is always visited by many tourists.

The place is quite small, situated on the north-west of the Dead Sea.

It is very close to the caves where the Dead Sea texts were discovered. The texts were written in Hebrew, in Aramaic or in Greek. From the archaeological investigation of the ruins, Qumran seems to have been a military centre in the time of the Hasmoneans, a centre that collapsed in the earthquake of the year 31 BCE according to Flavius Josephus, the famous Jewish historian of the same period.

Another thing that makes us think this centre could not have been a centre of the Essenes is that many things belonging to women were found, knowing that the Essenes drove women out of their lives. In the cemetery of 1,200 tombs, at least 300 were tombs of women.

This centre, which the Arabs today call Qumran, seems to be the city called 'Ir ha-Melah', 'the City of Salt', in the book of Joshua. On the other hand the archaeologists Amir Drori and Yitzhak Magen showed us that these ruins must belong to a military camp just like Masada. This fortress was built at a point where the routes of trade and military activity meet. For these archaeologists the ruins were formed either because of a military attack or because of the earthquake of the year 31 BCE mentioned by the famous Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Apart from the ovens and the water cisterns that were found, they also found a great many coins of that period. The very large number of coins leads us to understand that the place was a commercial or industrial centre rather than a community centre like that of the Essenes. According to the archaeologists, the site fell after the year 70 CE, that is, after the fall of Jerusalem. With all this we cannot forget that the Essenes too lived in the same place and left traces of their lives. What we do not know very well is the size of the population that lived there in that era.

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Health in Antiquity

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 10.7.2024 · original

'Baths, wine and sex can harm the body; but it is these things that make life worth living.'

A tomb inscription found in a tomb of the 2nd century CE at Ephesus. The man buried in this tomb was called 'Tiberius Claudius Secundus'.

A very famous doctor named 'Galen' lived in the same period as this 'hedonist' (one who knows how to savour life). Doctor Galen lived in Pergamon, which in Turkish we call 'Bergama', a town north of İzmir. He was doctor to the Roman emperors, because he lived both in Bergama and in Rome. He was at the same time a philosopher, a surgeon, a pharmacist and a biologist.

He himself said: 'To understand something, one must stand on two feet. One is the "logos", which means Reason. The other is Experience. Without reason and without experience you cannot find what is right,' he always said. He also added: 'To have good health, man must take responsibility for his own body. Knowing what one is eating and not going to excess, doing gymnastics, drinking water, breathing clean air and sleeping well are the primary things for health.'

Again according to this doctor, the health of the soul should be part of the health of the body. A happy coincidence is that the Asklepion, the hospital dedicated to the god Asklepios, is in Pergamon, where Galen lived. This hospital dealt with illnesses of the soul in general. The daughter of this god was called 'Hygieia' and was responsible for cleanliness, or hygiene. So washing in clean water was a way of respecting this goddess. In the traditions of Anatolia there is a doctor called 'Lokman Hekim', a doctor with almost the same figure as Asklepios. He knew all the herbs for making cures, came to the side of the sick to give them the medicines they needed, and had a thousand pieces of advice so that a person could have a body full of health and live many years.

The first president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, said: 'A sound mind is found on a sound body.' I believe that in Galen's time they thought the same way.

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On Jerusalem

El Amaneser no. 233, p. 18–19, 10.7.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

The investigations carried out in Jerusalem have shown us that this city was at first very small; it is believed that perhaps some 500 or 700 people lived there between the years 1700 and 1000 BCE, says Professor Hillel Geva of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In the time of the reigns of King David and Solomon this population must have grown to 2,000, Prof. Geva thinks. Other professors think the population could have been around 4,500 or 5,000 in the same period. By the time of the Hasmoneans (150 to 50 BCE), Prof. Geva thinks the population rose to 8,000.

With the dynasty of Herod (between 50 BCE and 70 CE) the maximum was about 20,000. Other professors have estimated up to 75,000 people. With the arrival of Christianity, Jerusalem became a cosmopolitan city, filled by Christians, Jews and more people of other nations such as Armenians, Georgians or Copts, who wished to die in the Holy Land or make a pilgrimage. After the Bar Kokhba events, when the Jews were not allowed to live in Jerusalem, with the camp of the Roman soldiers the language spoken there was generally Greek, because it is believed that most of the soldiers of the camp were natives of Jerusalem who spoke Greek.

We know that when the priest prayed in Greek, the prayer was at once translated into Aramaic. This shows us that Aramaic in this period was still the language spoken in the city. In the 4th century, with the Emperor Constantine, who gave freedom to the Christians, and the Emperor Theodosius, who decided to make the Christian religion the official religion of the Roman Empire, many Jews began to convert to Christianity in order to survive peacefully in Jerusalem. With the invasion of the Persians in the 7th century CE, counting the dead and those taken prisoner by the Persians, it is reckoned that some 50,000 people lived in Jerusalem.

After the Roman Empire accepted the Christian religion as the religion of the state, many Latins went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. Some stayed, and the rest returned to their countries. Many of them were of the aristocracy or close to the reigning emperor. Some of these pilgrims also went to live in Bethlehem, where it is said Joshua, or Jesus, was born, and which was formerly part of Jerusalem. Others wished to live on the Mount of Olives, where they founded many monasteries. Like the Latins, many Romans who spoke Greek — it being their mother tongue, because they lived in today's Turkey or in Constantinople — went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage.

Among these Anatolians, two queens received great honour in Jerusalem. One of these queens was Helena, the mother of Constantine, who made the tiny town of Byzantium the capital of the Roman Empire. Helena arrived in Jerusalem in the year 327 CE and is said to have found, as a miracle, the Cross on which Jesus (Joshua) had been crucified 300 years earlier. It seems that this so historic cross is in the foundations of the column we call in Turkish 'Çemberlitaş', the first monument erected by the Emperor Constantine, which bore his statue in the form of Apollo on top of the column — a statue that fell in the 10th century after a very strong storm.

As many fires broke out around the square we call today 'Beyazıt', they put iron rings on the column so that it would not collapse. The other queen was Eudoxia, the wife of the Emperor Theodosius II, who was the son of Arcadius. To understand better: Arcadius was the son of the Emperor Theodosius I, who divided the Roman Empire in two. He had two sons. Honorius stayed in Rome and became emperor of the Western Roman Empire. Arcadius stayed in Constantinople and became emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, which much later would be

called the 'Byzantine' empire. Eudoxia, a very beautiful girl, was a lady of honour who came from Athens.

She was very cultured because she had an academic education and instruction; she pleased Pulcheria greatly, the elder sister of Theodosius II, who decided to marry her brother to this girl. As she was accused of adultery she went to Jerusalem and stayed there. In the history of our own days, the mother of Prince Philip, the mother-in-law of Queen Elizabeth II, Alice, who became a nun (a 'woman priest' — as in our culture we have no woman priest, I used the Spanish word), is buried in Jerusalem. Apart from Constantinople, pilgrims from Cappadocia in the centre of Turkey, from Konya, from Pontus in the Black Sea region, from Galatia in the region of Ankara, from Caesarea in the region of Kayseri, and from Armenia in eastern Turkey filled Jerusalem.

Today in Jerusalem there is a quarter called 'the Armenian Quarter', and it is believed that the Armenians have always lived in this quarter. Another quarter was the quarter of the Georgians. The Georgians spoke Greek but prayed in Georgian. Since the Emperor Hadrian gave the order not to let Jews enter Jerusalem after the year 70, we are not very sure that there was a Jewish quarter. But we know that on the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot the Jew had to go up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. This makes us think that there were always Jews who went to Jerusalem for these festivals, and even that they went there to commemorate the day of Tisha b'Av.

We also know that a small Jewish community existed on Mount Zion despite the prohibition. When the Emperor Julian came to power — the emperor they called 'the Apostate' because he did not accept Christianity and wanted to return to paganism — he allowed the Jews to rebuild the Beit ha-Mikdash. But he died before the work began. When Queen Eudoxia allowed the Jews to enter Jerusalem again, more than 100,000 Jews came for the festival of Sukkot in the year 440 CE. In the year 640, when the Sassanids (Persians) took Jerusalem, we know that many Jews helped the Sassanids in that war.

The era of the Crusades and the Seljuks deserves another article. With them began the rule of the Muslims, which with the Ottomans lasted until the end of the First World War. In 1948 half of Jerusalem became part of Israel. Today Jerusalem is the sole capital of that country. Source: Leah Di Segni, Yoram Tsafrir, Hershel Shanks

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Abdiel and Joseph the Righteous

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 23.10.2024 · original

In 1980 Alain Zivie, an Egyptologist (an expert in the science of Egypt), began to excavate a rock-cut tomb at Saqqara, a place very near Cairo where the cemetery of the Pharaohs and their families lies. In a short time he understood that this tomb held something extraordinary, because he discovered that the tomb belonged to the Vizier (minister, in the Ottoman sense) 'Abdiel', his wife 'Taweret' and his son 'Huy'. Among the things found in the tomb was the list of the offices and functions he had held in his life. The tomb was next to the tombs of the Pharaoh Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti.

This name 'Abdiel' is a Semitic name and is not found in the list of the great men of Egypt. ABDI-EL means 'the slave of God' or 'the servant of God'. At Pesach we read in the Haggadah the verse 'Avadim hayinu...', that is, 'Slaves we were...'. The form of this name resembles 'Daniel', which means 'God is my judge' (Dan = din), or 'Raphael', which comes from 'refua' and means 'God healed me', or 'Michael', which means 'Who is like God'.

What we know about this man is the list of titles and functions he held as Vizier. To begin with he is 'the president of the country', the Vizier who commands. This title is repeated many times. Other titles are 'the counsellor of Pharaoh', 'the president of all the land', 'the general of generals', 'the ambassador of the king' (in the military sense), 'the one responsible for the king's women', 'the one responsible for the education of the king's children', 'THE SERVANT OF ATEN'.

Aten is the single god that the Pharaoh Akhenaten, or Amenhotep IV, obliged the country to believe in. Akhenaten did not want polytheism, which means believing in many gods. Although he met much opposition from the priests (the clergy of Egypt at that time), his will was accepted during his life.

After he died, the priests, so as not to lose their powers, returned to polytheism. Akhenaten lived in the 14th century BCE and reigned between the years 1350 and 1330 BCE. His wife was the famous Nefertiti, the most beautiful of the queens of Egypt.

Two things make one believe that Abdiel and Joseph the Righteous could be the same person: his name Abdiel (Avad-El) and his belief in a single God. Although we know that Abdiel was an Egyptian, there were many foreigners who were officials of the state in the time of the Pharaohs. The name Abdiel is a Semitic name and a foreign one among the names of Egypt. Joseph, who was a foreigner, held high functions in the state of Egypt. Abdiel's belief in a single god makes us think of something else: whether it was he who stood behind the Pharaoh Akhenaten in believing in one God, or whether it was he who taught Akhenaten the belief in one God. Since he was responsible for the education and instruction of the Pharaoh's children, and since he was the Pharaoh's counsellor, we can rely on the second theory as well.

Source: Alain Zivie

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The Olympic Games

El Amaneser no. 239, p. 18–19, 8.1.2025 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

It is said that the Olympic Games began in the year 776 BCE. Although in the epics of Homer, who we believe lived before that date, we see that sporting games were organized, the date of 776 BCE was accepted by everyone, because it is from that date that we have the first writings about the Olympics. Sporting disciplines such as wrestling, boxing and the race to run fastest were already known both in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, but it was on that date of 776 BCE that we see for the first time the names of the winners written in the lists of honour.

These names are written in a text by Hippias, a philosopher and sophist who lived in Elis, the city where the stadium of Olympia stands. The towns, which were independent city-states, prepared their athletes for 4 years and sent them to Olympia, a village in the Peloponnese 15 km from the Ionian Sea, where the stadium dedicated to the god Zeus was the largest and where many spectators could come. The games took the name Olympics from the name of this village. The games were repeated every 4 years until the year 393 CE, when the emperor Theodosius announced that the Christian religion would be the religion of the Roman state, and since the athletes had to compete naked, he did not allow any more Olympics to be held.

The athletes had to be free Greeks, born of a normal family and not of adultery. They had to have no public offence that could stain their lives. They had to be over 18 and not slaves. At first the games lasted a single day. After the year 472 BCE more games were added and the Olympics lasted 5 days. The night of the third day had to coincide with the full moon. At the start of the games the athletes had to swear that they would be honest and would compete for the honour of their towns and of Zeus. The famous poets and philosophers had to read their works.

Then the games began: the pentathlon, chariot and horse races, discus throwing, the long jump (in those days they did not run up to jump), wrestling, running several times round the stadium. Note that the word stadium comes from the root 'stad', and the measure of a stade was about 185 metres. In certain cities this measure could vary between 165 and 192 m. On the last day crowns of olive leaves (not laurel leaves) were placed on the heads of the winners. The winners could also obtain good positions in the government of their city. Since the branch of olive leaves symbolized peace, crowning the winners with a crown of olive leaves symbolized friendship and peace between the towns, which were often at war.

On the other hand the word stadium meant to stand. Only the high dignitaries had marble seats. All the people watched the games standing around the stadium. So the word stadium was formed not by the athletes but by the spectators. Those who threw the discus had to rub their hands with earth so that the discus would not slip. This way of rubbing the hand with sand is used today by athletes who lift heavy weights. Since the athletes were naked, women could not enter the stadium. If a woman, out of curiosity, ever watched the games, she could be tried and punished with death.

They could not even approach the stadium. Only the priestesses of the goddess Demeter could watch the games. Like the athletes, the judges (referees) too had to swear to the honesty of the decisions they would give. If today we have some rules for sporting games, it was surely the rules mentioned above that played a great part. Although the official date of the end of the Olympics is the 4th century CE, with the emperor Theodosius, the end had already begun with

the Roman invasion of the Greek lands from the year 148 BCE. Interest in these sporting games declined against the Romans' new interest in gladiators and more savage games.

It is said that even the philosophy of Socrates drew the young men away from certain sporting activities. When excavations began at Olympia in 1875, Baron Pierre de Coubertin got it into his head to revive these historic games under the name of Olympics. Apart from the two world wars, these events have been repeated every 4 years, each time in a different country. The five rings seen on the Olympic flag symbolize the five continents, and the ritual of carrying the torch from Olympia to the city where the games will be held began with the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, based on an invention of the Nazi party.

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Rubbish

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 19.11.2025 · original

Elusa is an ancient city in the Negev, 20 km from Beersheba. Elusa was the departure point of the caravans for Egypt or for Sinai. In the Torah this city bears the name 'Bered', a city famous for the vineyards from which wine was made. The white wine of this city of nearly 20,000 people was considered a medicine in the countries of the Mediterranean.

This flourishing city, also called 'Haluza', disappeared in the 7th century CE, buried under the earth of the Negev. Today what can be seen are a few remains of its former life. Historians believed that the fall of Elusa came about through the presence of Islam, which prohibited the production of wine, the commodity on which its wealth was based. But the archaeologists who excavated and analysed the rubbish realized that the fall of the city was not in the 7th century but at least a century earlier, when the Islamic religion did not yet exist. So they understood that this tragedy happened after a great change of climate caused by volcanic eruptions.

The rubbish studies were carried out under the supervision of the professor of archaeozoology at the University of Haifa, Guy Bar-Oz. These studies were based on ashes, on bones of meat and fish, on grape pips and olive stones, on broken wine jars, and they saw that after the 550s there was no more rubbish, noting that at the same time as they stopped throwing out rubbish there was a great climate change in Asia and Europe, a change that caused great difficulties for survival in the years of the mid-6th century CE.

The cold period of the climate change was calculated by the professor of environmental analysis Ulf Büntgen of the University of Cambridge, who found that this period ran from the years around 536 to nearly 660. Examining what happened in those years, the professor and his colleagues saw that there were certain volcanic eruptions in that same time. The ash from the lava, covering the sun, caused an excessive cold that made life quite hard to live, through lack of food and through certain pandemics that spread rapidly, such as the plague epidemic in the time of Justinian, the emperor of the Roman Empire that was later called the Byzantine Empire — an epidemic that reached almost the entire empire, including Elusa.

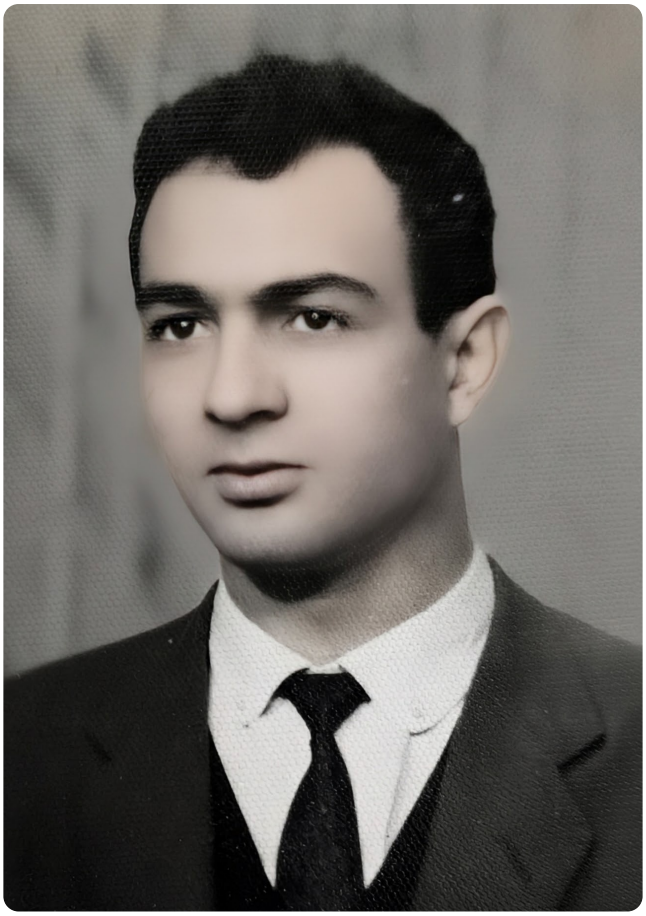
Probably the fall of Elusa came with the fall of the economy of the place. Elusa lived exclusively from the export of wine. Disease, hunger and cold put an end to the exports, and Elusa was abandoned. Today we know that the reason for many historic events was always the economy.

Source: Megan Gannon

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Jewish History & the Holocaust

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This Is Nes Gadol: One More Who Was Saved from the Ship Struma

El Amaneser no. 179, p. 2, 8.1.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Mr Arnold 'Noli' Engler was born in Czernowitz, Romania, in 1927. Noli was the only son of the Jewish Engler family. In 1940 they moved to Bucharest and opened a business. But in 1941 they began to suffer intense antisemitism and decided that young Noli should leave Romania, and they at once set about buying a ticket on the ship STRUMA. With great difficulty they managed to get the last ticket for the ship. They came to the port to see Noli board the ship and flee from Constanța, the port on the Black Sea. His mother, who saw the ship Struma close up, began to scream and said to her son, with the premonition she had: 'I will not let you board and travel on this ship, rotten on every side.' Noli's intelligent mother saw that the ship was very old and was greatly troubled, understanding that the ship would not survive the voyage on the Black Sea.

Her husband, Noli's father, protested strongly against his wife's act, because he thought this ship might be Noli's only chance to flee the country. With good reason, it was she who won, and poor Noli had to stay in Romania, without understanding much of what was going on; but he stayed alive, and was saved from the terrible end of the ship and of those who were on the Struma. The end of the Struma caused a great shock in the family, and they could not believe the miracle (nes) that had happened to them.

At the end of 1941, in December, they had another chance: to be in the group of young people that the Jewish Agency (Agence Juive) was organizing to smuggle to Palestine. It was a group of 60 children, hidden in a train that was to reach Istanbul. When the train entered Bulgaria, the Gestapo rounded up all the children over 13. Noli hid behind the suitcases on top of the seats. The Gestapo officer who came back into the train to check whether any Jew remained, saw that none was left, and began to leave the compartment. Suddenly Noli's tefillin fell from his head, slipping off from the sweat and the immense emotion the boy felt.

The German officer looked up, saw Noli's eyes, looked at him, looked at him and looked at him... Without a word he turned his back and left the train. Another 'nes gadol' that saved Noli Engler once more... To this day Arnold (Noli), who lives in the United States, has found no explanation for this unimaginable act of the Gestapo. He alone survived of the 60 children, who disappeared in Auschwitz. When the train entered Sirkeci and Noli saw the minarets of Sultanahmet and Ayasofya, he could no longer hold back the emotion of being saved and began to cry for hours and hours. In Istanbul the Jewish community took charge of protecting Noli for a few months before sending him to Palestine by way of Syria and Lebanon.

While he was in Istanbul, Noli went every day to the Ashkenazi synagogue of Yüksekkaldırım. When he reached Palestine, his uncles and aunts, who had emigrated in the 1920s and 1930s, took charge of bringing Noli up. He took part in the War of Independence in 1948 with the Haganah, and in 1949 joined the Tsahal. He studied at the University of Jerusalem and completed his doctorate in nuclear physics at a university in Switzerland. After his studies in Switzerland he moved to the United States and became a professor at Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). In 1995 Arnold (Noli) came to Istanbul to attend the wedding of his son Jonathan with Beki Behar of Caddebostan, in the Ashkenazi synagogue, and he remembered again all this adventure that had passed through his head and shaped his life full of miracles. This story of his father was told to me by Jonathan, who came with Beki and their children to

visit Beki's father and mother, who today live in Caddebostan. This is what we can call Nes Gadol.

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The Jews in the Conquest of Istanbul

El Amaneser no. 186, p. 5, 12.8.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

One of the first things Sultan Mehmet did in Istanbul was to look after the population of Istanbul and improve the state of misery the city was suffering in 1453. When the city of Constantinople passed to the Ottoman Empire, it had a population of no more than 30,000 souls. Apart from the walls being in ruins, the citizens, having no hope of salvation, had let the city fall into deep poverty. For this reason the Sultan ordered Constantinople to be repopulated, the lamentable state of the city improved, and everything in ruins restored as quickly as possible. By 1480 the population is said to have risen to nearly 200,000. When Ibn Battuta passed through Constantinople in 1330 he said there were 13 quarters in the city apart from Galata, and in 1480 they counted 180 quarters. People were brought from other towns, from the interior of Anatolia and from the Balkans. The criteria for selecting people for Istanbul were good qualities, honesty and culture. The Jews met these criteria. The first Jews came from Edirne, Bursa and Salonika. Of course the Jewish population grew much more with the expulsion from Spain in 1492. We do not have many sources to know this migration in detail. The only sources, apart from the Ottoman books, were the historians Doukas, Kritoboulos, Eliyahu Kapsali, a few of the foundations of Mehmet II, and the writings of Professor Halil İnalcık.

For the Jews before the conquest, Benjamin of Tudela says that all the Jews lived opposite Constantinople, in what we today call Galata or Pera. When he came in 1176 he saw that the Jews had no right to ride on horseback and had to cross the sea (the Golden Horn) by boat to speak with the rulers. Benjamin tells us there were 3 classes of Jews: the Rabbanites, the Karaites and the Romaniotes. They lived in the same quarter but had walls separating them. Another traveller who came to Constantinople before the conquest was Ibn Battuta in 1330. He tells us that the person who taught him how to speak with the emperor was a Jew who knew Arabic. A Russian pilgrim, Zosima, tells us there was a gate in the walls near today's Gülhane Park called the 'Porta Judea'. The name of this same gate appears on Buondelmonti's map in 1422. Another traveller, Bertrandon de la Broquière, in 1430 speaks of the Jews who lived in Galata or Pera (opposite), a quarter that always remained a commercial centre.

Sultan Mehmet II's policy was to bring Jews from other towns to Istanbul. According to Bernard Lewis, it was a way of balancing trade against the Byzantine merchants. Moreover the Jews were known as the People of the Book, capable and trustworthy economically and politically. Eliyahu Kapsali, nephew of Moshe Kapsali, the Chief Rabbi at the time of the conquest, tells us that Sultan Mehmet had allowed the Jews to settle in any town of the Empire. Kapsali says the Sultan even learned Hebrew from a Jewish teacher. The historian Kritoboulos, who witnessed the conquest, tells us how the Jews were settled in Istanbul. In the population register of 1455 it is written that Jews from Yambol, Ohrid, Štip, Trikala, Plovdiv and Sofia — towns of today's Bulgaria — all came to Istanbul. Another population register, of 1485, speaks of 'the Jew Salamon, born in Nikopol and living in Istanbul', 'the Jew Yako, born in Kastoria (today's Greece) and living in Istanbul'. In an edict of Sultan Mehmet it is written thus: 'In Konstantiniye, the quarter of the Jews of Edirne'. From all this we understand that Jews from Edirne came to Istanbul.

We know that certain Jews who were forced into exile from Bursa to Istanbul fled back to Bursa and were imprisoned. Apart from Bursa, Edirne and Salonika, Jews from various parts of the Ottoman Empire came to Istanbul in the same period. The Jews of Salonika lived in Balat. I believe many will remember the 'Selaniko' synagogue, and this is proof that these Jews lived in Balat.

Only, we are not very sure whether this synagogue was of the 15th or the 16th century. Avram Galante and Stefanos Yerasimos tell us that Jews from Antalya, Tire, Sinop, Ayasuluk (today Selçuk), Eğridir and Kastamonu came to settle in Istanbul. According to the estimates, the Jewish population of Istanbul at the time of the conquest must have been some 10,000 to 13,000 people. But with the arrival of the Sephardim this population grew by many more souls.

A debate that lasted for years was whether the arrival of the Jews in Istanbul was forced, by order of the Sultan, or voluntary. The case of the Jew who fled to Bursa and was imprisoned makes us think it could have been forced. According to the historian Bernard Lewis, those who came at the conquest must have been forced, while those who came from Spain, Portugal and Italy, and the Ashkenazim, were volunteers. Jews from all over the world now have their Blessed Homeland, with its doors wide open to all who wish to come to the Promised Land of their own free will. Adapted and compiled from a university study.

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A Jewish Gladiator

El Amaneser no. 198, p. 14, 11.8.2021 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

In the archaeological excavations at Pompeii, Italy, a helmet was found with, on its front, a menorah — or rather a palm tree with seven branches, a symbol seen on the coins of Judea. A helmet probably made at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and probably a helmet that belonged to a Jewish gladiator. This symbol was not found on the helmets of the other gladiators, which bear only pagan symbols. The coins with a palm tree belonged to the emperors Vespasian and Titus and to the Jews who fought in the war against the Romans in the years 66-74 of our era. Until the war of Bar Kokhba the palm tree was the symbol of the Jews of Judea. So we can say that this helmet must have belonged to a Jewish gladiator.

Would it be possible for a Jew to be a gladiator? Normally not, but we know through the historian Josephus that many Jews taken prisoner by the Romans in the war of the Maccabees had to fight as gladiators, and those who had the luck to survive could be free and were allowed to wear their own helmet. The case of this anonymous Jewish gladiator is more special because he had the chance to put his menorah in the form of a palm, to go to Pompeii, and unfortunately to die under the lava of Vesuvius. Josephus tells us something else: 2,000 years ago Herod organized games every five years in honour of Augustus, the first Roman emperor, in Jerusalem and in Caesarea, a city on the shore of the Mediterranean bearing the same name as 'Kayseri'.

Pompeii was not as important a city as Rome, but inscriptions with Jewish names such as 'Youdaikos' and 'Mari' were found. This shows us that the people of Pompeii seem to have been tolerant enough to accept people of another ethnicity and culture. This helmet was found in the barracks (kışla) of the gladiators, under the lava and ash left by the eruption of the volcano 'Vesuvius' in the year 79 of our era. What is interesting about this helmet is the symbol of the Menorah seen on its front, like a date palm with branches of dates. Many helmets were found, as it was a barracks, but this was the only one bearing this symbol, next to the other helmets, which were decorated with symbols of pagan iconography.

Was this symbol of the date palm accepted in that period as the flag of Judea, also seen on the coins of the same geography? Only, do not confuse it with the coins produced in cities such as Carthage (Africa, Tunisia) or Ephesus, where the date palm is seen with the goddess Artemis. One exception is the coin found at Tiberias, a city built in honour of the emperor Tiberius, where the date palm signifies agriculture rather than geography. It is believed that this gladiator was a Jewish soldier captured by the Romans in the war of the year 70, taken to Pompeii as a prisoner of war, and that to escape this penalty he had to fight as a gladiator and defeat his rivals. Once in Pompeii, being a hero (gibor), he was not afraid to have a helmet showing his Jewish identity.

Still according to Josephus, the Jewish gladiators in Jerusalem and Caesarea did not allow killing. Jewish criminals were punished on the cross like the Christians, and not in the arena of the amphitheatre like a gladiator. A similar example comes from the Jewish community of Smyrna (İzmir) in the second century of our era. Jews are found in every century, in every nation, in every field and in every kind of trade, working with ardour and reaching every kind of important rank, as we see in our own era too. We hope our descendants will reach the highest missions with great dignity and pride, bringing to all the ardour of carrying and passing on the torch of glory and peace to future generations. Adapted from an article by Samuel Rocca, who was born

in Milan, Italy, made aliyah to Jerusalem and became curator of the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem.

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Holocaust

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 26.1.2022 · original

27 January is the international day of remembrance of the murder of the Jews by the German Nazis, because in 1945 the armies of the Soviet Union entered on that day the wretched camp 'Auschwitz-Birkenau', a concentration and extermination camp in Poland. In the history of humanity many tragedies have happened, but none as great as this one: a systematic murder, organized by a state, exterminating six million Jews — men, women, children — only because they were Jews, and millions more because they were Gypsies, homosexuals, or without intellectual or physical capacity. The murder was accepted not only by that state but also by the nations that collaborated with it.

The Germans called this murder 'the Final Solution of the Jewish question'. We call it the 'Holocaust' or the 'Shoah', a word used after the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in the 6th century before our era, and the second destruction of the Beit ha-Mikdash in the year 70 of our era by the Romans. The word Holocaust comes from the Greek 'holokauston', which means the burnt sacrifice offered to God — like the dead bodies of the Jews consumed in the crematorium ovens. The word holocaust has the same root as the word 'hypocaust', which means the furnace that gives the hot air of the Roman bath.

When the Russians entered the camp they found 7,000 prisoners who had managed to survive the hell they had lived through there. Of course the word 'Holocaust' or 'Shoah' does not come from this camp alone, because more than five million Jews were killed in other ways — hunger, mistreatment, and saddest of all, mass killing with weapons in this war of Hitler's madness. So 27 January 1945 was accepted as the day of commemoration of the Shoah by Resolution 60/7 of the General Assembly of the United Nations; according to that resolution, the nations must teach the Holocaust so that it cannot be repeated in the future.

Most nations observe this day as a day of remembrance, but Israel and the Jews of the diaspora observe it on 'Yom HaZikaron', which comes before 'Yom HaAtzmaut'. For us it remains to say, for ever: 'NEVER AGAIN'.

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Jews in Asia Minor

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 16.2.2022 · original

A short while ago we visited an exhibition held in the old Zülfaris synagogue, showing us the places where Jews lived in today's Turkey, formerly called Asia Minor. After the Babylonian exile, certain Jews, instead of staying in the Holy Land, had preferred to go to other lands and settle in other countries. So Asia Minor was a land much appreciated by many Jews of that period, and they became part of the local population while keeping their own Jewish culture, and probably kept the Hebrew, the Aramaic or the Greek of that time.

The oldest writing we have of the Jewish presence in Asia Minor is what Saul wrote 2,000 years ago. Saul was born in Tarsus, a town of the city of Mersin in the south of Turkey, on the Mediterranean. In that city Antony met Cleopatra, the famous queen of Egypt, with whom he had a great love story. So this Saul, born of a purely Jewish family of the tribe of Benjamin (he introduces himself with these words), studied in Jerusalem under Rabbi Gamaliel, worked as a tailor sewing tents with black goat-hair thread, and one day changed his name from Saul to Paul and, after the death of Jesus, became his most ardent missionary without ever having known him. Being the good Jew he was, and to make his ideas about his mission understood, he travelled almost all over Turkey going to the synagogues to preach his ideas. When we say synagogues we mean the kehilot, the Jewish communities.

All this we know from the letters he wrote to the communities. He also wrote that they beat him in the synagogues for his strange ideas. In the end the Romans imprisoned him and he was beheaded in Rome, even though he was a Roman citizen. I am telling this story of Saul because it lets us understand that Jews were living in these regions of Turkey more than 2,000 years ago. Today archaeologists have found many proofs of the existence of Jews, in tombstones, in the Menorah, in remains of the typical architecture of the mikveh; and the splendid Museum of the Quincentennial Foundation of Turkish Jews has printed a very successful book about these places where Jews lived. The book, entitled 'Jewish Identity Engraved in Stone', dedicated to Beki Kumru, contains detailed studies by the academics Siren Bora and İnci Türkoğlu, and by Professors Nicholas D. Cahill, Nevzat Çevik, Martin Seyer, Christof Berns and Nadin Burkhardt.

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Jewish Chocolate

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 23.2.2022 · original

In the book 'The Jewish Chocolate Recipes of the World', written by Michael Leventhal, it is said that the role of the Jew in chocolate is very great. According to him, the merchants or the Conversos — Jews who falsely changed religion to appear Christian in the time of the Inquisition — were completely involved in the trade of importing and selling cocoa beans. Surely they learned to make chocolate with these beans and, when expelled, carried this knowledge into the diaspora.

Three years ago the author of this book went to Bayonne, a city in the south of France right on the border with Spain, knowing that Bayonne was and is the centre of chocolate making in that country, and studied in the two chocolate museums in the city. There he learned that in the 17th century a Jewish community lived in Bayonne that devoted itself to the cocoa-bean industry.

When the Jewish bakers began to make chocolate cakes, which people liked very much, in 1720 a law was passed forbidding the Jews of Bayonne to make chocolate. From the same studies the author learned that the art of chocolate spread to Europe and North America thanks to Jewish merchants. In 1650 a Jew named Jacob opened in England the coffee-house where, for the first time, coffee and hot chocolate were served. Another Jew in Belgium began to make chocolate as we know it. The oldest recipe for a cake made with chocolate and almonds, passed from mother to daughter, came to be written down in Ladino and then in French by a Jewish family of Bayonne.

The proceeds from the sale of this book go to help the funds of the organization 'Chai Cancer Care', which helps members of the Jewish community of England.

How good that charity and the unique flavour of chocolate complete each other at such a high level.

Source: taken from the article by Rachel Ringler

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Sephardic Culture in the Ottoman Empire

El Amaneser no. 208, p. 18–19, 8.6.2022 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

The Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain, on coming to the Ottoman Empire, settled for the most part in Istanbul, Edirne, İzmir, Salonika, Aleppo, Damascus (Sham), Baghdad, Cairo and Alexandria. Relations with the Jews of northern Italy and with the Sephardim of Holland, mostly of Amsterdam, were always very active. The Ottoman Empire considered its population according to whether it was Muslim or not. All were protected by the Sultan. But those who were not Muslims had to pay a tax, the 'cizye', and had certain restrictions meant to degrade them: restrictions such as clothing of a different colour; they could not ride on horseback or belong to the brotherhood institutions (Ahilik) or the guilds (lonca).

The culture of the Jews hardly changed until the 19th century, or until the beginning of the 20th, when modernism and the influence of the West began. The Jews, being very conservative, lived by the laws of the Halakha, and those who were not very observant formed a minority of no importance. Ottoman Sephardic Jewish society never reached the cultural level and learning of the Sephardim of Spain. The Sephardim of Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, became so attached to the culture of the city that a kind of rivalry arose between the Jews of Jerusalem, Safed and Salonika. The Sephardim formed congregations (kahal, kehila) on the model of the Spanish congregations (aljamas) from before the expulsion of 1492, basing themselves on the laws of Valladolid (in Spain) of the year 1432 (Gilles Veinstein).

The behaviour of the Sephardim towards the Romaniotes (the Jews left over from the Byzantine Empire) was at first not very friendly. With time the Romaniotes assimilated completely into the Sephardic majority. The behaviour towards the Ashkenazim was different. There were many waves of Ashkenazi immigration into Ottoman lands: an Ashkenazi immigration in the 15th century, before the great Sephardic wave of 1492, from countries such as Hungary and Moldavia; other waves of Ashkenazi immigration would come in the 16th century with the Ottoman conquest of Buda (Budapest) and other places. To move within the Ottoman Empire the Jews had to have a document, like the passport of our days, called 'yol hükmü', which protected them, or rather kept the holder under the grace, the 'aman', of the Sultan. In Muslim lands, one who did not have the 'yol hükmü' could be executed or enslaved.

The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire excelled in the art of textiles, which they already knew from Spain. They brought the fiscal capital the Empire needed and supported the Sultan in diplomacy, thanks to their knowledge of foreign languages. The Sephardim organized themselves according to the city they came from. Those who came from Ohrid (North Macedonia) formed a kahal with its Kehila Ahrida; those from Kastoria (Greece) another kahal, with its Kehila Kastoria; those from Yambol (Bulgaria), with their Kehila Yambol. There was a social group identity depending on religion, belonging, family, place, social class and cultural formation. Belonging to the religion dictated the way of living, one's social rank and family relations. This Jewish identity, in the Muslim Ottoman environment, made them proud to be Jews, looking down on those who did not have this feeling and keeping away from them so as to live in closed groups.

Private and social life was based on the Jewish calendar, just as today we celebrate the Bar Mitzvah or the memorial services by the Jewish calendar. Even the celebrations of the days of victory of the Empire or of the Sultan or his family, and the Muslim festivals such as Ramadan or the sacrifice of the lamb, were recorded by the Jewish calendar. Contrary to what one might believe, the Jew in the Ottoman Empire was not very cultivated. The great majority barely knew

the Hebrew letters to read the prayers, without needing to know how to write, even to sign their name. If we can speak of an elementary school, it was the Talmud Torah, where only the boys went. Until the 19th century the girls had no education at all and were almost all uncultivated. For this reason there was no literary work written by Jews in these centuries.

Speaking of culture, one can say there were two cultures: Spanish Jewish culture and Ottoman Jewish culture. The Spanish language was the key to unifying all the Jews of the Ottoman Empire and of the Sephardic Diaspora. Along with the language, the Halakha, the customs and Sephardic cooking helped to complete the unity. What is interesting is that the Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire, with time, forgot the expulsion and never gave up their nostalgia for Spain, embracing the Spanish language as their mother tongue and keeping the culture they had, their way of organizing themselves and the Spanish way of cooking the dishes they prepared. They loved the tasty Spanish dishes and knew very well how to cook them. This nostalgia did not stop the Sephardic Jews from being well integrated in the big cities, in urban life, in contrast to rural life. Thus the Sephardic Jew did not feel a stranger when he met Muslims in the coffee-house or in the Turkish bath (hamam).

The economic activity of the Sephardic Jews was above all commerce; they were merchants. They traded in everything, according to the skill they had. An important trade was with the foreign countries of Europe. They engaged in production in small workshops, and the important product was textiles. Fiscal service with the authorities was important, because they could farm the collection of taxes, duties and customs. There were great bankers, and they gave diplomatic advice and knew foreign languages. The Jews were also very famous in medicine. They were known as players, acrobats and singers, contributed new makams to music, and had great skill in making puppets dance with strings, fingers and hands. Although Ottoman legislation wanted to see the minorities as inferior to the Muslims, in daily life this was not noticed, and the advantages the Muslims had meant that conversion to this religion accelerated in the 17th century, such as the conversion of Sabbatai Zevi and the families that imitated him. It must be admitted that these converts formed the intellectual population of Ottoman society. Many Jews converted to Christianity in Spain, the Marranos, returned to their own religion in the 17th century on coming to the Ottoman Empire, helping the prosperity of the Ottoman state.

What the Empire left us free is important: the language, the beliefs, the mentality, the religious practices. The language was Ladino, with certain Turkish words such as musafir, fostan, maale, balta... We said that the men, to be able to read the prayers, learned the Hebrew letters, but the scholars knew Hebrew, and correspondence between Jews of the world was generally in this language. Swearing (azer kifur) was in Turkish. From Ottoman folklore the Jews appropriated the figure of Djoha, or Nasreddin Hodja, certain sayings translated into Ladino, and the makams of Turkish music with the maftirim. Some makams were even composed by Jewish composers, such as Haham Algazi. The way of living was no different from that of the Ottoman nation. That is, men and women had their own circles for entertainment. Jewish women never went to the men's coffee-houses. They entertained themselves among neighbours or by gathering in the courtyards of the houses. The mentality was the same among Sephardic Jews, Christians and Muslims: an epidemic, a pandemic, a fire or a storm were the result of sins. In general the Jews adapted to the customs and the valid laws of the countries where they lived, and today they continue in the same way in the different countries of the world. Source of the article: Department of Jewish History of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, adapted from a study by Amnon Cohen. September 2020

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Tintin in Haifa

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 29.6.2022 · original

After the 'Tintin' book came out in Ladino, another Tintin was found, with his adventure in Haifa.

Suddenly an announcement was heard: 'Residents of the Land of Israel: a citizen of Belgium, with a tendency to make trouble, dressed as an Arab, has been seen in Haifa. This person gives his name as "Tintin". He is known as one who investigates where he should not and asks many questions. If anyone knows where this person is, please call the police.'

As you have understood, this announcement appeared in one of the books of the famous series 'The Adventures of Tintin', published in 1939-1940 under the title 'Tintin in the Land of Black Gold'.

The story tells of a secret plot of sabotage to be carried out on oil wells in the Middle East, and the villain of the story is the German Dr Müller. Our Tintin, dressed as an Arab and walking the streets of Haifa, was kidnapped by the Irgun, the secret organization that fought both the Arabs and the English.

The artist of these adventures, Georges Prosper Remi, known by the name 'Hergé', was sending in his work while doing his military service. On the very day the Germans entered Belgium he was released from military service because of a severe sinusitis. Naturally, because of the war, he stopped drawing the adventures, and readers had to wait years to learn how Tintin escaped the sandstorm in the desert and the wickedness of the evil Dr Müller.

Source: Chen Malul

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Byzantine Laws on the Jews

El Amaneser no. 209, p. 18, 20.7.2022 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Until the Emperor Constantine the Great arrived, the Jews felt no complaint at being minorities in their own lands. When Constantine the Great decided to free the Christian believers and the religious movement began to change in their favour, this new religion, called Christianity after the Council of Nicaea (İznik), spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire, until the Emperor Theodosius I declared that this religion would be the official religion of the Empire. Up to the second Theodosius, who issued the 'Codex Theodosianus', in which we see the laws — some protecting the synagogues that already existed, others prohibiting their restoration and the building of new ones — at certain times Christians were punished for destroying or vandalizing synagogues, and at other times they were supported by the Byzantine authorities of the period.

With the Emperor Theodosius I, the Jews were considered a minority and began to have restrictions in the practice of the Halakha. A decree of Constantine in the year 331 says that the leaders of the synagogue would be exempt from public obligations so as to practise the laws of the Jews. This type of decree shows us that at the beginning of the Byzantine reign the synagogues were on the same level as the Christian churches. In 397 a law promulgated by the Emperor Arcadius speaks of the 'illustrious patriarchs', the 'archisynagogues', the 'experts of the religion', without making clear who is meant, who would also be exempt from public obligations. The first official law came in 393 from the Emperor Theodosius I, saying: 'To the governors and military commanders of the East of the empire: the Jewish sect is not prohibited by any law.' He says this as a reminder that there had been attacks on synagogues in certain places, without specifying the sites or the persons who carried them out in the name of the Christian religion.

Antisemitism began with the famous priest 'John Chrysostom', 'St Jean Chrysostome', meaning 'Golden Mouth', with his eight sermons treating the synagogues as theatre and brothel, a place of thieves and beasts. In 388 synagogues were burned and no one was imprisoned. Measures were taken by the Emperors Arcadius in 397, Theodosius II in 412 and Honorius in 423 to protect synagogues and Jews. These measures were taken only in some parts of the Empire and not in the whole Roman territory. It is not well known whether this protection was given out of love for the Jews or to maintain the Roman peace. In any case, after the year 415 the emperors prohibited the building of new synagogues and encouraged the destruction of synagogues in places with a small Jewish population.

There is the known decree of Theodosius II against Gamaliel, a rabbi of Constantinople, stripping him of his status of 'Honorary Prefect' without mentioning why he was punished. Other prohibitions that came with this decree were the prohibition on circumcising Christians, on having Christian slaves, and on judging disputes between Jews and Christians. The decree ends with these words: 'No new synagogue shall be built; those that exist shall remain as they are.' In the decree of the year 438 we read this: 'They shall not dare to build a new synagogue, for if they do they shall pay a fine of 50 pieces of gold; but they should know that they have permission to repair the ruins of abandoned synagogues.' From this decree one understands that they did not want ruins to be seen in the city and did not want Christians to use these abandoned spaces.

In the 6th century, in the time of the Emperor Justinian, who built the famous Santa Sophia, the Jews of 'Amida', the city today called 'Diyarbakır', had to make a large donation to protect their synagogue and so that the Christians could build churches. In this same period, between the 4th and 6th centuries, archaeologists are today finding in the north of Israel, in Upper Galilee, ruins

of synagogues with artistic mosaic motifs like those of the synagogue of Sardis/Sart. It is believed that this protection, weak as it was, of the synagogues and of the Jews in general was meant to maintain the Roman peace and avoid trouble over reactions against the Jews. Adapted and adjusted from an article by Catherine Hezser.

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The Samurai Who Saved Thousands of Jews from the Nazis

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 27.7.2022 · original

In general, when a tragedy happens, many look for a positive side; they seek heroes and their sacrifices. In the pantheon of heroes of the Shoah (the Holocaust) stands Chiune Sugihara, who was the Consul General of Japan in the Lithuanian city of Kaunas (also known as Kovno). Sugihara took up this post in March 1939, six months before the German invasion of neighbouring Poland. Polish and German Jews began to flee to Lithuania. But Lithuania's status as a refuge ended abruptly on 15 June 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania. The Soviets allowed Polish Jews to leave Lithuania through the Soviet Union. But in July 1940, with the German advance towards Lithuania, the Soviets ordered all foreign diplomatic posts to leave Kaunas. Sugihara asked for and received an extension. The only other diplomat who remained in Kaunas was Jan Zwartendijk, the acting consul of the Netherlands.

Certain Jewish refugees learned that two Dutch islands in the Caribbean, Curaçao and Dutch Guiana (today known as Suriname), did not require formal entry visas. Consul Zwartendijk was authorized to stamp passports with entry permits. But to reach the Caribbean one had to pass through the USSR. As a condition for obtaining Soviet exit visas, the Soviet consul demanded Japanese transit visas, because one had to pass through Japan to reach the Dutch islands, almost half a world away.

Learning of this need, desperate Jewish refugees crowded in front of the door of the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas. Chiune Sugihara's request to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue transit visas was unconditionally refused. Sugihara had to make a very difficult decision. He had to weigh his disciplined traditional Japanese obedience on the one hand against his vocation as a Samurai to help those in need on the other. Sugihara and his family chose to defy their government and help as many people as was humanly possible.

During the following 29 days, from 31 July to 28 August 1940, the Sugiharas spent all their waking hours writing visas by hand, an average of 300 visas a day — the equivalent of a month's work for the Kaunas consulate. Chiune himself refused to rest even a few hours and subsisted on sandwiches, and Yukiko, Mrs Sugihara, massaged her husband's aching hands every night. Even in his last moments as Japanese consul in Kaunas, while boarding the train taking him to Berlin on 1 September 1940, Chiune was writing visas and handing them to those he saw from the train window. Even as the train began to pull away, he threw the consular visa stamp to a refugee so that he could write a few more transit visas. As a direct result of Sugihara's heroism, the lives of 6,000 refugees were saved from Nazi barbarism; they were thus able to board the Trans-Siberian train bound for Kobe, Japan.

After the Second World War, Sugihara was dismissed from the Japanese diplomatic corps for his insubordination. To support his family he worked as a translator and, finally, as a businessman. It was not until 1969 that Sugihara's incredible heroism and sacrifice were discovered, by a survivor he had saved. Chiune never spoke of his actions. Chiune Sugihara died on 31 July 1986, at the age of 86.

On the anniversary of his death I wanted to remind you of his heroism.

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Forgiving Baruch Spinoza

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 10.8.2022 · original

The 27th of July 1656 was the day they took the decision to excommunicate — to pronounce the herem on — the young Baruch for ideas that did not conform with his Sephardic Jewish community of Amsterdam, a community of Jews expelled from Portugal by the Christian Inquisition and settled in Holland, knowing they would have the freedom to practise the Jewish religion without fear. At that time Baruch was 24, and the decree of herem says:

'The gentlemen of this community make known that, having long seen the erroneous opinions and the conduct of Baruch de Espinoza, they tried with many promises to turn him from his evil path. After seeing no result and having information that every day he is practising his horrible thoughts, they decided that this same Espinoza should receive the herem.

'After the judgement of the angels and of the Saints, we anathematize, cast out and curse the accursed Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, blessed be He, and of the Holy Congregation, before these Holy Books and the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot. May he be cursed by day, by night, when he wakes, when he lies down, in the street and at home. God will not forgive him; may His wrath and His anger be against him. God will blot out his name from under the heavens. No one shall communicate with him, neither by speaking nor by writing, nor show him any favour, nor stay with him under the same roof, nor come within two metres of him, nor read anything written by him.'

In reality, Spinoza did not cease to believe in God. But for him, God is the Universe. For this reason historians would consider him the first secular Jew. With the enlightenment and rationalism of the last century, Spinoza was considered by thinkers as a martyr. In 1924, at a conference held for the 250th anniversary of his death, the historian and academic Joseph Klausner said: 'To Baruch Spinoza the Jew: from Mount Scopus, from this new Sanctuary that is the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, your herem is annulled. Whatever your sin against Judaism, it will be forgiven. You are our brother, you are our brother, you are our brother.'

In 1953 David Ben-Gurion wrote in the newspaper Davar an article entitled 'We shall right the wrong', thinking to revive the writings of Baruch Spinoza in Hebrew: 'It is the duty of every Israeli citizen to bring back into our culture and our Hebrew language the original writings of the most profound philosopher to come out of the Hebrew people in the last two thousand years.'

Today no study based on the history of Jewish thought can be considered complete without mentioning the name 'Baruch Spinoza, the Philosopher of Philosophers'.

Source: The National Library of Israel. Chen Malul

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Adolf Eichmann

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 25.1.2023 · original

In 1961, in Jerusalem, there was one of the most important trials in the history of the Jewish people: the trial of Adolf Eichmann. This German criminal, who had thousands upon thousands of Jews killed, could never have imagined that 16 years after the end of the Second World War he would find himself in the Jewish state and be tried there. The role of this man in the Shoah was already known from the Nuremberg trial, where the Nazi leaders were judged. It was known that from 1941 he ran the accursed office IV B4, which was in charge of the Jews. It was known that he was the secretary of the Wannsee conference, where 15 leaders of the German state and the Gestapo decided the fate of the Jews. It was known that he himself organized the killings at Auschwitz. But in 1945 he managed to escape American control, hide for 5 years in Germany under the name Ricardo Klement, and go to Argentina by way of Austria and Italy. He took many jobs, ran a laundry in Buenos Aires, and finally became a mechanic at the Mercedes-Benz factory outside Buenos Aires.

In those years spent in Argentina he never regretted being in contact with the hidden Nazis, including the terrible Dr Josef Mengele, though he did not see him much; but he always regretted that he had not been able to finish his work of killing. Of course it was an obsession for Israel's secret services, the Mossad, to be able to seize the criminal Eichmann and try him in Israel. In the end it was a German named Lothar Hermann, who had emigrated to Argentina in 1938 after being imprisoned in the Dachau camp near Munich, who discovered that Eichmann was living in Argentina under the name Ricardo Klement. Lothar's daughter was a friend of Eichmann's son. Talking intimately together, the son had told Lothar's daughter who his father was. Lothar sent this news to Fritz Bauer, attorney general in Germany, and Bauer thought it better to alert the Government of Israel.

When David Ben-Gurion, then prime minister, learned that Eichmann's whereabouts were known, he launched the operation 'Attila', which consisted of seizing him. As planned, one day as he left his house he was seized and put in the basement of a house rented by the Mossad until an El Al plane came to take him to Israel. To get through customs without the customs officers noticing, they sedated him and dressed him as an El Al officer who was very ill, almost unconscious. Isser Harel, the head of the secret services, said: 'The hardest thing for us was knowing that we had to look after his health, feed him, shave him, cut his hair — in short, serve this man who had so many thousands of Jews killed — in order to bring him safe and sound to Israel and try him there.'

On 23 May 1960 Ben-Gurion told the Knesset and the whole world that the great criminal of the 'Shoah', Adolf Eichmann, was now in a prison in Israel. His trial made a great noise, but in the end he was hanged, his body burned and the ashes thrown into the sea outside the borders of Israel, in 1962.

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Paris: The House of Camondo

El Amaneser no. 216, p. 9, 8.2.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

In the 8th arrondissement of Paris there is a beautiful park called Parc Monceau, along the avenue Monceau. Near this elegant park is the Nissim de Camondo museum, which was his residence in Paris. The house where he lived is very close to the Arc de Triomphe and the very famous avenue des Champs-Élysées. This marvellous house was built by Count Moïse de Camondo, and its architecture was inspired by the famous palace of Versailles. After passing through great doors and seeing a large, beautiful courtyard, one enters the hall, where an elegant staircase curves up to the floor above. This staircase reminds us of the curving staircases in the dream of Tevye the milkman, in the play Fiddler on the Roof: he wanted two staircases in his house, one for going up and down and the other of no use at all, just for show.

The dining room (salle à manger) of this museum, which looks onto very elaborate gardens, has classical furniture, paintings of great value and porcelain of the finest kind. Count Moïse de Camondo was the heir to a very important fortune of Jewish bankers. He was able to collect works by famous artists of the 18th century, a table covered in petrified wood that belonged to Queen Marie Antoinette, and luxury decorative articles and silverware that had been part of the wealth of 'Catherine the Great' of Russia. Moïse and his cousin Isaac de Camondo were great admirers of painting and helped many artists of their time, such as Monet, Manet, Cézanne and Degas (even though Degas was a great antisemite). Isaac de Camondo gave his whole collection of paintings to the Louvre museum, and for many years these works stayed in the museum's storerooms. The Camondo brothers were members of the foundation of the Louvre, and most of its meetings were held around the sumptuous table of the dining room, looking out on the avenue Monceau.

In 1891 Moïse de Camondo married Irène Cahen (Cohen) d'Anvers, the daughter of Louis Cahen d'Anvers, one of the richest bankers of Europe, head of the bank today called BNP Paribas. This family had the tradition of saying they descended from the line of King David. Moïse's wife, Irène, was painted by the famous painter Renoir when she was a girl of 8, and this painting is called and known as 'Little Irène'. The Camondo family began with Avram Salamon Camondo, born in 1781 in Istanbul. With time, A. S. Camondo became the great financier of the Ottoman Empire and was called the 'Rothschild of the East'. He became counsellor and confidant of the Grand Vizier and of the Sultans Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz, helped with the expenses of the Crimean War and with the Tanzimat reforms for the consolidation of the state.

The Emperor Franz Joseph invited him to Vienna for his wedding in 1854 and gave him the title of Knight (Chevalier). The Italian king Victor Emmanuel gave him the title of 'Count' after his acts of philanthropy in Italy in 1867. He helped the Jews of the Ottoman Empire a great deal, some hundreds of thousands of them in various cities of the Empire. Across the whole territory of the Empire — the Balkans, Salonika, Syria, Iraq, today's Egypt, which were part of the Empire — Camondo also had many problems with the religious leaders of the Jewish community, because he supported the school of the Alliance, where teaching was in French, and the religious leaders were not happy and feared that this teaching could lead to assimilation. Camondo gave his house in Istanbul to Moses Montefiore, another philanthropist, who came to Istanbul to help resolve the problem of the Jews imprisoned in Syria after the blood libel and had meetings with Sultan Abdülmecid on the matter. The problem was resolved and he stayed in the home of his friend Avram Camondo.

Avram's son died very young, and the grandsons Avram Bohor and Nesim transferred the bank from Istanbul to Paris, to the rue La Fayette, in 1868. They built houses on the rue de Monceau, and inside, a yeshiva holding all the Jewish riches of grandfather Avram, such as Torah scrolls with their silver crowns. Grandfather Avram died at 92 in 1873, and the whole family moved to Paris. The mausoleum where he was buried is in Istanbul. Later the body was taken to Paris. The mausoleum was abandoned and served as a shelter for those who had no house to live in. Years ago it was restored by the Municipality of Istanbul. The two brothers Avram Bohor and Nesim died in 1889. Nesim's son Moïse had married Irène Cahen. In the Second World War, Béatrice, the daughter of Irène and sole heiress of the fortune, although she had converted to Christianity, was killed in Auschwitz by the Nazis. Lives of rich memories, full of history, and examples of courage and great vital energy. Adapted from the article by R.B. Goldschmidt

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The Khazars

El Amaneser no. 217, p. 20, 8.3.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

The name Kuzarim (Khazars) was given to a Turkic tribe that entered world history and in a few centuries disappeared from history without leaving a trace, after converting to Judaism. It seems it was the Chinese who, telling the history of the Turks of the 6th century of our era, said that the descendants of the Sabirs, a branch of the 'Celestial Turks' (Göktürk), settled north of the Black Sea and for the first time used the name Khazar. The Sabirs are the ones who gave the name Siberia to the region so called. It is believed there are different explanations for the root of the name Kuzari or Khazar. Some say Kuzari comes from the Turkish word 'gezmek', meaning to wander (going from one place to another without settling, göçebe, gezer). Another meaning of the word 'kaz' is a person who is not tall and has slanted eyes (like the Chinese, çekik gözlü). The word Khazar, which in Russian is 'Kazar' and in Hungarian 'Huszár', means 'horseman', one who rides a horse. In Turkish we call the Caspian Sea Hazar Gölü — probably because the Khazars settled beside the Caspian, as far as the north of the Black Sea, dominating a large part of today's Ukraine.

Certain historians claim that the Georgians are descendants of the Khazars who converted to the Orthodox Christian religion. As part of the 'Celestial Turks' (Göktürk) branch, they helped the Byzantines against the Sassanids, the Iranians of the time. It was in the year 630 that they formed an independent state and advanced considerably into the region of the Caucasus (Kafkas), taking over the Crimean peninsula too. Khosrow I, the shah of Iran, said: 'There are three other empires like mine: the Chinese empire, the Roman (Byzantine) empire, and the Khazar empire.' Relations with the Byzantines became so good that in the year 732 a Khazar princess named Chichek married Constantine, the son of the emperor Leo, and took the name Irene, which means 'Peace'. The son they had came to the throne of the Byzantine empire under the name Leo IV, or 'Leo the Khazar', whom we see in the mosaic above the imperial door of Santa Sophia in Constantinople (Istanbul). This intimate relationship meant that the Khazars and the Byzantines fought together against the Arabs so that they would not approach this city.

The Khazars managed to be the strongest and most powerful state of eastern Europe until the 11th century, and then began to decline. The reasons for the decline were that the economy and the internal unity of the country broke down, the attacks of the Russians became more frequent and damaging, the capacity of the Turks to be 'a military nation' weakened, and when the Byzantines saw that the Khazars no longer had the same strength and power, the friendship they had for them turned into friendship with the Russians, and from friends they became enemies. The Khazars left no literature, and we have no idea of the language they spoke. Today academics think it must have been a language mixed from Hungarian, Bulgarian and Turkish. Correspondence was generally in Greek, in Arabic and sometimes in Hebrew. Unlike the authentic Turkic tribes, which were military, they were more interested in commerce, in handwork, in agriculture. Having Turkic roots, they did not entirely abandon the characteristic of the peoples of Central Asia of being nomadic (göçebe). The great majority lived in cities in winter and went, when spring came, to the high pastures to spend the summer in tents (çadır) of felt (keçe). One word in Khazar that is pronounced 'hukurim' means 'okurum': 'I read'. It is said that the Karaites of Crimea and Poland spoke Khazar.

The head of state was called 'Kagan'. The title of Kagan passed from father to son and had to belong to the dynasty of Asena, the mythological name of the mother wolf who began this dynasty.

It was believed that the Kagan had divine power. But if a drought came or a war was lost, the Kagan was responsible, and he could often be executed by decision of the council of elders. The Kagan's wife was almost his equal and was called 'Hatun'. As they were good soldiers, there were many Khazars in the palaces of the Byzantines, the Abbasids and the Sassanids as loyal guards. Like the other Turkic tribes, the Khazars too gave a divine character to the day, the night, the sun, the earth, the sky — to almost everything. The rulers and those around them adopted the religion of Moses our Teacher, but among the people some adopted the Orthodox Christian religion and others the Muslim religion. So the religion of the state was Judaism, but they left full freedom to those who practised the other monotheistic religions.

It is said there were two groups of Khazars: one very handsome, with blue eyes and fair hair, and the other made up of dark people with black hair. It seems the handsome ones were the rulers, those on top, and the dark ones those below, the people. According to the famous historian and traveller al-Masudi, who lived in Iraq in the 10th century, there were 7 judges in Itil, the Khazar capital: one judged those who believed in the Sky God, two judged the cases of the Christians, two more those of the Jews, and the other two judged the cases of the Muslims. Judaism developed among them mainly under the Kagans Bulan and Ovadya. The economy was commerce. They exported furs, honey, wheat flour, slaves and something much prized, the swords they made. As they were on the Silk Road, they collected taxes from the caravans that passed through their lands and from the ships that passed through their waters. They also collected a fixed tax from the peoples they protected. Being of nomadic roots, they were experts at tending livestock — sheep, goats, cows and camels. On the silver coins they minted, called 'yarmak', they wrote in Arabic on one side 'Arz al-Khazar', 'Land of the Khazars', and on the other 'Musa Rasul Allah', 'Moses, messenger of God'.

A discussion still not settled is the theory that the Ashkenazim are the descendants of the Khazars, and that Yiddish arose in Crimea — a debate with many controversies. Some say yes, others say no. Another theory says that the word Ashkenazi was first found in the east of Turkey. We believe that one day science will give us the right answer. Source: Wikipedia

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The Khazar Correspondence

El Amaneser no. 219, p. 14–15, 10.5.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

The Khazar correspondence is the communication between Hasdai ben Ezra ben Yitzhak ibn Shaprut, the unofficial foreign minister of Abd al-Rahman III, Caliph of Córdoba in Spain, and Yosef, king or Kagan of the Khazars, in the 950s CE. Hasdai ibn Shaprut was a doctor, a diplomat and the main person who helped the Jewish renaissance in Spain. This renaissance was also called 'the Golden Age' or 'the Convivencia', an era in which Jews and Umayyads lived together and made Andalusia the centre of a very special civilization. Hasdai, from his youth, knew very well Hebrew, Arabic, Greek and Latin, a language known only to high-ranking Christian clergy. He studied medicine and became the doctor of Abd al-Rahman III, being the first Jew to hold so high a position. With his great knowledge, his way of living, his wisdom and his personality, he won the Caliph's favour and became his faithful adviser. As he remained a Jew and did not wish to convert to Islam, he was not officially called vizier, but he acted as foreign minister, being a good diplomat.

When he heard that there existed an independent Jewish kingdom, very distant and governed by Jews, he wished to enter into correspondence with the head of this kingdom, confirmed by the ambassadors Mar Shaul and Mar Yosef. Hasdai gave them the letter written by Menahem ben Saruq in good Hebrew, in which he says: 'I, Hasdai, son of Yitzhak, son of Ezra, belonging to the Jewish people exiled from Jerusalem, in the land of Sefarad (Spain), a servant of my Lord the King, bow to the ground before you, and prostrate myself towards the house of Your Majesty, from a distant land. I rejoice in your serenity, and I lift my hands to God in Heaven that He may extend your reign in Israel. Blessed be God for His grace to me. Kings of the earth who know the great power of Abd al-Rahman bring him gifts, winning his favour with precious gifts: the King of the Franks, the King of the Gebalim (Croatia?), who are a German people, the King of Constantinople and the others. All the gifts pass through my hands, and I have the duty of making gifts to them in return. (Ibn Shaprut, who knew many languages, received the ambassadors.) May my lips praise God in Heaven, who so far has spread His goodness over me without my deserving it.

'Of the ambassadors of these kings who bring gifts, I always ask whether they know anything about our brothers the Israelites, what remains of the exile (galut), whether they have heard anything about deliverance from slavery, or whether they are living in peace. (Hasdai was anxious to know whether the 10 lost tribes existed anywhere as an independent Jewish state.) At last an emissary (shaliah) who came from Khorasan (a region in Iran) told me there is a kingdom of Jews called Al-Khazar. But I did not believe these words, thinking he was telling me things to win my favour and my kindness, until ambassadors came from Constantinople with gifts and a letter from their king to our king; I asked them about this subject, and they answered me: "It is quite true, and the name of that kingdom is Al-Khazar. It is a fifteen days' voyage by sea from Constantinople; but by land there are many nations between us. The name of the king who reigns now is Yosef. Sometimes ships come to us from his country and bring us fish, hides and all kinds of goods. We collaborate with them and honour them. We have reciprocal relations with embassies and gifts. They are very powerful and maintain many strong armies." When I heard this report, I rejoiced, my hands felt strong and my hopes were confirmed. With this, I bowed down to worship the God of the Heavens. I pray for the health of my Lord the King, for his family and his house. May his throne be established for ever. May his days and those of his son be long in the world of Israel.'

Letter of King Yosef, son of Aaron the king, to Hasdai, son of Yitzhak, son of Ezra. May the Creator keep him at the head of his community. 'I wish to inform you that your very well written letter was brought to me by Yitzhak, son of Eliezer. You made us happy, and we are delighted by your understanding and your wisdom. We shall strengthen the diplomatic relations that existed before between our fathers, and we shall pass this heritage on to our sons. (Yosef believed the Khazars had earlier had diplomatic relations with the Arabs of Spain.) You ask in your letter: "Of what people, of what family, of what tribe are you?" Know that we come from Togarma, son of Japheth. I found in the genealogical book of my ancestors that Togarma had 10 sons. The eldest was called "Ujur" (Uyghur), the second "Tauris", the third "Avar", the fourth "Uauz" (Oghuz), the fifth "Bizal", the sixth "Tarna", the seventh "Khazar", the eighth "Janur", the ninth "Bulgar" and the tenth "Sawir" (Sabir). [These names are the mythical founders of the tribes that once lived in the region of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.] I come from the branch of the seventh son, Khazar.

'I have the testimony that although my fathers were not very numerous, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them the strength, the power and the energy to win in the wars against many nations more powerful and more populous than they. With the help of God they drove them out and took possession of their lands. Some were put to forced labour and continue to work to this day. The territory where I now live belonged formerly to the Bulgars (along the Volga). Our fathers, the Khazars, came and fought with them. Although the Bulgars were more numerous than the grains of sand on our beaches, they could not defend themselves against the Khazars. So they left the territory and fled as far as the distant river Danube (the river Tuna). From that day the Bulgars have been along the Danube, as far as near Constantinople. After this, many generations passed until a king named "Bulan" came. He was a wise man, respecting and believing in the Creator with all his soul and heart; he drove out of the country the magicians and the idolaters, and took comfort in the shadow of His wings. His fame, in a short time, spread to foreign countries. The king of the Romans and of the Arabs, who heard of him, sent ambassadors (shagririm) with great riches and costly gifts for the king and his counsellors, to convert them to their religions. The King had a Christian priest and a Muslim qadi brought. But he — may his name always be beside the name of God — being a wise man, sent also for a learned Jew (melumad), gathered the sages of the three religions and asked them to explain the arguments (taanot) of each. Each sage began to say that the arguments of the others were lies, so that they could not agree. Seeing this, the king told them to return to their homes and come back after three days.

'On the third day the King told the sages to discuss and decide which of the three religions was the best. They began to quarrel among themselves without reaching a result. Finally the King asked the Christian priest: "What do you think of the religion of the Jews and of the Muslims? Which of them is preferable?" The priest answered: "The religion of the Jews is better than that of the Muslims." Then the King turned to the qadi and asked him whether the religion of the Jews was preferable to that of the Christians. The qadi answered: "The religion of the Jews is preferable." With this the King said: "So you have both accepted that the religion of the Jews is the best. Consequently, trusting in the mercy of God and the power of the Almighty, I choose the religion of Israel, which is the religion of Abraham. If this God in whom I trust and in the shadow of whose wings I take comfort helps me, He can give me without trouble the treasures of gold and silver that you promised me. Now you may return in peace to your homes." From that moment the Almighty helped Bulan, strengthened and comforted him. He was circumcised, he and his servants, his guards and all his people. (Arab sources confirm that the king's family and the nobles became Jews, but not all the people.) Then Bulan had sages brought from Israel to explain the Torah to him and to establish the religious precepts. Since then we have been

subject to this religion. May the name of God be blessed and His memory praised for ever. Since the day my ancestors entered this religion, the God of Israel has humbled all their enemies and subdued all the peoples around us, be they Christians, Muslims or pagans. To this day none of them has been able to raise his head against us. [The letter was written around the year 960; 9 years later Yosef lost the war against the Russians.]

'After Bulan, one of his descendants named "King Ovadya" reorganized the kingdom and established Judaism properly and correctly. He built synagogues and yeshivot, had sages brought who were rewarded with gold and silver. (Probably these sages came from Baghdad or Constantinople.) They explained to him the Torah, the Mishnah, the Talmud and the Halakha. The king was a true servant of God. After Ovadya came his son Hezekiah, after him his son Manasseh, after him Hanukkah, Ovadya's brother, then Yitzhak his son, after him his son Zevulun, then his son Moshe, then his son Nisim, then his son Aaron, then his son Menahem, then his son Binyamin, then his son Aaron II, and finally I, Yosef, son of Aaron II the king; I am king, son of a king, descendant of kings. No stranger can ascend the throne of my ancestors. The son follows his father. This was our tradition and the tradition of our ancestors since their existence began. May it be His loving will, He who appoints all kings, that the throne of my kingdom may last for all eternity. You asked me about my country and the extent of my empire. I wish to inform you that I live on the bank of a river whose known name is Itil, or Volga. At the end of the river is the Caspian Sea, or Khazar lake. The source (makor) of the river is in the east, at a distance of four months' journey. Along the river live many tribes in open and fortified cities. Do not forget that I live in the delta of the river Itil, or Volga, and with the help of God I guard the delta of the river and do not let the Russians who come with their ships to the Caspian Sea have contact with the Muslims. Likewise I do not let the enemies of the Muslims who come by land enter as far as Derbent, the gate of the Caucasus above the Caspian Sea. I must make war on them, because if I gave them the smallest opportunity they would destroy the whole region of the Muslims as far as Baghdad.

'You asked me where I live. I tell you that by the grace of God I live along the river where the three capital cities stand. The queen lives in one of them, where I was born. The city is quite important, built in a round shape with a diameter of fifty "fersah" (the distance a person can walk in an hour, 5.5-6 km). (The king lived on an island in the middle of the Volga.) The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims live in the second city. With them there are many slaves of all nations. It is a city almost eight "fersah" long and wide. In the third live my sons, my officials, my servants and my close ones. Also a round city, three "fersah" in diameter. The river passes between the walls. It is my winter residence. After the month of Nisan (April) we leave the city, and each goes to his work in his fields or vineyards. You say in your letter that you wish to meet me. I too would very much like to see your pleasant capacity and the rare beauty of your wisdom. If I were allowed to be with you and contemplate your pleasant capacity, you could be my father and I could be your son. May all my people be governed by your recommendations, and may I lead my country by your discreet counsels.' Source: Wikipedia

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Mount Moriah

El Amaneser no. 226, p. 20, 13.12.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

General history is full of events in which the Jews were sometimes able to go up to this mount of the Beit ha-Mikdash, and sometimes were not allowed to be there. After the second destruction of the Temple until the revolt of Bar Kokhba there was no restriction. But with that revolt of the year 135 CE, the Emperor Hadrian decided to forbid entry to this place. So the Jews went up to the Mount of Olives, from which Mount Moriah and the ruins of the Temple are very well seen. The Emperor Constantine, who in the 4th century transferred the capital of the Roman Empire from the city of Rome in Italy to Byzantium — the first name of our city of Istanbul — allowed the Jews to enter Mount Moriah only one day a year, the day of Tisha b'Av. Constantine's nephew, the Emperor Julian, known as the Apostate (the one who denied Christianity), in the year 363 gave full freedom to the Jews and even ordered the treasury of the empire to collect funds to build the Third Temple. Whether because of the prayers of the Christians, who did not want this, or the prayers of the Jews, who also did not want a Temple before the coming of the Messiah, the construction work did not continue. The Christian pilgrims who visited Jerusalem gave no importance to the mount, which they used for dumping manure.

We know the Jews did not move away from Jerusalem in that period, because when the Empress Eudocia (401-460) made her pilgrimage to Jerusalem she was acclaimed with great fervour by the Jews, who were able to obtain her permission to go up to Mount Moriah. Spreading this news to other communities, more than 100,000 Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot that same year. But again the protests of the Christians were enough to expel the Jews from Jerusalem until the Muslims came. In between there was a short era of freedom when the Sassanids, with King Khosrow II, and with the help of 30,000 Jews, entered Jerusalem (613-615 CE). But the famous Byzantine emperor Heraclius returned (629 CE) and left the city to the Muslim army under Caliph Omar (638-1099 CE). Rabbi Eleazar ben Kalir (570-640 CE), a Byzantine rabbi who wrote many 'piyyutim' (verses of the classical liturgy that became very well known in certain services such as Tisha b'Av), confirms these facts.

50 years after Omar, the Umayyad rulers of Damascus (Şam), thinking to damage the economy of Mecca, whose only income was the pilgrimage, built a grandiose building with a roof in the form of a golden dome on top of the rock of Mount Moriah, to draw the pilgrims there instead of to Mecca. The Jews were even allowed to build a synagogue, but in another part of the mountain. Between the years 940 and 960 a Karaite named Salamon ben Yeroham, who lived in Jerusalem, wrote that the Jews had no restriction on praying on this Mount. In that period the Muslims in Jerusalem neither damaged nor took over the religious buildings, neither those of the Christians nor those of the Jews. But in 1071, when the Seljuks entered Jerusalem, it seems they both damaged and took over the Christian buildings. This led Pope Urban II, in 1095, to call for Jerusalem to be rescued from the 'infidels'. And this caused the 'Crusades', the first of which was in 1099, when they massacred all the Muslims and Jews of the city. Although they declared that entry to this mountain would not be allowed to those who were not Christians, Maimonides writes that in 1165 he prayed on this Mount; Benjamin of Tudela, who was also there, says that Jews prayed on Mount Moriah.

In 1187 Jerusalem was rescued by Saladin, giving freedom to all beliefs. But soon the debates began among the rabbis, whether Jews should or should not go up to the Mount, for fear of treading on the Holy of Holies — others saying that the Mount without the Beit ha-Mikdash

should not be considered a sacred place, and others asserting that one may go up to the Mount after the Messiah comes. In the Ottoman period Sultan Suleiman restored the walls of the city and allowed the Jews to pray only in front of the Kotel ha-Maaravi, which the Franks call 'the Wailing Wall', and not to go higher. After the Crimean War, at the request of the English, the Ottoman authorities allowed everyone to go up to the Mount, except only on Friday, which is the sacred day for Muslims. Although this freedom existed, the rabbis categorically refused to let Jews have it — something that was not well accepted, because we know that Moses Montefiore and Baron Edmond de Rothschild, among many others, took no notice of this refusal.

In the 19th century the pupils of the Gaon of Vilna, Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, arrived in Jerusalem and formed the core of the sect we call the 'Haredim', a group who consider themselves 'Ultra-Orthodox'. They were and are totally opposed to Jews going up to Mount Moriah. In the War of Independence of 1948, General David Shaltiel, commander of the Jewish secret forces in that region, cleared the place of foreigners, but had to withdraw because the place was sacred, and the forces of Jordan took over a large part of Jerusalem, including of course the sacred mount. In 1967, on the second day of the Six-Day War, Colonel Mordechai Gur, commander of that region, declared to the whole world that 'Mount Moriah, 2,000 years after it was lost, is now under the control of the Jewish people'. Rabbi Shlomo Goren, with the Torah scroll in one arm and the shofar in the other hand, made the same declaration. With the intifada of the year 2000 the Mount was again closed to non-Muslims, and in 2003 it was again opened to visits by everyone, on condition that there would be no prayer, neither by the Christian community nor by the Jewish community. Source: F.M. Loewenberg

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The Nuremberg Tribunal

El Amaneser no. 231, p. 20, 8.5.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

At the Nuremberg tribunal some 200 people from the German government, the army, doctors and businessmen were tried as criminals for what they did in the Second World War. The leaders of the Nazi party, such as Rudolf Hess and Hermann Göring, were tried for the crimes against humanity they committed during the Shoah. We know that most of the leaders hid or fled abroad from Germany. Some were caught later and tried, like Eichmann. This court sat in Nuremberg, a city of Germany under the control of the United States at the end of the Second World War. To hold this court the four states that agreed were the United States, England, the Soviet Union and the provisional government of France. Four charges were tried: conspiracy, crimes against peace, war crimes and, most important, crimes against humanity. The Nuremberg trial opened the way to certain international rights, such as the United Nations Convention on genocide (1948) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

For this trial the Allies chose the city of Nuremberg over the other three candidates, which were Leipzig, Munich and Luxembourg. The decision for Nuremberg was for two reasons: the activities of the Nazi party had begun in Nuremberg; and although the city was entirely in ruins, the building of the Palace of Justice, the Grand Hotel and the Town Hall remained almost intact. It was also in Nuremberg that the first antisemitic laws were proclaimed in 1935. The Americans brought in electricity, water, telephone and the tram. Among the journalists was Joseph Kessel (1898-1979), a very famous Jewish writer who lived and died in France and became a member of the Académie Française. Among his books, 'Belle de Jour' was made into a film by Luis Buñuel with Catherine Deneuve. When he was admitted to the Académie Française he had his sword decorated with a large Magen David, something never before seen at the Académie. Another Jewish journalist was Markus Wolf (1923-2006). Born in Germany, he emigrated with his family to Switzerland, France and finally Russia when Hitler came to power. He entered the diplomatic career and became the head of the secret police of East Germany.

A third Jewish journalist was Richard Llewellyn (1906-1983), the famous English writer known for his book 'How Green Was My Valley'. Richard lived for years in Eilat and died in Dublin. The journalist Gitta Sereny (1921-2012), born in Vienna and died in Cambridge, England, daughter of the German Jew Margit Herzfeld, wrote mainly about the Shoah. The journalist Tullia Zevi (1919-2011), née Calabi and married to Bruno Zevi, was president of the Union of Jewish Communities of Italy and correspondent of the Israeli newspaper Maariv. As prosecutor, Bernard B. Fall (1926-1967), a Jew born in Vienna and in 1938 a refugee in France, spent his life as a professor of law in the United States. He died in Vietnam. Another prosecutor was Adrian S. Fisher (1914-1983). A third lawyer was David Daniel Marcus (1901-1948), a colonel in the United States army who, at the invitation of Ben-Gurion, went to Jerusalem to organize the defence of the city and died in the battle of Abu Ghosh in 1948, a month after the declaration of the State of Israel. This name was given to the village because the owners of the land were called Abu Ghosh, but before it was called 'Karyat Anab' (Kiryat Anavim), 'village of grapes'.

Among the lawyers of the French group was the Jew Joe Nordmann (1905-2010), who worked together with Vincent Auriol, the first President of the Fourth French Republic. Another Jewish lawyer in the same French team was Léon Poliakov (1910-1997). Léon was born in St Petersburg, Russia. His family emigrated to Paris to flee the Russian revolution. He studied law and became the pioneer of the history of the Shoah. Being the secretary of the famous Rabbi Schneour Zal-

man Schneersohn, he founded with the rabbi's cousin the CDJC (Centre de Documentation Juive [...]). The tribunal was the cause of a very important innovation, which was simultaneous translation, that is, translation at the same moment. The judges of the four countries — the United States, England, Russia and France — the prosecutors, the lawyers of these four countries and the German criminals could all hear, understand and speak in their own languages, wearing headphones to hear what was being discussed. It was Raphael Lemkin, one of the advisers, who invented the word 'genocide' for the extermination of the Jewish people. The word 'genos' in Greek means 'people' or 'race'. The word 'cide' in Latin means 'killing'. From there came the word 'genocide'. Never Again.

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Ivan Moscovich

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 24.7.2024 · original

Ivan Moscovich was born in 1926 in Novi Sad, a city of what was then Yugoslavia. His Jewish parents were from Hungary. His fame comes from having invented many games and educational toys that are still considered valuable today. He died last year, in 2023, at the age of 96.

He was interned in 1943 at Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and two more camps. He survived to the end of the war, lived for a time in Sweden to recover, finished his studies at the University of Belgrade and went to live in Israel.

At 95 he held an art exhibition at the National Museum of Mathematics in New York. The figures were made mechanically and by the rules of mathematics.

Works of art made in collaboration between man and machine. These works were made with a machine invented by Ivan Moscovich called the 'Harmonograph', and he himself was deeply attached to the art of mathematics.

An important particularity of this machine is that no two figures are alike; each and every one is independent. This interest of Ivan Moscovich in the art of mathematics seems a little strange, because mathematics helps us analyse and classify with precision everything that exists. But art, according to Prof. Marshall McLuhan (a Canadian Jew who foresaw the internet 30 years before it was invented), is to produce everything that can be made.

In Israel he worked as a scientific researcher, and in 1964 he founded the museum of 'Science and Technology' in Tel Aviv. Even though this museum did not live long, it led to science museums opening all over the world, such as the 'Exploratorium' in San Francisco and 'MoMath' in Manhattan. Apart from this famous centre, his works decorated the museums of Berlin, London and many other capitals. Thanks to these exhibitions, today's generations, who are not very aware of the Holocaust, are taking an interest in the subject, above all through these survivors, of whom so few remain. His works interested almost everyone, from children of 4 to people of 104. Moscovich says 'it is a rare thing for mathematics, science and art to mix in such a harmonious way'.

His star shone when he was in a Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles, eating for dessert a cookie in which there was a slip of paper with advice that said: 'Sell your ideas, because without any doubt they will be accepted.' That is how he began to invent games and toys based on mathematics, science and art. But he does not forget to add: 'Everything in life is connected. If I had not been in Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen or the other camps, and if I had not had hope, a goal to live for, I don't know whether I would be the same Moscovich. The same symptoms that Primo Levi had, who after the war killed himself at 43, I had too. But I saved myself because I needed to let it out, and that made me an inventor.'

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Killing Hitler

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 14.8.2024 · original

In 1933 some American Jews made plans to kill Hitler. The American authorities, who learned of this, were worried, thinking it could be an international scandal for the German leader to be killed by Americans.

On 23 March 1933 a certain Daniel Stern wrote this letter to the German ambassador in Washington DC:

'Dear Sir,

I have asked President Roosevelt to protest to your government about the indignities being inflicted on the Jews in Germany and to end this persecution immediately and completely. In case the President makes no declaration, I inform you that I shall go to Germany to kill Hitler.

Cordially,

Daniel Stern.'

The Ambassador took this letter to the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and the Secretary passed the letter to the Attorney General, Homer Cummings. Although the German Ambassador, Friedrich Wilhelm von Prittwitz, resigned his post in April 1933 in protest at Hitler's becoming Chancellor, the German diplomats demanded that this threat be treated seriously.

On the one hand, President Roosevelt, newly elected to power and with the problem of the American Depression of those years on his mind, had no interest either in the persecution of the Jews of Germany or in Hitler's having become Chancellor. On the other hand, militants of the Jewish community held rallies in front of the German consulates in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and elsewhere. In this atmosphere the American Government took the threat seriously. So Attorney General Cummings turned to J. Edgar Hoover, then director general of investigations and later the founder of the F.B.I., the Federal Bureau of Investigation. To find Daniel Stern, who was an unknown gangster, they contacted the famous Jewish gangsters such as Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel, Dutch Schultz and Lepke Buchalter, but none of them had heard of Daniel Stern; on the contrary, they were quite eager to take part in this plot, but backed off because a plot of this kind could harm their clandestine activities.

In the F.B.I. archives, file no. 65-53615 explains very well and in great detail this plot, which was smothered by the American Justice Department, thereby saving Hitler's life until the end of the Second World War.

Source: Robert Rockaway, Claire Levenson

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The Synagogue

El Amaneser no. 237, p. 9, 13.11.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

We know that the Synagogue was the religious and social centre of the Jewish community, holding the Jewish people together in a united community after the destruction of the Beit ha-Mikdash. But today we do not know very well when the existence of the Synagogue began. The word synagogue is a Greek word meaning 'place of assembly'. In Greek there is another word that says the same thing: 'ekklesia', 'place of assembly'. In Hebrew we say 'Beit Knesset', 'house of assembly', or 'Beit Tefila', 'house of prayer'. In Ladino we say 'kehila', which also means a place where the 'kahal', or group of people, gathers. In Turkish we say 'cami', which means place of assembly. The root of this word is 'cem', meaning the 'sum' of things or people. So the Synagogue served as a house of prayer, as a community centre, as a house where the community meets, as a place to celebrate festivals all together or to console the relatives at a funeral, as a place of charity and piety. So the Synagogue was a very radical innovation in the life of the Jew, because he began to gather with more people for prayers or social activities, which they could not do in the Beit ha-Mikdash, where only the officiants such as the Kohanim and the Leviim entered.

A great majority of academics think the Synagogue began with the exile to Babylon, in order to teach the Torah to the children, to maintain the traditions and take care that they were not lost. The academic Aharon Oppenheimer does not agree with this theory, saying that the Babylonian Talmud, which deals with the period of the exile, was written 1,000 years after that event and that there is no archaeological evidence relating to that period. A second theory says the Synagogue began with Ezra and Nehemiah after they returned from Babylon, in the 5th century BCE. According to Ismar Elbogen, the time of Ezra was the time that served to develop the liturgy of the Synagogue, such as the ceremony of reading the Torah. A third theory says the Synagogue began in the Hellenistic period (4th century BCE) in Egypt. According to Rachel Hachlili, it was there that the inscription 'Synagogue' was found for the first time.

A fourth theory says the Synagogue began with the Pharisees in the time of the Hasmoneans. The fifth theory says the Synagogue developed after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 CE. The fact is that the Synagogue must have existed well before the fall of Jerusalem: according to the writings of the philosopher Philo, according to the historian Josephus and according to the book of the Maccabees, synagogues existed both in Palestine and in the diaspora, such as the synagogue of the City of David, which existed even 150 years before the fall of the Temple to the Romans in the year 70 CE. According to the writings we know that this synagogue served for prayer, for teaching the Torah and even for people who came from afar and had no place to stay. Of all these theories, the theory of the Hellenistic period of the Diaspora convinces us more than the others, having the proof of archaeological remains. We can say that the Jewish community in the Galut made the Synagogue the place where the traditions of Jewish identity were preserved, taking into account politics, liturgy, social life, education, justice and spiritual life. Source: S. B. Jang of Bar-Ilan University

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Jews in Spain

El Amaneser no. 242, p. 18–19, 16.4.2025 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

There are many legends that speak of the Jewish presence in Spain, and the oldest legend tells us that the Jews began to go to Spain from the time of King Solomon. It seems the Phoenicians, as a Semitic people and good navigators, had colonies in the Iberian peninsula, where today we have the two countries Spain and Portugal. The legend says that certain Jews, as famous merchants, mixed with the Phoenicians and stayed in Spain. There is no proof, either archaeological or historical, to support this legend. And we do not believe Jews would have gone so far from the Beit ha-Mikdash in the time of King Solomon. Another legend says that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, carried the Jewish slaves as far as Spain after destroying the Beit ha-Mikdash in the 6th century BCE. What is interesting is that these legends, however absurd they may seem, found many believers among Jews and Christians, because they show that the Jews of Sefarad were already there before the crucifixion of Jesus — or rather, they show that the Jews were already in Spain before the arrival of Christianity, so that they were not the criminals who killed him, a theory the Christians always used.

In certain chapters of the Tanakh we find the name Tarshish. Whether in 'Shemot' (Exodus) or 'Vayikra' (Leviticus), or in the books of Kings or the Song of Songs, this name appears as the name of a city in Spain that can be identified with Tartessos, near the Guadalquivir in Andalusia. It seems the Phoenicians often came to Tarshish to trade, as there were rich silver mines there according to the Assyrian texts, but geographically it is not well known where this city was. On the other hand the name Tarshish is confused with the name 'Tarsus', which is near Adana in Turkey. The same name Tarshish appears in the Torah as one of the grandsons of Noah. Be that as it may, one can say that the first Jews in Spain were in Tarshish, south of Córdoba, which with time became the capital of Jewry in Spain.

The name of Spain in Hebrew is Sefarad. We find this name for the first time in the book of the prophet Obadiah. He says: 'Those of Jerusalem who were in SEFARAD shall possess the cities of the south, and the saviours shall go up to Mount Zion.' Probably the prophet Obadiah, or whoever wrote this book, was not thinking of Spain in the 6th century BCE. The fact is that we have no description of the place where Sefarad is, because in the Tanakh we do not find the name Sefarad a second time. Only in certain texts found in Mesopotamia, written in the lingua franca that was Akkadian, as was Aramaic, do we find the name 'SPARD' to designate the city of Sardis, which was the capital of the Lydians. Sardis is very near İzmir. It was there that what we call 'coin' was first minted (the Castilian word is acuñar, to stamp money). The whole world copied from the Lydians the way of making coins. We also know that the Persians were in both Mesopotamia and Anatolia in those times, until the arrival of Alexander the Great, who brought Hellenistic civilization in the 4th century BCE. Aramaic, like Hebrew, is written only with consonants, so Spard was written with 'shin', 'pe', 'resh', 'dalet'. We know that the letter 'pe' is also pronounced 'fe'. That is why the word 'Spard' was read 'Sepharad' or 'Sefarad'. In 1916 the archaeologist E. Littmann found a clay tablet written in two languages, Greek and Aramaic. The name of Sardis was written S.P.R.D in the Aramaic part.

In the Talmud there is talk of 'Aspamia', a land at the edge of the world, a year's journey from the land of Israel. Clearly it was a particular way of naming Spain. But it is believed that Sefarad became Spain after the 6th century CE. The oldest document of the existence of Jews in Spain is thanks to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who tells us of Herod, who was exiled with his

wife Herodias to Spain by the emperor Caligula. Probably Herod's Jewish friends and relatives accompanied him to Spain and stayed there, and this could be the beginning of the Jewish presence in Spain. On the other hand Saint Paul, a rabbi named Saul, born in Tarsus, who after the death of Jesus began to spread his ideas, writes in his letters that he was in the synagogues that existed at that time in Anatolia and the other places he went. It seems he also went to Spain. The famous Spanish writer Luis García Iglesias tells us something similar, saying that Saint Paul had the habit and the intention of indoctrinating first the Jew and then the rest. So it is normal to admit that Jewish communities must have existed in Spain even before the arrival of Saint Paul.

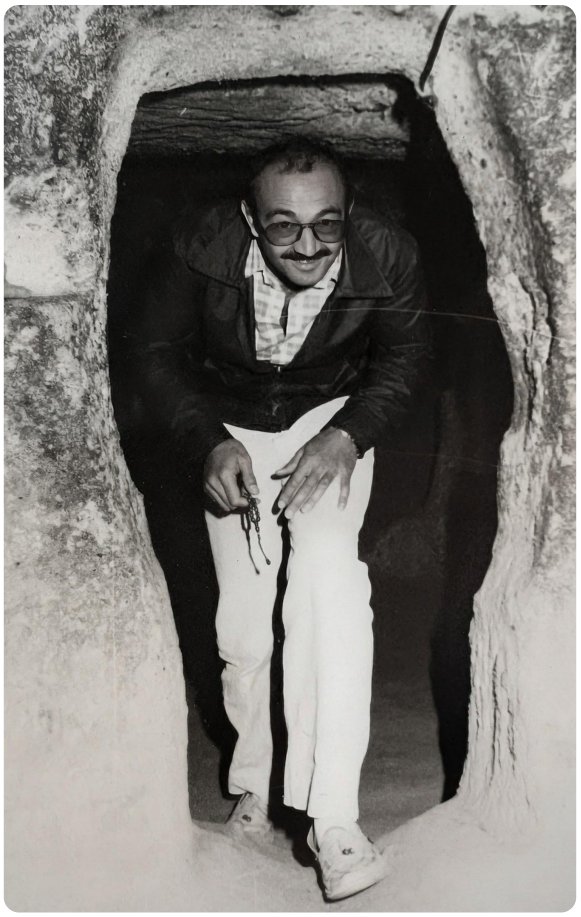
The oldest proof we have of the Jewish presence in Spain is a fragment of an amphora of the 1st century CE with certain letters in Hebrew, found in Ibiza, one of the three Balearic islands that belong to Spain in the Mediterranean. In the same century and on the same island certain coins of the Palestine of that time were found. A piece of a tombstone of the 2nd century with the word 'Judea' was found at Abdera. In an inscription in three languages — Hebrew, Greek and Latin — found at Tarragona, it was written: 'Peace to Israel, to us and to our children, Amen.' The inscription belonged to the 1st or 2nd century CE. In the year 305 CE, Christian religious leaders gathered in Granada under the name of the 'Council of Elvira', where they took important decisions such as the prohibition of marriage for priests; the prohibition for a Christian woman to marry a Jew, and to eat at a Jewish table; and not to accept the blessing of a Jew for Christian fields that were to give abundant wheat... These canons show us that the existence of the Jews in Spain was something of great importance, because according to certain academics the relations of living together could help many new Christians to convert to Judaism, so that it seems the Jewish population grew not only through immigration but through frequent conversions.

In conclusion, we can say that most of the places where the Jews lived were the urban centres of the great cities, or near the coast of the Mediterranean, just as happened in Asia Minor, that is, today's Turkey. Source: Isabel Neto-Costa

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Istanbul & Turkey

Estanbol i Turkiya · 9 articles



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Outings

El Amaneser no. 183, p. 8–9, 6.5.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Many of our outings are the memories that stay with us for ever. I remember we used to go on outings from Balat to Bostan İskelesi, to Kâğıthane, and even to Tuzla to drink a flat-tasting water that was said to fight tapeworm. To be able to drink this water we had to eat salted olives. We went to Yakacık, to Çırçır, to Hünkâr Suyu or Sultan Suyu, spending the whole day in these places. The custom was to spread a sheet or a thin piqué cover on the ground where we ate. To prepare the food for these days, one cooked the whole week. These outings had existed for centuries. I remember that when we went to these picnic places, we went together with many families who knew each other; the men formed a separate group and the women another. Groups also formed according to the language spoken and the social level one belonged to.

Kâğıthane and its surroundings were called 'the Sweet Waters of Europe'. Göksu and Küçüksu were called 'the Sweet Waters of Asia'. I remember we went to Küçüksu to eat corn (mısır). There was a heap of cauldrons where they served the corn, and they put salt on the corn husks and the hot corn inside. That way we did not burn our hands eating the corn. Travellers alluded to London's Hyde Park, saying that 'the Sweet Waters of Asia' resembled this park. Imagination, as we know, has no limit. To reach these places there were carts drawn by oxen. I also remember that we went to Polonezköy in these carts — carts where we sat sideways, and my mother complained that her behind hurt. Another way to reach these places was by boat. In these places each minority gathered with its own group. The Jews formed one group, the Greeks another, the Armenians yet another. It was quite rare to see them mixed, and each group spoke its own language, and the flavours of the food were different. The powerful families had their own boats, and so they went to Kâğıthane or Küçüksu in their boats. There were boats which only men or only women entered. This separation could be seen even in places of gathering like the picnics.

Apart from the Turks/Muslims, who preferred to go out on Friday, the minorities went on their outings on Sunday. Certain families came to these outings with their servants, so as not to work and tire themselves there. The traveller Wittman, in 1803, said that humble families did not have a great separation of men and women. Julia Pardoe, in 1837, writes: 'In these places of outing, and more so on feast days, the mixing of poor and rich does no harm to society. The rich man sits next to the boatman (kayıkçı), the master next to the fisherman (balıkçı).' The traveller Smith remarks in 1850 that one particularity of the Turkish man is to play with worry beads (tespih). Rich or poor, it makes no difference. They lean against a tree and amuse themselves for hours with the tespih. Turkish/Muslim women, like all the women of the different minorities, also held tespihs in their hands.

Among the sporting activities it was wrestling (güreş) that pleased everyone. Only the traveller Frankland, in 1830, writes thus: 'At Fenerbahçe, when we were among the pines, there were certain women swimming with the help of their black servants.' J. Pardoe adds that the nargile was in fashion for women as well as men, and they brought charcoal (kömür) to revive the nargile. Another pastime was the acrobats, and the gypsy women who played and danced. The observations about women were more accurate from the women travellers who had the chance to be invited, being close to ambassadors or foreign diplomats, and who could sit among the women, unlike the men, who had to stay among the men. To travel, to see and to know is always a privilege, in every era. Adapted and adjusted from a study by Zofie Uçar.

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The Arameans and the Syriacs

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 1.7.2020 · original

Years ago I spent some time in the east of Turkey, and at weekends I went to the nearby cities such as Mardin.

There were many people there whom we called Syriacs (Süryani). A while ago our friend Silvyo told us about the inauguration of a Syriac church in Istanbul. Who are these Syriacs, who say their prayers in Aramaic, like our Kaddish?

One should know that the Aramaic language was spoken by both the Arameans and the Hebrews. Now, who are the Arameans? The Arameans were a Semitic people who lived in Harran (the country of Abraham our father and Jacob our father) under the domination of the Assyrians.

Both in the temple of Amenophis IV and in the tablets of the Hittites the Arameans are spoken of as the 'Habiru', who were Semites. The language they spoke was a Semitic language.

The Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser said: 'Twice a year I crossed the river Euphrates, defeated the peoples there and brought to my country everything that was there.' The peoples there were the Arameans.

In the letters of 'Tell el-Amarna' (a city on the river Nile) where the famous Pharaoh Akhenaten lived, who formed a kind of monotheistic religion, it says that the Habiru were the Arameans and the Hebrews.

Aramaic was spoken over a fairly wide geography: Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, even today's Iran. The oldest writings are those of 'Hazael', who lived in the 800s before our era.

There was a period of peace between the Arameans and the Kingdom of Judah. But when King Ahab died, the peace ended.

Every time the Assyrians wanted to conquer the lands of the Jews and the Arameans, these two peoples united. After the Assyrian danger passed, they fought each other again.

The language of the Arameans belongs to the same family as Hebrew and Phoenician. That is, these languages are Semitic. For this reason certain of our prayers are in Aramaic and not in Hebrew. But having the same root, it is not very difficult to understand what they said. Even the Assyrians wrote in this language.

At Tel Dan (the north of Israel — Dan, Dafna, Metula) is the stone we call the Stele, where King Hazael wrote in Aramaic.

The book of Ezra and the book of Job are written in Aramaic. It is said that Jesus (Isa) too spoke Aramaic.

The Arameans lived in different countries. Those who settled in Syria took the name Syriacs and became Christians. There are Syriacs who belong to the church of Urfa; they are called Eastern Syriacs, or Nestorians.

There are also Syriacs who belong to the church of Antakya, called Western Syriacs, or Aramean Syriacs. As Jesus (Christ) spoke Aramaic, they are said to be the first Christians of the world, or the first who decided to convert to Christianity. Today they are mostly in Mardin and Tur Abdin.

The monastery of 'Deyrülzafaran' (the house of saffron) is very famous. Other monasteries such as Mor Gabriel, the monastery of the Forty and the monastery of Mar Kiryako are the best known.

With the events of terrorism, many Syriacs decided to live in other countries such as Sweden and other neighbouring countries.

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The Cisterns of Constantinople

El Amaneser no. 185, p. 5, 1.7.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Constantinople, today's Istanbul, is known for its Byzantine churches and its rainwater cisterns. I remember cisterns from my childhood, much smaller than the cisterns I am going to tell you about. I remember that many years ago we went to Halki (Heybeliada) to spend the summer. Under almost every house there was a cistern. The cisterns were shared and filled with rainwater that came from the roof. On top of these cisterns was a lid, sometimes with a hole, and a pulley with a rope to lower a bucket and fill it with water from the cistern. This water was used for cooking and also for housework. Drinking water was bought from the water-seller (saka). These sakas could sometimes be seen at night near the more distant cisterns, filling their waterskins with this water too. I am not sure, but perhaps they filtered the water in their own way so that it would have a good taste.

The cisterns were very important in the centres inside the city too. In those days there were no apartment buildings as today. The houses were more like family dwellings, I mean that large families lived in one house with all the members of the family. The women of these families shared the kitchen, and if they had a terrace on the floor above, it was for hanging out the washing. There too, the laundry had to be well washed — washed by hand, of course — and the white linen had to be spotless, without any stain. Gossip was not lacking, and daughters-in-law did not always get on with their mothers-in-law. Let us return to our Byzantine cisterns, large, immense, which can still be visited and seen. One of these cisterns is the Sunken Cistern of the 6th century of our era (Yerebatan Sarnıcı), a fairly large and elegant cistern built by the emperor Justinian in the year 532. It has 336 columns, and almost all have capitals of different styles and bases of different sizes to support them. Two of these bases bear the face of the Medusa.

Who is this Medusa? In Greek mythology the Medusas were invented by the writer Hesiod in the book Theogony, the History of the Gods. An interesting part of the story of the Medusas is written by Ovid in his book called 'Metamorphoses'. Without going into details, Greek mythology holds that a young hero, Perseus, was sent to the Medusa, who had hair in the form of snakes and an invincible power to turn to stone anyone who looked at her. Perseus thought of a plan to kill her without being attacked. One day when the Medusa was sleeping, Perseus took his shield (magen) to use it as a mirror and placed it before the sleeping Medusa. When the Medusa awoke, she opened her eyes and saw herself in the shield. At once she was petrified, and Perseus could cut off the Medusa's head to bring it to the goddess Athena. Athena always wore this head of the Medusa as a medallion on her breast. Mythology with its tales is a bottomless well.

Another cistern nearby is the Cistern of the Thousand and One Columns. The name already gives an idea of its size. Of course one should not trust every name one is given and everything one reads: these columns were only 224, and today 212 remain. It was built by the Emperor Constantine. The columns are interesting for being formed of two separate columns, fitted one on top of the other. Today this cistern is a museum and can be visited. Another cistern near there is the Şerefiye Cistern, recently restored and opened to public visits. The cistern also serves as a concert hall, and it is the only cistern with a modern lift at the service of the public. Şerefiye is under the building next to the Municipal Conservatory. This cistern was built by the emperor Theodosius in the years 428-443 of our era.

Another cistern, again in the old city, in the centre of Sultanahmet, is very original and lies under a shopping centre called Nakkaş. It was restored by the owners of this same centre. Byzantine cisterns are many in Istanbul. One of them is near Edirnekapı and is known as the football ground of the Karagümrük team. This cistern was one of those that were open to the sky. Another cistern that is not visited lies under the Zeyrek church/mosque. From outside, along the road, only the strong walls of the cistern are seen. It seems that in Istanbul we have more than 100 cisterns. Water is one of the primordial elements of life. In Turkish they say 'Su gibi aziz ol!' — 'Be blessed like water!'

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The Minorities

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 22.12.2021 · original

The film 'THE CLUB' made me think about the way we are seen as a 'minority', or as 'THE OTHERS', in Turkey. The Jew in the United States is first American, then Jewish. The Jew in Turkey is first Jewish, then Turkish. The Turk is a Turk not only because he belongs to the Turkish stock but also because he is a Muslim. The Jew neither belongs to the Turkish stock nor is a Muslim. So he is 'THE OTHER'. The Other, even if he is not, and even with a very small probability, may be an enemy of the Turkish state because he may collaborate with foreign powers. That is why we shall not see any Jew in a dominant position such as governor, ambassador or judge. Of course what I say is not only about the Jew, but about all the other minorities that are not of the Muslim religion. So we can say that the essential element for being a Turk is not the origin of one's stock but the Muslim religion. Since Ottoman times, peoples of the Muslim faith and of non-Turkish stock were assimilated; but peoples of non-Muslim religion were categorically considered THE OTHERS, THE FOREIGNERS.

The Ottoman ran his empire on the basis of two communities (umma): the Muslim community and the non-Muslim community. The tradition was to see the Muslim community as always superior to the other. 'The Others' could not have taller houses, could not ride on horseback without permission, had to dress in a different colour from the Muslims, and so on. With the Ottoman reforms of the 19th century, all obtained equality of national rights while remaining independent in their religious rights. With the Muslim immigration from the Balkans, Crimea and the Caucasus, the non-Muslim minority belonged all the more to 'THE OTHERS'. This belonging was signed in chapter 3 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which called MINORITIES only the NON-MUSLIMS.

The pains they made us feel and suffer so much — the Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi), the 'twenty classes' conscription, what happened in Thrace, the vandalism of 6-7 September — all this was part of the mentality and the thinking about 'the Others'. Even today we are considered THE OTHERS. I believe that is how the majority sees us, even though the laws say we are equal.

To feel good in our beloved country is what we wish, without forgetting to keep our eyes well open at all times.

Always good fortune, health and peace to all.

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EFES
Midyeci

Snow in Istanbul

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 23.3.2022 · original

The snow we had this month is not a very rare thing for Istanbul. In past centuries, history tells us, there were snowfalls heavier than what we saw last week. The oldest writing we have about harsh winters is from the time of the emperor Arcadius, son of Theodosius, who built the walls in the fifth century that are still there: the shores of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus turned to ice.

In the year 763 the whole Golden Horn and the whole Bosphorus filled with blocks of ice that came from the Black Sea. It was written that the ice was nearly 30 centimetres thick. It is even said that people crossed the Bosphorus from one side to the other on these blocks. This event was repeated many times during past centuries. In 1954 we had the same thing, and I too, who was a teenager, remember having walked on the ice. In 1621 the cold was so strong that the water froze in the public fountains, where everyone went with buckets to fill water, and the sakas who brought drinking water could not go out for that reason. Those who did not have enough water in the jars of their homes suffered greatly from lack of water, and the people of Istanbul from lack of bread and other foodstuffs.

In past years, when the winter was very harsh, we heard that wolves and wild boars came very close to the centre of the city and people were afraid to go out at night. The only ones who were happy were the children, who played in the snow and did not go to school. There were winters when the schools closed for nearly three weeks.

We are lucky that in Istanbul we live the four seasons like Vivaldi's music, even though we complain of both cold and heat.

This makes us think that man must struggle with nature and appreciate its changes. That is how the rebirth of nature can be celebrated. When man feels this change he also appreciates his humility before Creation.

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The Two Romes

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 25.5.2022 · original

After our friend Sami Aji wrote about the anniversary of Istanbul, born in the year 330 on the 11th of May, I thought I should give some explanations about the two cities that bore the same name and which, thanks to Constantine the Great, survived until the 15th century as capital of the Roman Empire, called the Byzantine Empire.

Constantine the Great speaks thus: 'From today onwards, we decide that the right and the power of my reign be transferred to this province of Byzantium, an excellent place, and that a city be built in my name, and my right be established there.'

With these words Constantine took two great steps in world history. He gave freedom to the Christians and made Byzantium the capital of the Roman Empire. It is known that Constantine had thought of establishing the capital of the empire at Troy before Byzantium, but as he won the last war to be sole emperor right opposite Byzantium, at Chrysopolis, today called Üsküdar, fortune fell to Byzantium instead of Troy. Today we do not know very well whether Constantinople was designated as capital or whether its star shone because the star of Rome had darkened. On the other hand Rome, becoming the centre of Christianity, gained a religious importance.

Before Constantine, the emperor Diocletian tried to establish himself at Nicomedia, today called 'İzmit', a city at the end of the gulf of İzmit on the Sea of Marmara. Other attempts to establish the capital were made at Thessalonica, 'Selanik', or at Antioch, 'Antakya'. We know that the emperors Constantius, son of Constantine, Julian, who prohibited Christianity, and Valens, who built the 'Bozdoğan' aqueduct, stayed much more in Antioch than in Constantinople. But Constantine, who restored the Hippodrome for the chariot races (yarış), bringing important monuments from other parts of the empire, raising the famous column we call today 'Çemberlitaş', on top of which he placed his own statue in the form of 'Apollo', and widening the walls of Byzantium, made this city as splendid as Rome. After searching all the documents, only in three of them was the name 'New Rome' or 'Second Rome' found for Constantinople; so these names were never used frequently.

After the vandalism of the Goths and Visigoths in the year 410, the Rome of Italy declined more than greatly. With the building of the church 'Hagia Sophia', which means 'the Sacred Wisdom', after the Nika riots of the year 532, by the emperor Justinian, our Rome became the largest city of the Mediterranean Sea. Even so, its name 'Byzantion' disappeared just after the 7th century. And in the year 1054 the two Romes anathematized (excommunicated) each other. What we know today as Constantinople was completed by the emperor Theodosius, who moved the walls to where they are now, in the 5th century.

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The Sea in Istanbul

El Amaneser no. 227, p. 20, 10.1.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Some time ago my wife Anna wrote an article about sea bathing with the title 'From the plajes to the beaches'. This made me think about the way we went from 'sea hamams to beaches'. For in the Ottoman period, bathing in the sea was not something known to the public. And all the more so in a country like the Ottoman Empire, where the great majority of the population was Muslim: bathing in the sea could not be accepted in any way. It was after the middle of the 19th century that they allowed whole enclosed houses to be built in the sea so that men and women could enter the sea separately. The writer Ragıp Akyavaş, in his book Asitane, says: 'The beauties of Bene Israel came from Yeldeğirmeni and even from Balat to the hamam of Haydarpaşa, and to the hamam of Moda went the kokonas of the Frankish minority.' The known baths were those of Haydarpaşa, Moda, Caddebostan and Fenerbahçe. Later they made baths also at Beyaz Park next to Büyükdere, at Salacak, at Küçüksu...

According to the Muslim religion there was no restriction on entering the sea. But some doctors wrote advice for those who wanted to bathe there. In an article on the sea hamam written in 1889 by a doctor of the Ottoman navy, it says: 'Without the doctor's approval one must never enter the sea. Even the hour at which one is to enter the sea is for the doctor to decide. Those who live in a village far from the sea and come to bathe must wait at least three days before entering the sea. Do not enter before the watermelon rind falls into the sea. The best time to bathe is the end of summer and the beginning of autumn. The belief that says "entering the sea between 20 June and 11 August is not healthy" is a superstition and not true. Adults must not bathe just at dawn, nor after the sun has set. The best time should be between two hours before noon and five hours after. Do not enter the sea before finishing digestion. Adults must enter either on an empty stomach or three and a half hours after eating. Small children can enter two hours after eating. Do not put children in the sea before they have completed six years.' According to Doctor Ahmed Şükrü of Adana, even old people past forty-five must not enter the sea. If they dare to enter, they may suffer from haemorrhoids. Doctor Salahaddin Ali of Beşiktaş said that the waters of Hasköy and Balat are not clean for bathing. On the Bosphorus only the waters of Arnavutköy are clean. The waters of Makriköy (Bakırköy), Fenerbahçe and the Islands are also clean. To enter the sea, men and women had to cover themselves down to the knee.

The fashion for beaches began with the Russian émigrés. The White Russians, losing the struggle against those who made the revolution of 1917, fled across the Black Sea to Istanbul and settled in the camps near Florya. In the famous Rejans restaurant the Russian women who worked there presented themselves as if they were countesses. At Florya they began to lie on the sand and sunbathe, and to enter the sea men and women together. This pleased the minorities first of all, and with time members of the more secular Turkish Muslim community too took pleasure in doing the same. This fashion, after Florya, was also seen at Moda and Büyükada. One thing that greatly helped the spread of this fashion was the vision of our first President of the Turkish Republic, the immortal Atatürk, who at Florya entered the sea in a short swimsuit. The house built there even served to receive leaders of other countries, such as the King of England, Edward VIII, in 1936, and in 1937 the King of Jordan, Abdullah.

The beach fashion brought another fashion, the gazinos behind the beach. People spent the day on the beach, and in the evening went to the gazino to eat and dance the tango, the foxtrot, the charleston, or to hear famous singers such as Zeki Müren, Müzeyyen Senar... especially on Sat-

urdays and Sundays. The gazinos of Caddebostan, Beyaz Park, Bebek, Salacak and Moda were the most famous. Now that we are closing the season for entering the sea, it is good to know — saver es bueno — to remember what it was like before. Source: Zafer Toprak, exhibition of the Pera Museum 'From the Sea Hamam to the Beach'

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The Yin-Yang in Turkey

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 30.5.2024 · original

This photo was taken from the international space station by an astronaut in 2022. It shows us the caldera of the volcano on Mount Nemrut in the region of Lake Van, in the town called Tatvan. One part of the Yin-Yang is a lake and the other part is formed by the solidified lava of the volcano. This volcano is on a mountain 2,900 metres high, and the last eruption it had was in the year 1650. In the caldera, which is the mouth of the volcano, the lake is full of fresh water, covering an area of 12 square kilometres with a depth of 176 metres. Beside this lake there is another, much smaller, but with very hot water, 11 metres deep. This shows us that even though the volcano is extinct, there is active life beneath the caldera. The photo shows us the crater lake.

In Turkey we have two mountains of the same name dedicated to King Nimrod. The other mountain is in the region of the Commagenes, between Adıyaman and Malatya. On the summit of the mountain there are two temples. One faces east, where the sun rises; the other faces west, where the sun sets. In each of these temples one sees enormous heads of heroes of Greek mythology merged with the gods of Persia. These heads fell from the statues that were seated on thrones after a great earthquake.

In writing Yin-Yang in Turkey, I wanted to show the resemblance between the photo above and the symbol called Yin-Yang, a symbol of Chinese philosophy that shows us dualism, the struggle between contradictions and the balance needed to form vital harmony.

Source: Science journal 2020, Harry Baker

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The Oldest Synagogue of Istanbul

El Amaneser no. 238, p. 9, 11.12.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Very few people have taken an interest in speaking about the oldest synagogue that existed in Istanbul. As we have no concrete proof of its existence, those interested did not give much importance to what some Byzantine historians said. Importance was given mostly to the church dedicated to the 'Mother of God' that was built in the copper market. Those of my age know very well that the copper market in Istanbul was behind the great covered market called 'KAPALI ÇARŞI' and in front of the market of old books called 'Sahaflar Çarşısı'. Today this market has disappeared, but it was an attraction to hear the sound of the hammer striking the copper and making very special handmade things out of copper. The copper market the Byzantines spoke of was right between the great church called 'Hagia Sophia', 'the Sacred Wisdom', which we know today as the Ayasofya Mosque, an enormous temple built in the 6th century CE, and the park of Roses known today as 'Gülhane Parkı'.

The oldest writing about this synagogue is by Theophanes, the historian who lived between the years 860 and 917 CE. Theophanes tells us that the church was built by Pulcheria (Pulchérie), sister of Theodosius II, in 449-450 CE on the same site where the synagogue of the copper market stood, where the Hebrews (the Jews) lived. This Theophanes does not inspire much confidence, because in another writing he repeats the same thing, saying that the church was built in the time of the Emperor Justin II, who reigned between 565 and 578 CE. In the book 'Patria', written in the 10th century, the same thing is written: that the church of the 'Mother of God' was built in the copper market where Hebrews had lived since the time of Constantine the Great and even before him — that is, even before the year 330 CE, when Constantine made Byzantium, which was a small town, the great capital of his empire and called it Constantinople.

A chronicle of the 12th century written by a certain John Zonaras says that the synagogue of the copper market was built illegally. It seems the Jews decided to bribe Honoratus, the prefect of Constantinople, to build a synagogue in the copper market, and obtained his approval; knowing that Honoratus was not a Christian but a pagan, he even took on the costs of the construction. This caused the Christian community to protest against the existence of a synagogue in this area, and they damaged the building, burning it entirely. The prefect Honoratus decided to punish those who caused the fire, ordering them to rebuild the synagogue according to the law of Theodosius, which agreed to protect the Jews, and informed the Emperor Theodosius, who was then in Milan, of all that had happened in Constantinople.

When Ambrose, a Christian scholar considered one of the fathers of that religion, who lived in Milan, heard of all this, he said to the Emperor: 'For what reason, you, Emperor, are insulting Him who made you king among the men of the people, Him who placed the crown on your head, by accepting that Christians build and pay the costs of a synagogue in the middle of the city where Christ is worshipped?' With this criticism Theodosius changed his conduct and decided that synagogues should be built outside the city. According to these explanations, today we consider that this synagogue stood right where the mosque of 'Arpa Emini Lala Hayrettin Paşa' is. Source: Alexander Panayotov (United Kingdom), 2019

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Jewish Holidays & Tradition

Fyestas i Tradisyones Djudiyas · 7 articles



When It Is Rosh Hashanah · The Dove · Purim · Pesach · The Jew's Hat · Joy in the Festivals · On Hannah and Hanukkah

When It Is Rosh Hashanah

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 2.10.2019 · original

Every new year is the door to a beginning. For people, the new year means new emotions, new wishes, new events.

None of us is perfect. We all keep striving to be a better person. Some of us want to lose weight, others want to stop smoking, and the aim of others is to save money. Some of us want to be more patient, others more orderly, others more tolerant...

Well, to begin to change, why do we choose the first days of the new year and not the last days of the old one? People have the habit of taking new decisions on entering a new year, and one must decide to continue this good attitude the whole year through. For example, to settle everything at one go, it is better to begin with small steps.

One must be realistic. We can take a decision, for example, to do more exercise, to lose weight and keep healthy. To run a kilometre or walk every morning is hard in winter with the rain; so do twenty movements at home, in the morning or at night.

Not for charity — don't regret it!...

This year we shall think, and truly believe from within our hearts, that there will be peace in the world, that humanity will no longer think of evil, and will strive so that the world becomes more beautiful from day to day.

To begin, we shall at once look for a friend who thinks we have forgotten him.

We shall purify our minds of black intentions and of jealousy.

We shall be more delicate and more refined with those around us.

We shall pay people compliments so that they are happy. We shall forget the injustices done to us.

We shall listen much more and be attentive.

When we are unjust, we shall not refrain from apologizing.

We shall give importance to ideas different from our own.

When we get sad or angry we shall ask ourselves: will this problem be so important two weeks from now?

When we need courage, we shall say 'yes' to ourselves.

We shall not forget to smile much more. We shall have much more tolerance.

It is not easy to do all this; but one must begin with faith. And whatever is worthwhile of what we accomplish this year will form a step for the year to come. One must not regret the decisions one has taken.

A new year is a new future. And life will pass like this, with new wishes, illusions, emotions and ideas...

Now that we are in the week of Rosh Hashanah, one of the most important festivals and the day to beseech God, hearing the shofar, to pray for the new year, for health, happiness, and for peace and love in the whole world…

Jews take new decisions, make an effort to purify themselves of their faults, and believe they will be forgiven their sins by the Almighty.

All who are angry with one another must make peace, must be reconciled before Rosh Hashanah, so as to enter the new year without sin.

All promises must be kept, so as to be a humbler person and more fruitful to humanity.

May we all be written in the holy books... Good inscriptions, and may God keep us from the things we cannot keep ourselves from...

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The Dove

El Amaneser no. 199, p. 13, 8.9.2021 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

We have a granddaughter called Paloma, who lives in London. This name was chosen by her parents as a symbol of peace and good fortune. The word is in fact very rich in symbols adopted by different peoples, different beliefs, different painters and more. Through the centuries this bird forms a very rich iconography, whether in art in general or in religious figures. In mythology the dove represented the Mother Goddess. In the ruins of the temple of Mesopotamia we see doves in relief as decorative birds representing the Mother Goddess. In the temple of Cyprus the doves symbolize figures of happiness and procreation. And they became the sacred birds of Astarte, the goddess of Canaan, whose name changed into Esther. The same thing is seen in the goddesses Venus and Fortuna, who are depicted holding doves in their hands or on their heads.

The dove also represents the Breath, or 'Ruah'. Both in Bereshit and in the Dead Sea Scrolls we see that the 'Ruah' is linked with doves. Another dove figure we find in the story of Noah: the dove that returned with the olive branch in its beak announces to Noah that land is near. The same figure also appears in the epic of Gilgamesh, where Utnapishtim sends a dove from the ark, which comes back. After a time he sends a raven, which does not return. So it is understood that the raven was able to descend on dry land. The Torah also speaks of the Jewish people and of sacrificed doves. We have in Jerusalem, in the City of David, ruins of columbaria (dove towers) where doves were kept for the sacrifices. Christianity adopted the dove to symbolize the Holy Spirit that emanates from God. The ancient Greek word for dove was 'peristera', which comes from 'Perah Ishtar' of the Semitic language, meaning 'Flower or Bird of Ishtar'. The goddess Aphrodite, or Venus, is always seen with doves on her or around her on ancient vases.

Doves are sacred in Japanese mythology because they are the spirit of Hachiman, the god of war in the Shinto and Buddhist faiths. The dove is also associated with peace and pacifism, as at the Olympics. In politics it became the symbol of protests against war and violence. The dove with the olive branch became the symbol of the 'Peace and Freedom' movement in the 15th century. In the 20th century it is seen in the lithographs of Pablo Picasso (this time without the olive branch). And so our granddaughter allowed me to name her with the affection we have in seeing her. May her name bring the hope of health and peace to the world. Birds, goddesses and gods, amulets can be interesting examples. For humanity, world and spiritual peace will come with the contribution of each of us, bearing in mind that we are all in the same boat, and before it takes on too much water and sinks, we must protect it.

Another name, by coincidence, again of one of our grandsons, is Noah. Like Paloma, it made me want to look more closely at the name Noah through the centuries. The parasha spoke to us of the Flood that happened at the beginnings of time, and of Noah. When they gave the second grandson this name, we were overjoyed. The name symbolizes justice, uprightness, honesty, and reminds us that we must always be correct, love and praise nature and leave it in good condition for the future of the new generations. Reading the parasha of Noah, I realized that we do not know Noah's personality very well. We know he is upright, but there is no detail about his life and character. Uncle Google tells us that this name means tranquillity, peace, intelligence, reflection, and that the one who bears it is beloved and delightful.

The third grandson, who is Noah's twin brother, is called 'Ilan', which in Hebrew means tree. In Bereshit there is talk of 'Hag ha-Ilanot', which is what we celebrate as the festival of 'Tu Bishvat', the festival of trees and of everything we eat that grows from the earth. Tree makes us think of

being upright, having strong roots, knowing how to give back to Nature what we receive from Nature. Speaking of the tree, we remember the prohibition on touching the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil', which was the cause of Adam and Eve's sin. Speaking of the tree, we know that the roots remind us that man must hold on to his roots, the branches symbolizing the home and the family. The tree, in short, is the symbol of life and rebirth. So our three grandchildren made me think about their names, the meaning of their names and what they can symbolize in life.

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Purim

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 16.3.2022 · original

According to Torah scholars, the festival of Purim does not have its roots in the story written in the Book of Esther. Hayyim Schauss says that Purim first began to be celebrated among the Jews of Persia, who took the tradition from their non-Jewish neighbours. In Persia a festival was celebrated in the last month of winter, with masks, dances, joy, games and jokes, to welcome the spring that would announce the rebirth of Nature — a festival very like the festival of Dionysus celebrated by the Greeks and Romans of antiquity. As Dionysus was the god of wine, at this festival wine was drunk to the point of drunkenness. It seems this use of wine entered the customs of the Persians, and the Jews of Persia did the same thing. Let us not forget that at Purim we say 'ad lo yada', which means drinking wine until one cannot tell the white thread from the black. Today the very famous carnivals of Rio and Venice, held at almost the same time of year, have their roots in these customs of antiquity.

Theodore Gaster, in his book 'Festivals of the Jewish Year', speaks of various theories about Purim, and one of them is that Purim comes from the 'New Year festival' of Babylon. It seems that at this festival the gods decided the destiny of man, and this decision was made by lottery. The word for this in the language of Babylon was 'PURU', a root very like 'Purim'. At this festival they imitated the gods, who mocked and mimed other gods from outside Babylon.

Another theory says that formerly, for Purim, another word was used: 'Furdaya'. And the Jewish historian Josephus used the same word, which apparently derives from the Persian word 'Farvardigan', a festival held with wine towards the end of March.

Yet another theory says the word 'Purim' may come from the Hebrew word 'purah', related to wine, and derives from the Greek festival 'Pithoigia', the festival of opening the wine barrels. This festival began to be held in autumn and came to be held at the spring equinox, which corresponds to the time of Purim. But Gaster draws this deduction: the story of Esther is not a true story, and its relation to the festival of Purim has elements resembling the Greek festival, such as the selection of a queen — 'Esther'; the reception of one of the people who passes for king — 'Mordechai in the streets of Shushan'; the fast — 'the Fast of Esther'; the execution of the villain — 'the execution of Haman'.

In any case the story of the festival of Purim entered our traditions not before the second century CE. Another tradition is that at Purim we give each other little gifts and remember those in need, to help them with what we can.

A happy Purim to all.

Source: Rabbi Ron Isaacs

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Pesach

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 20.4.2022 · original

Pesach is one of the three festivals we call 'shalosh regalim'. These festivals are also known as 'pilgrimage' festivals. In the time of the Beit ha-Mikdash, the Jews of the Holy Land had to go to Jerusalem to celebrate 'Pesach', 'Shavuot' and 'Sukkot'. The journey they made was a pilgrimage, in today's word a 'hajj'. These days of pilgrimage or 'hajj' were called 'HAG' in Hebrew, which can be translated as 'festival'. We have other words too for festival, such as 'Moed' or 'Yom Tov'. That is why we greet each other saying 'Hag Sameah' or 'Moadim le Simha', which means 'May the festival(s) be joyful'. Note that these festivals are celebrated for 1 day in Israel and 2 days outside Israel, in the Galut. In one of the mosaics of the Kariye Museum, which is now a mosque and closed, we see this journey of Joseph, Mary and Jesus on the road to fulfil this mitzvah and celebrate Pesach in Jerusalem.

According to what is written, on the night of the departure from Egypt everyone had to eat in haste, with their shoes on their feet — although at home they always went barefoot — so as to be able to leave the house with the staff in hand that would serve for defence and support. All this because at any moment they might receive the order to leave and begin the road of the exodus.

The night of Pesach we call the 'Seder', a word that means 'to arrange, organize, order'. We must observe, arrange and organize this meal with certain rituals. We must feel the bitterness with the maror and the joy with the wine. We must teach the children who ask us the reason for all these rituals. This night is one of the nights when the whole family gathers and all loved ones are invited.

Pesach today is no longer the departure from Egypt and the road to salvation from slavery. Today it is the hope of spiritual freedom and universal peace.

Hag Sameah, and a joyful Moed.

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The Jew's Hat

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 23.11.2022 · original

We all know what the 'kippah' is — what we put on our heads in the synagogue, and what many Jews hold should never be taken off the head by the men of our people. The word comes from Hebrew and means the dome, 'kubbe' in Turkish. In the second book of the Torah, in Shemot, we see that the Kohen Gadol must cover his head. It is believed that the first man to cover his head was the sage Rav Nahman ben Yitzhak of Babel (Babylon). The Talmud tells us that the kippah reminds us that God is the highest authority above us. In the Middle Ages some Jews said there was no obligation to put a hat on the head. On the contrary, in the Shulchan Aruch, Yosef Karo says that no Jew may walk more than two metres without a hat.

But again in the same period of the Middle Ages, some European countries such as France and Italy decided to oblige the Jew to wear a hat shaped like a cauldron lid with a fairly tall peak. In 1215 Pope Innocent III decided that Jews had to wear this hat so that there would be no mixing with Catholic Christians, that they would not intermarry, and more than that, to humiliate the Jew. Although this law came out in the 13th century, the use of the conical hat was seen more and more in the 15th and 16th centuries, in the Renaissance, when Europe emptied of Jews after the expulsions. This hat became a mark, symbolizing the evil Jew who kidnaps children to make matzah with their blood. The historian Naomi Lubrich, in her study entitled 'Judenhut und Zauberhut', 'Jewish Hat and Sorcerer's Hat', says that Europeans reached the conclusion that Jews and sorcerers have dealings with the devil.

This hat, which was meant to expel the Jews from national society to prevent mixed relations, was for the rabbis the salvation that prevented those relations. So the Jews did not take this obligation as a humiliation; they appropriated it in order to stay away from the Christians by covering their heads, and later the kippah, which at first was not a ritual object, slowly became part of the Jew's religious ritual. The humiliation the Christians expected became a pride for the Jews. Instead of bowing to the orders of the rulers, they said they bow to the orders of God.

The Jew, who in world history was seen as a dark, evil and lowly figure, always held his head high and was proud to be a Jew.

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Joy in the Festivals

El Amaneser no. 223, p. 14, 13.9.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Festivals make us happy; they give us the warmth of being together with our loved ones, of knowing that we belong to a unit — the family, the tribe, the community, a people — having the same feelings, the same beliefs, the same history; of knowing that we shall have the same rituals, the same foods, the same songs, which give life another savour. Ritual reminds us of certain events that give us the tasty flavour of life: the anniversaries of our wedding, our Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the candles of Hanukkah or the shofar of the New Year. In general the celebration is done with soul and heart, not with flattery, to show that this celebration has great importance, and this importance makes us remember every year this day or moment so special... Let us not forget that one of the benefits we have from celebrating the festivals is the unification of the family, and the family is the joy of every human life.

Everyday life is not always certain. It is full of anxieties and doubts. Knowing that we have to read the Haggadah, hear the voice of the shofar, light the hanukkiah, prepare the meal for the family, fills our hearts and gives a meaning to the day. The traditions of the festivals are full of rituals. It is well proven that rituals lower anxiety, because anxiety harms human life. Also singing, saying 'Le Hayim' with a little glass of wine, gives us joy. Of course all this can be done the whole year round; but doing it during the festivals, on special days, has another value. No festival celebration can be complete without a meal of dishes prepared with grace. From the day man hunted the animal and roasted it on the fire, cooking has always been the very characteristic thing of man.

Scientists always wanted to know how man became human, how the brain became what it is today, and they saw that the primordial thing was the way of cooking. Professor Richard Wrangham, in his book 'Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human', says that if man ate only raw food we would not be what we are today. The brain would be less developed and we would be much more primitive. And it was this, says Prof. Wrangham, that caused the division of labour between man and woman, leaving to the woman the role of cooking while the man was busy hunting. Comparing with the primates, we see that they hunt together. And this too was one of the reasons the family became patriarchal. Even so, today the most famous chefs are men.

The hours we spend cooking the festival dishes, preparing the meal, sitting at the table to eat, are part of the characteristics of a home, of a family, of the atmosphere of family company. Sharing a festival meal symbolizes the community, brings the whole family together around the table, and eases conversation and the union of its members. Apart from each festival having its special food, each festival has its special ritual. One important thing about festival meals is that this ritual reinforces the relations among the members of the family, makes us feel that we belong to this community, makes for a perfect harmony in the family. Even if they do not agree — father and son, or father-in-law and son-in-law — about politics or the economy of the country, these moderate debates serve and help greatly the union of the family. In 2020 we celebrated all the festivals all alone, in front of the television or looking at Zoom to be virtually accompanied. Today, thanks to God, everything has changed and everything is again taking place just as we dreamed. Dreaming and hoping gives us the strength to pass the new year, taking all precautions with patience and good sense.

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On Hannah and Hanukkah

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 29.11.2023 · original

The National Library of Israel published an article written by Ayala Deckel in 1922 about Hanukkah, saying that it was a woman who gave the spark for the Maccabee brothers to revolt against the authority of the Seleucids (the kingdom formed by Seleucus, general of Alexander the Great, who after his death took over the region of the Middle East).

According to the Midrash, the miracle of Hanukkah is based on a very courageous woman who dared to say aloud the thing everyone knew and no one wanted to say. This declaration made her brothers revolt. Her name was Hannah, daughter of Mattathias, sister of the Maccabees. Again according to the Midrash, in that kingdom there was the tradition of giving the governor the right to violate the newly married woman on the first night of the marriage — a tradition said to have existed in the Middle Ages in the countries of Europe. The same thing is found in the epic of 'Gilgamesh', which is said to have been a source for the writing of certain books. It seems the Hasmoneans accepted this right with their eyes closed.

The day of Hannah's wedding came, and she decided to put an end to this distressing tradition. At the celebration on the wedding night she stood up, before the guests, her mother, her father, her brothers, began to tear her dress and stood naked, saying: 'You want to kill me because I have dishonoured myself before you, but you have no reaction because I am going tonight to the governor's bed instead of my bridegroom's bed.' According to the Midrash, this was the spark that made the Maccabee brothers revolt.

When we speak of Hanukkah we always refer to the story of the oil that lasted eight days. This story of Hannah is not known at all. Perhaps because of its content, full of shame, it was not told; but certain Ashkenazi communities of Europe mention a similar story without giving the name of Hannah, saying simply: 'Bat Hashmonai', 'daughter of the Hasmonean'. Some researchers claim that 'Bat Hashmonai' and Judith are the same person. According to Rashi, the great sage, it was the heroism of a woman that lies behind the story of Hanukkah. Moreover there is a great similarity between the word Hanukkah and the name Hannah. That is why today the candles are lit by women in many parts of the Jewish world.

Ending her article, Ayala says that Hannah is the voice of the women who had to stay silent for many centuries until today, who must defend the human rights of women, and that a truth, even if cruel and painful, can have its miracle of being healed.

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Customs & Language

Kostumbres i Lingua · 14 articles



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What Happened to the 'Turkey'?

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 6.5.2020 · original

We all know the turkey, which looks like a large hen. This bird has some interesting names in different languages and countries.

In English it is called 'turkey' — Turkey, the country. How on earth did this bird get the name of a country? What is more interesting is that in Turkish we call this bird 'hindi', which means 'from India'.

In Turkish we have many words that came from French. In French this bird is called 'dinde', and the male 'dindon'. Dinde is the French way of saying 'from India'. Turkish made a pure translation from the French, and so it was called 'hindi'.

Out of curiosity, people in India were asked: how do you call this bird in your language? And they answered: we do not have this bird in India, and for that reason its name does not exist in our vocabulary! This bird came from America, and as we do not have it in India we did not invent any name to identify it. Those who asked and made this linguistic investigation insisted: if you watch an American film you have subtitles under the film — what do you have to write to say turkey? They thought and decided to take the American name and call it by the American word 'turkey'.

This same word for turkey in Portuguese is 'peru', like the name of the country, because in Portugal this bird is known to have arrived from Peru. The Arabs call this same bird 'the bird of Ethiopia' (Habeşistan), and the Greeks call it 'gallopoula', or 'French hen'. The same bird in Italian is called 'tacchino', a word with no relation to any bird. The same Italians call maize 'grano turco', 'Turkish grain'. This time we are back in Turkey, and in Turkish we call maize 'mısır' (Mısır = Egypt).

The professor of philology Şinasi Tekin of Harvard University explains that in Turkey we have a bird called 'çulluk'. The çulluk looks like a turkey but is smaller in size. Before the discovery of America, the English took this bird, the 'çulluk', to England and called it 'Turkey bird', the 'bird of Turkey', or simply turkey. When the English went to America they confused the American turkey with the 'bird of Turkey', and that is how this bird came to be called 'turkey' in English. As we saw, in other nations this bird is called 'bird of India', 'bird of Peru' or 'bird of Ethiopia'.

The turkey in Turkey is generally eaten on the last night of the year, and the smoked meat of the turkey is also famous. On the last night of the year it is the custom to eat this bird, specially prepared with great care, stuffed with chestnuts and cooked in the oven slowly, to have a special flavour and make the meat very tender.

Speaking of eating (komer): in other Latin languages this word is 'manger', 'mangiare'. The root of these words is 'manducare', which means 'to bring the food to the mouth with the hand'. In certain parts of the world this custom is still the normal way of eating. Even so, things that can be eaten are called in English or French 'comestible', a word that comes from komer.

Etymology is a very interesting science that takes you down a thousand roads, and in the end you often arrive at a common root: humanity.

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The Week of Christmas

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 29.12.2021 · original

Christmas is celebrated on 25 December. On the 24th, exactly at midnight, Christians go to church to commemorate the birth of Jesus, their prophet. This week the religious observe it as religion, and those who are not religious give each other gifts, saying they are gifts from Father Christmas, and decorate a pine branch.

Since always, the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere has been 21 December, also called the solstice. In many countries of Europe, on these very cold days, even those who were not very well-off ate meat. Moreover the wine and beer on these days were already well fermented and ready for consumption.

More than 2,000 years ago the Romans celebrated a festival called 'Saturnalia', a festival in honour of the god Saturn, considered the god of agriculture — a festival that lasted almost a month, with dancing and singing, and the slaves were freed for that month. 25 December was the birthday of Mithra, the Sun god of the Persians for more than 5,000 years, and the religion of Mithra was the most prized religion among the Romans before Christianity. In the 4th century, when Pope Julius decided to give Jesus a birthday, 25 December was the most suitable day, as it was already the birthday of Mithra. In this way the festival, instead of a month, lasted only 12 days, ending on 6 January. And 6 January was accepted as the birthday by the Orthodox church of the East.

Let us not forget that festivals, in almost all religions and peoples, serve to open the roads of unification and peace. May the new year bring us good health, happiness and much joy.

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Women's Day

El Amaneser no. 206, p. 20, 13.4.2022 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

In high antiquity we see that woman was worshipped as a goddess because she gave birth to children, just as the earth gives what you sow. Thus she symbolized fertility. That is why we find many small statues of women with large breasts, large legs and their genitals exaggerated. And this also lets us understand that woman was equal to man in the eras we call 'matriarchal'. When man began to feel himself stronger than woman, humanity became 'patriarchal', until the 20th century, when woman came back to demand her equality.

In 1910 Clara Zetkin, née Clara Josephine Eissner, at the 'International Conference of Socialist Women' held in Copenhagen, Denmark, asked to establish 8 March — the day on which many women died in the fire at the textile factory in 1857 — as 'WORLD WOMEN'S DAY'. Her request was accepted unanimously. This day became official in the Soviet Union from 1921 to 1965. Finally, in 1977 the 'UNITED NATIONS' made this day official as 'INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY', inviting all member countries to celebrate it in favour of 'WOMEN'S RIGHTS'. In 61 countries of the world this day is a holiday on which no one works. Turkey is not among these countries.

In Anatolia, which is today's Turkey, since prehistory we have many of these small statues of entirely naked women, with large breasts and legs, giving birth or nursing children. Statues considered goddesses and called 'Mother Goddess' were found in various regions of the country. These statues symbolized fertility. All this we say on the basis of theories, because we have nothing written about this era. The first written texts about women in Anatolia come with those whom the Hebrews called Hittim and we call Hittites. Both in the carvings on rock and in the clay tablets we see that the king and the queen are always seated side by side, that is, the queen is always beside the king. There are tablets that write about queens who governed. The best known is Queen Puduhepa, wife of Hattusili III, the king who signed the treaty of Kadesh, considered the first peace treaty in world history.

Among the roles of women among the Hittites, the most important was to be a doctor. She had the duty of healing the sick. Another important role was to lead the religious ceremonies with dances and songs. They knew how to play musical instruments very like the bağlama, the tef (tambourine), the kaşık (castanets) and the zurna (clarinet) of today. Of course we have no idea of the music of that era. But the family system was patriarchal, and only the father's will was valid. Marriage among the Hittites closely resembles today's: before marrying they had to give their word, be engaged for a certain time, and marry after the bridegroom gave a large sum to the bride's father and brought the bride's trousseau to his house. The levirate system also existed among the Hittites. Quarrels between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law were very frequent, and this entered the laws. But the mother-in-law was always the one in command.

In Egypt, from certain documents we understand that woman was equal to man before the law. She could be the owner of her own business, she could divorce, or decide to be a doctor. So she did not depend on her father, her husband or her brother, as was the tradition in other countries. Marriage was made neither in an administrative nor in a religious form. Only the decision of a man and a woman was enough to form a marriage. They made a contract of the goods they brought. She could keep her own name and not take her husband's. To be married it was enough to say to each other: 'I have made you my wife', 'You have made me your wife'. In ancient Greece a girl had to marry at 15. Only the father decided on the marriage. Women had no rights either in politics or in social life. All their lives they had to depend on the father, the husband, the

brother or their sons. A widow without sons had to depend on the nearest man of the family. They were the mistresses of the house: giving orders to the slave women and servants, they had to spin the wool, prepare and sew the cloth for clothing, look after the household economy and care for the sick servants.

In the Roman Empire woman had the same fate as the Greek woman. One difference was that the Greek woman could not go out of her house without a servant, nor go to the theatre or a sporting game; but the Roman woman had the right to go out alone into public life. In certain parts of the world the same restrictions exist even today. After thousands of years of evolution almost nothing has changed under the sun. Of course we must not be pessimists and fail to see how many laws have changed in favour of women and families. Women have won their financial autonomy. On the other hand, even in advanced countries, for various reasons there are men who act in a very archaic manner. Blessed be God, with the patience and sense of women and the maternal instinct, she adapts to every kind of important change. Balance in every important moment brings peace and serenity, love and affection to all women and men, with mutual understanding. May men and women, inshallah, always be in harmony. Know that women, with great struggles, obtained this sacred day that reminds man of 'THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN'.

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The Sacrifice

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 20.7.2022 · original

The feast of the sacrifice in the Muslim religion follows the lunar calendar, a calendar very like ours, with the difference that no adjustment is made to have the feast in the same season — that is, they do not do as we do, adding a month every two or three years in a cycle of 19 years to celebrate the feast in the same period. Without this adjustment, the feast can come sometimes a month earlier, sometimes a month later.

Studying the subject of sacrifice, we find in this word two senses: 'sacr-' and '-fice'. The first is to sacralize, to give the sense of holy, of sacred. The second has the sense of doing, making. In world history there were sacrifices of animals and of humans. We know this custom was practised in different civilizations such as the Sumerians, the Hittites, the Egyptians, the Hindus, the ancient Greeks, in Jerusalem, and among the natives of America... Another sense of the word 'sacrifice' is to lose a small portion in order to gain a larger one. In Turkish 'sacrifice' is 'kurban', a word that comes from the Hebrew 'korban'. Another sense is to give part of one's goods to help the unfortunate who suffers from want.

In world history the sacrifice of an animal, or sometimes of a human, was practised to calm the anger of the gods, to have good produce, to thank and gratify the gods because we had a good harvest, to cleanse sins, to show the respect we have for these gods. Apart from Buddhism, this custom was practised in the other civilizations. In Buddhism it is not looked on kindly to exploit and make other creatures suffer. From this we understand that for them making an animal sacrifice makes no sense.

In the Muslim account of the sacrifice of Abraham our father, although it is said to have been the act of sacrificing Ishmael, the Koran says he wanted to sacrifice his 'SON' without mentioning a name. This act is celebrated today at the end of the pilgrimage to the holy places such as the Kaaba, which was already a holy place before Islam, where idols stood, and among them 'the Black Stone'. Today inside the Kaaba there is only 'the Black Stone', thought to be a meteorite; now we know that this theory is less accepted after the studies made on it.

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The Evil Eye

El Amaneser no. 212, p. 16, 12.10.2022 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

We all know what the 'blue eye' is, which we call 'nazarlık': a piece of glass made like a wheel, in the middle a blue eye looking you in the face, which is said to protect you from the evil eye. In Antioch (Antakya) we have a museum very rich in mosaics. One of these mosaics, called 'KAI SY', shows us the 'Evil Eye'. KAI SY = 'AND YOU'. By writing 'and you', the mosaic means: 'To those who wish you good, may good befall them; and to those who wish you evil, may evil befall them.' The message of this mosaic is 'What you wish for me, I wish for you' — a message of fighting evil and settling in goodness. This type of mosaic was found in front of houses in the Roman period, and is said to have served to drive away the evil eye and bad energy from these houses. The evil eye is a look believed to do harm to a person or a thing. This harm can come in the form of misfortune, accident, illness and even death.

The academic Alan Dundes spent years studying the phenomenon of the evil eye and says it is a folk belief in the Indo-European world and in the Semitic world, as we see in the texts of the Sumerians. Before drinking, clinking wine glasses, saying 'Ke bivas' — 'may you live' — when someone sneezes, are remnants of this type of belief left to us from those ancient times. Alan Dundes, in his work, drew on anthropology, ophthalmology, psychiatry, sociology and religious studies. The academic Needham says the evil eye is a synthetic figure that comes from jealousy, from wanting and not being able, from the notion of the evil sorcerer, from desire and from fear.

The hands found in the cave on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, more than 40,000 years old, give us an idea of the symbolic figure of protection, of driving away harm, illness or any other danger. The evil eye, which is a form of sorcerer's curse, has its roots in superstition and magical thinking. When the reason for some harm, illness or natural evil cannot be found, man has always found the solution in the evil eye. Since always, this answer has been given to the question 'Why do bad things happen to good people?': 'From the evil eye.' It is said that the eyes form the entrance to a person's soul because they have a special power. Avoiding someone's gaze is said to denounce the liar. A fixed stare can be interpreted as coming from affection or from menace, depending on the circumstances, and also shows a power of superiority. The gaze explains emotion, love, hatred, disgust, annoyance, insult, affection and surprise.

It is believed that the cross-eyed person brings bad luck, likewise the person with eyes of different colours. In many countries, praising a baby does not please the parents, because this too can bring bad luck. In Turkey putting a little blue eye with a safety pin on the baby's swaddling is very common. After praising a baby, one is told to spit three times in the baby's face saying 'pu, pu, pu'. In Greece, even when praising a woman's beauty, you must do the same thing. A protection against the evil eye was sometimes the garlic hung in a part of the house. Today there are a great many jewels that women wear, with precious stones, that resemble the blue eye. Do not think the superstition of the evil eye has been lost in today's world. According to many academics this superstition affects millions of people, whether in the Mediterranean region or in Latin America. In Hebrew we say 'Ayin ha-Ra'. One protection against the Ayin ha-Ra is what we call the 'hamsa', the hand with five fingers, which serves to drive away the 'evil eye'. I wish you all to be far from the evil hour and the evil eye. Source: Benjamin Radford and C. McKelvie

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Diwali

El Amaneser no. 214, p. 14–15, 14.12.2022 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

The end of the month of October contains festivals not very well known in our country. Both the Christians and the Hindus celebrate festivals that resemble each other but have different roots, and which in the end arrive at the same celebration: celebrating the change of season, celebrating the victory of the struggle of light against darkness, of wisdom against ignorance, of Good against Evil. Diwali is a Hindu festival that lasts almost a week and is believed to be the most important festival; it comes more or less in the same season, because the Hindus too use the lunar calendar, or rather the 'lunisolar' calendar, like us, and add a month every 32 or 33 months, approaching the solar calendar, and so synchronize the two calendars. Because the lunar year has 354 days and the solar year 365, the difference of 11 days is adjusted every 2 and a half years. In reality India, being almost a continent, has in different regions different customs of calendar, of celebration, of language, different usages and traditions. But the majority accept what has been said.

Diwali is at the same time a new year festival like our Rosh Hashanah and a festival of lights like our Hanukkah. What is interesting is that these festivals always come in the same season of the year. A similar festival is the feast of Saint Lucia, the victory of the struggle of light over darkness. This feast is celebrated mostly in Italy, in the Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, in Spain, and in certain countries of Latin America. The legend says that a girl named Lucy helped the secret Christians, bringing them food with her hands and holding the candle on her head. From there also came the name of the feast as the feast of lights. The feast has a relation both with the Christian martyrs and with the souls of those who died. And we too, between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, go to visit the dear ones who passed to the other world, more or less at the same season. The same tradition exists among the Christians, who call it the Day of the Saints — in English All Saints, in French Toussaint — a day of commemoration of the beloved dead.

This day is celebrated on 31 October, and on the same day in America they celebrate what is called 'Halloween', or the feast of 'the Witches', which is also a day of commemoration of martyrs or the dead. The root is said to come from the Celts, or Galatians, who also gave their name to a quarter of Istanbul, the famous Galata — a root based on the harvest (hasat). Tradition has it that in America the children, lantern in hand, go from house to house asking for sweets or sometimes money. Years ago, in the quarter of Kuledibi, the Jewish children went about, lantern in hand, singing 'ashiya mi koles, syen paras de koles'. This tradition of carrying a lantern and going round the houses began in the 15th century, when children paraded from house to house to eat the sweets made for the souls of the dead and also to collect pennies to be paid for the prayers they said for them. In America this feast was influenced by novels such as 'Frankenstein', 'Dracula', 'the Mummy', with vampire costumes, cemetery articles, tombs, the dead and 'the best of us', or the demons.

Again in America, the custom at this feast is to eat apples dipped in honey, just as we do at Rosh Hashanah, and to eat toasted pumpkin seeds, something that never lacked in our homes, sitting near the stove to pass the time. Writing 'Feast of the Witches', one must add the folklore of the Slavs, which concerns 'Dziady', meaning the Fathers, the ancestors, the communion of the living with the dead. The word 'Dziady' comes from 'dede', which also in the proto-Slavic language means 'father of the mother or of the father', an old man with an honourable position in the

family. As we see, words we believe original to one nation are already found in the languages of other nations that have no dealings at all with each other. Like words, feasts too greatly resemble each other among countries that have no geographical relation between them. We wish that Friendship and Brotherhood in all the world be for ever. Source: Wikipedia

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The New Year's Pine Tree

El Amaneser no. 215, p. 13, 11.1.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

In many Christian countries they celebrate the feast of Christmas by hanging little gifts on a small pine tree. The legend says that Father Christmas, or Saint Nicholas, helped brides who had no means of procuring a dowry, or threw little gifts down the chimney of the roof that fell into the stockings they hung on the chimney of the room to dry. With time, instead of hanging stockings, parents hung the little gifts on a small pine tree. It became fashionable in many countries to have a small pine tree in the house at the end of the year. We know that pine trees were always a symbol of long life, because they do not let their leaves, which are like needles, fall, and they always stay green. Only sick pines have brown leaves.

In general the peoples of the Middle East worshipped the sun when the night was the longest, which corresponds to the last days of the month of December. More than 2,500 years ago, in China, a man named Zungfong found, by measuring the shadows, that the shortest day of the year comes in these days, and since then the Chinese celebrate these days of 21, 22 or 23 December as the festival of Dongzhi. A very similar festival exists in countries like Iran, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, called 'the night of Yalda'. Since Darius, the famous Persian king who lived more than 2,500 years ago, the people of these countries celebrate the arrival of winter on 21 December. In another part of the world, in North America, the Indians — the natives of that land, so called because Christopher Columbus believed he was in India when he saw these people who did not resemble Europeans — celebrated on this same day the arrival of winter just like the Chinese and the Persians, a celebration called 'Soyal'.

In a tomb found by Professor María Dolores of the University of Málaga, at Aswan in Egypt, the sun of 21 December fell exactly on the statue of the governor who lived nearly 4,000 years ago. This means that in Egypt too they marked this day of 21 December as an important day that was the entrance to winter. In all these celebrations, the most important decoration was a tree, generally a pine, giving rise to the feast of Christmas almost 700 years after the birth of Jesus (Yeshu). This tree is the most important proof of the tradition of inaugurating the day of 21 December. In the United States some Jews decorate the end-of-year tree with a Magen David and with lights instead of little toys, calling it a 'Hanukkah tree', knowing that Hanukkah often falls on the same days.

A very ancient Turkish tradition is what we call 'Narduğan' or 'Nardoğan'. The famous Sumerologist Muazzez İlmiye Çığ tells us that according to the faith the Turks of Central Asia held before taking the Muslim religion, they believed that right in the centre of the world there was a great pine tree that was considered the tree of life. The symbol of the tree of life is seen in many Turkish carpets, kilims and embroideries. The war between day and night ends on 21 or 22 December, and the victory belongs to the day, which begins to lengthen. The celebration is held under a pine tree where they ate and danced. This celebration is called the feast of 'Nardoğan'. Nar means Sun and Doğan means Birth. They hung little things on the pine tree to thank God who is making the days longer. This type of pine apparently grows only in Central Asia, and this tradition is said to have passed to the Christians as the Christmas tree, through the Huns, who were a Turkish tribe that penetrated as far as Italy with the famous Attila in the year 451. As the days lengthen, we wish you all health, love and good livelihood.

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Eyebrows

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 29.3.2023 · original

8 March was Women's Day. Speaking of women, it is impossible not to notice the change in women's fashion — change between regions, eras, different cultures; change in dress, in hairstyle, in make-up, and many other things.

Isabella Segalovich speaks of women's eyebrows beginning with Egypt, and says that in the time of the Pharaohs women painted their eyes and eyebrows to protect themselves from infection and insects. It seems that even today in certain countries of Africa there are women who continue to paint themselves as before, because they believe this paint protects them spiritually.

In ancient Greece, having thick eyebrows symbolized wisdom in women. In Victoria Sherrow's 'Encyclopedia of Hair' it is written that they used lead powder and sometimes pieces of goat hair glued to the forehead to give themselves this look.

In China, eyebrows were painted in many ways — long, short, thin, thick — depending on the fashion of the year. In the book '5000 Years of Chinese Costume', Xun Zhou writes that they placed feathers of gold, silver or emerald between the eyebrows.

In medieval Europe women shaved their eyebrows or made them so thin that they seemed not to exist. John Block Friedman writes that in those times the hair of a woman's body formed a danger to the soul and body of the man. Sometimes they used chemical products that caused sores in place of eyebrows.

In 19th-century France, for women to have long, dark eyebrows was a symbol of Jewishness, and they were called 'the beautiful Jewess' as an antisemitic allusion. In Ingres's paintings of 'the Baroness de Rothschild' and 'the Jewish Head' this form of eyebrows is noted.

In the same period in England the fashion was to have eyebrows like those of a small, innocent girl. The eyebrows must never be touched. Dr Thomas Sozinskey said that 'the more separated the eyebrows, the bigger the brain'.

The painter Frida Kahlo, famous for her eyebrows, is said to have symbolized the authentic Mexican woman.

The proverb says 'No kites ojo, areglando la seja' — 'Don't take out the eye while fixing the eyebrow': in straightening one thing, don't ruin another. 8 March, Women's Day, reminds us of many things like these. Let us hope never to have before us a woman with questioning eyebrows!!!!

Source: Isabella Segalovich

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The April Fool

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 12.4.2023 · original

Where the April joke came from — which in Turkish we call 'the first of April' and in French 'April fish' — we still do not know, even though it has long been practised by many different cultures; its origin is still a mystery. It is a kind of joke in which you tell the other person something that did not happen and, when they believe it, you remind them it is an April joke. Some historians say this day began in 1582, when Pope Gregory changed the Julian calendar: because that calendar began the year on the first of April and the feast of Easter, which corresponds to our festival of Pesach, did not fall each year on the exact date, he adjusted and synchronized the calendar. The Protestants, who do not love the Catholics, accepted this calendar in 1700, and the English, who have the Anglican Church, in 1752. It seems that the countries of Orthodox faith have still not accepted the Gregorian calendar for religious feasts, to this day.

Coming to the change of 1582: as there was no internet, no telephone, no postal system, news did not reach quickly from one place to another, and those who had not heard, and were considered fools, had a paper in the shape of a fish hung on their backs. The 'April fish' symbolized the little fish that is caught very easily, and, for people, the fools and the clumsy.

Other historians say this day came from the Romans, who celebrated the feast of Cybele, or Sibel, the 'Mother goddess', dressing in comic clothes as we do at Purim, at the end of March, and mocking the rulers — a custom that entered Roman culture apparently from the Egyptians, with the legends of Isis and Osiris.

One theory says that as in April it was not, and is not, allowed to fish, the joke was played with a paper in the shape of a fish on the first of April.

Finally there are those who say this day remained from the celebration of the equinox, when day and night are halves, equal, which occurs on 21 March. The Romans rejoiced and played jokes. The word equinox comes from Latin, where 'aequus' means equal and 'nox' means night.

What I have written is not an April joke, but a part of 'Saver es Bueno'.

Another thing that is not an April joke is that I wish you a festival of Pesach spent in rest, health and joy.

Source: Historia

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Mothers' Day

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 17.5.2023 · original

Mothers' Day is one day a year when we remember our mothers and honour them, or children remember their mothers. Sometimes grandchildren too remember their grandmothers, or the parents push the grandchildren to say or write a word to their grandmothers. After that day everything goes back to its place. Some give a flower, a little gift to the mother. But generally everything is settled with a phone call: 'Mama, congratulations on your day' — and that is all. Yet the mother waits every day to be called, to be asked how she is, to be remembered by her children and grandchildren, and not just one day a year.

It all began in ancient Greece. The Greeks and later the Romans worshipped a goddess known as the 'Mother Goddess', with different names such as 'Rhea', 'Demeter', 'Cybele', whom we know under the name 'Kibele'. In Ephesus the goddess of the city was 'Artemis'. Her statue is known for having many breasts, or testicles, symbols of high fertility; she too was considered the 'Mother Goddess'. In the same city of Ephesus the Christians gave the name 'Mother of God', 'Theotokos', to Mary, who was the mother of Jesus. The celebration was always held in spring.

So this worship of the 'Mother Goddess' changed with time into celebrating 'Mothering Sunday' among the early Christians — again celebrating the Mother on a Sunday in spring. In the 16th century CE, Mothering Sunday became a religious day to celebrate the 'Mother Church', a Sunday on which families who had servants gave them leave to go and visit their mothers. In the 20th century this tradition had almost died out until, in the United States, a woman named Anna Jarvis revived it to honour her mother. Her ambition was to secure one day a year for everyone to go and honour their mothers. In 1914, before the First World War began, the American President Wilson signed the law saying that the second Sunday of May would be 'Mother's Day' throughout America. At first Anna Jarvis was very happy. But later she protested very strongly against the commercialization of this day, which turned into a day for buying and selling gifts for mother. Among the gifts, what Jarvis liked least were cards prepared with reflections on mother, without a single personal word written.

What is interesting is that 'Mother's Day' is celebrated today on different dates in the countries of the world. In Israel it is the 30th of Shevat (this year it was 21 February). The Arab countries of the Middle East celebrate it on 21 March, the spring equinox. Spain and Portugal, the first Sunday of May. The second Sunday of May is the day celebrated by most countries; Poland, 26 May; France, the last Sunday of May; Belgium, 15 August; Argentina, the third Sunday of October; Russia, the last Sunday of November.

Kol ha-Kavod to all the Mothers of the World. Blessed they are, and blessed may they be for ever.

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Fathers' Day

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 21.6.2023 · original

The 18th of June was an important day called 'Fathers' Day', a celebration that did not exist in antiquity. A commercial day, but it is the day that allows us to remember that the father is the pillar on which the whole family leans.

In 1908 there was an explosion in a coal (kömür) mine in the state of West Virginia in the United States, and 362 men died in the explosion. In the mining town they held a commemoration for the fathers who died in the explosion. It was this event that made a girl of 16 think of fixing one day a year to be called 'Fathers' Day'. The girl's name was Sonora Smart Dodd, daughter of a worker who collected the coal that fell on the roads when the coal was carried from the mine to other places. The worker was called William Jackson Smart, father of 14 children, twice married and twice widowed. He took on the care of his own children and of those who came with the second wife. William was appreciated by the people around him not only as a father but also as an affectionate mother to the children.

So this girl, Sonora Smart Dodd, wished to honour her father, who had shown such devotion to her and her brothers and sisters, and in 1910 she set about having one day a year recognized as 'Fathers' Day'. She worked some 60 years to have this wish accepted by the authorities. Sonora was at the same time a complete artist, a poet and a writer of children's books. It was in 1972, 6 years before Sonora died at 96, that President Nixon signed the decree to celebrate 'Fathers' Day' on the third Sunday of June. In Turkey we have the same date for this celebration. In certain countries of Europe and Latin America this day falls in March, on the Catholic feast of Saint Joseph.

One thing that is much criticized is that in many places this day has been commercialized and is known as a day for buying and selling gifts — criticisms also made about 'Mothers' Day'. But be that as it may, for me, my children are the fathers of my grandchildren and at the same time my parents, because at our age we have become children again and we need our children to be our parents.

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On Esperanto

El Amaneser no. 229, p. 20, 13.3.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Towards the end of the 1800s the city of Białystok, which belonged to the states of Poland, Russia, Prussia and today again to Poland, was a cosmopolitan centre where Poles, Russians, Germans and many Jews who spoke Yiddish lived, forming 75% of the entire population. These Jews were the ones who dominated the textile industry. In 1921, 88% of the merchants were Jews and 89% of the factories belonged to Jews. On 15 December 1859 Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof was born in Białystok, the famous Jew who was going to invent the artificial language he called Esperanto. At home he spoke Yiddish, Russian and Polish with his parents. From his father, who was a schoolteacher, he learned German, French and Hebrew. At school he learned the classical languages: Latin, Greek, Aramaic. He was also interested in Italian, Spanish and Lithuanian. English he learned much later.

At the age of 10 he wrote a play called 'The Tower of Babel, or the Tragedy of Białystok'. This idea of writing a play came to him after seeing the conflicts that existed between the various nations of Białystok, which had no common language in which to understand one another. In 1878, when he was 19, he wrote the first version of Esperanto and called it 'Universal Language'. This first version was burned by his father, who wanted Ludwik to pay more attention to his studies instead of writing books, and so he studied medicine in Moscow and in Warsaw and became a good ophthalmologist. Ten years had to pass before he returned to his book. The first book of Esperanto came out in Warsaw on 14 July 1887. Ludwik Zamenhof signed his book under the name 'Doktoro Esperanto'. In the book were the 165 rules of grammar and the 917 roots of words from the languages of certain countries of Europe, such as the Romance, Germanic and Slavic languages (Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Czechia, Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia).

The idea was to invent the easiest possible language, one that could be learned in the shortest time. It seems that Leo Tolstoy learned Esperanto in very little time. There was even an international congress of Esperanto in 1911 in Antwerp. All this was so that a common language could be the instrument of a world peace between different cultures. Meanwhile Zamenhof was very preoccupied with the Jewish question, that is with antisemitism and the pogroms carried out against the Jews. He was active in the Zionist movement of 'Hibbat Zion'. But he published a declaration affirming that the Zionist movement could not solve the problems of the Jewish people: 'I am convinced that every kind of nationalism can give humanity nothing but great misfortune.' With time he developed a personal philosophy he called 'Homaranismo', meaning 'Humanitarianism', a philosophy based on the wisdom of the famous Jewish sage of the first century BCE (Before the Common Era), Hillel. With this philosophy Zamenhof tried to reform Judaism so that the Jews would not be victims of antisemitism.

Ludwik Zamenhof died in Warsaw on 14 April 1917. His daughter Lidia, who became a teacher to teach Esperanto, converted to the Bahá'í religion and lived in the United States, but in 1938 she had to return to Poland because the Americans would not extend her visa, and in Poland she was forced to remain in the Warsaw ghetto and died at Treblinka. The vocabulary of Esperanto is composed of English, French, Italian, German, Greek, Latin, Polish, Russian and Yiddish. These were the languages Zamenhof knew very well. Although they have a kinship with the languages of Europe, the grammar and pronunciation resemble Turkish a great deal. That is to say, in Esperanto there is no gender, masculine or feminine. 'Table' is not 'the table (f.)', it is just 'table'.

'Eye' is not 'the eye (m.)', it is just 'eye'. In the pronunciation, which is completely phonetic, all the letters are always pronounced the same way and do not change their pronunciation before other letters.

Between 1907 and 1917, the year he died, Zamenhof was 14 times a candidate for the Nobel Prize, and the Universal Esperanto Association was a candidate more than 100 times. Although this prize was never given, today it is said that there are more than 2 million people who speak this language. After the First World War the 'League of Nations' was formed to avoid conflicts between nations. The delegate of Iran proposed that Esperanto be the official language of the Assembly. Only France vetoed it, for fear that French would lose its importance, its influence and its prestige in diplomacy. They did not permit the teaching of Esperanto in the universities, saying it was a game of the communists. In the Soviet Union they said this language is a game of spies. In Nazi Germany they said this is a game of the Jews who want to conquer the whole world. It is after 1954 that UNESCO put Esperanto in its programme. MULTAJ DANKOJ = Many thanks

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The Mother

El Amaneser no. 232, p. 20, 12.6.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Since always, the mythologies of all cultures have associated woman with the earth, with the moon, or sometimes with the serpent. The relation of woman to the earth comes from the resemblance between the seed that enters the earth and the seed that enters the womb of the woman. In both forms, the seed makes a plant or a child. For this we have in the mythologies the figure of the Mother Goddess, symbolized as small statues of a rather fat woman. In almost all the museums of Turkey they show us these statues, which date from the Neolithic era and even earlier. The Neolithic era is the era when man began to build houses, to sow, to plough the earth, to settle in one place without being obliged to be a nomad in order to hunt and to live in natural caves. As the earth gives wheat, woman gives her milk to make her child live. For this reason, in the languages that use gender (feminine or masculine) the earth is feminine, and in Turkish the earth is known as 'Mother Earth' (Toprak Ana).

Again in the Neolithic era, when they buried, they put the body into the earth in the form of the baby as it was in the foetus of its mother, that is in the 'hocker' form, which consists of having the legs close to the belly. Burying in this position gives us to understand that there was the hope of being born in the other life just as one is born in this life thanks to 'Mother Earth'. Again it is for this reason that woman is blessed as the earth is blessed. The sterile woman who cannot have children is considered as a field where not even grass grows. Another resemblance of woman is with the Moon. In many cultures the moon was called the Queen or the Mother Goddess of the sky. The most typical relation between the moon and woman is the cycle of the moon around the world, which lasts a month, with the menstruation of the woman which occurs once a month. In antiquity the Mother Goddess was symbolized by the horns of the cow. The horns of the cow are like the half moon of Rosh Hodesh. In many poems they paint woman as if she were the face of the moon (Ay Yüzlü), because the moon is the symbol of beauty.

The resemblance of woman to the serpent comes from the legend of Eve, who was seduced by the serpent, which had the form of a woman called Nahash. But on the other hand this resemblance in different cultures is interpreted with a bad reputation, saying that woman is a serpent. With all these resemblances, woman was always the shadow on earth of the Mother Goddess who is in the sky. The Sumerians called this goddess Inanna; in Babylon she was called Ishtar; in our lands she was called Cybele; in Ephesus, Artemis; in Greece, Demeter (Deus Mater — Mother Goddess). These cults of the Mother Goddess meant that, according to some historians, the community was matriarchal, that is governed by the mother, which with time changed to being patriarchal, that is governed by the father. But be that as it may, the mother was always the mistress of the hearth, of the house, of keeping order in the family, of being the Holy Blessed woman of humanity, and she never lost her worth to be adored.

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Shaking Hands

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.8.2024 · original

In the time of the pandemic we had forgotten about shaking hands to greet each other. It seems this custom of shaking hands is not a fashion of our days but a tradition that has existed for many years.

This is a relief of the 9th century BCE, in which the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III is shaking hands with a dignitary of Babylon, confirming a peace treaty. The pandemic also taught us that many illnesses could pass from one hand to another. Likewise embracing and kissing, which like shaking hands symbolize friendship, affection and assurance — these acts too can pass illnesses from one person to another. The pandemic made us touch with our fists or our elbows.

In this relief of the Commagenes at Arsameia, near Adıyaman, we see King Antiochus shaking hands with the famous Heracles. So shaking hands was always a symbol of contracting a peace. When two hands touch, it shows that the hands are empty, that they hold no weapon to attack. Moving the arm while touching another person's hand shows that there is no secret weapon in the arm either.

In this Greek relief of the 3rd century BCE we see a man and his wife parting, greeting each other by shaking hands. With time, greeting by shaking hands became much more democratic, in place of the bows that were made, something that still exists today in the royal families of certain countries. Because to shake hands is to say that we are equals, at least for the moment. Another form of shaking hands is to put the other hand on the shoulder of the person opposite. It is not well known whether this way of greeting is out of sincerity or to manipulate. Likewise holding the other's hand with both hands, like a sandwich, can have the same meaning. If, in shaking hands, the other person takes only your fingers, it shows that he does not have much sympathy for you.

In India, instead of shaking hands they say 'Namaste', which means 'I bow before you', holding both hands together at the level of the heart as if asking pardon. In China the way of greeting is to bow the head slightly without shaking hands.

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Science & Nature

Syensya i Natura · 7 articles



The Age of the Earth · What Was Done for the First Time · Miracle of a Tree: Jabuticaba · Communication among Trees · On Cats · The Variations of Nature · Things of Yesterday and Today (the toothbrush and other inventions)

The Age of the Earth

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 4.9.2019 · original

That the world and the universe have an age is today a matter of evidence, and that this age amounts to many billions of years is also a certainty. More than two thousand five hundred years ago the philosophers of antiquity agreed, saying that the world could not be created from 'nothing'. But until the eighteenth century these theories, based on theology, which is the science of religion, limited us to the years written in 'Bereshit', and these years go no further than 5779 years...

With time the scholars of physics arrived at a result of some hundreds of millions of years, and today, with nuclear technique, one speaks of many billions of years. In 'Shir ha-Shirim' it is said that all that was, is, and there is nothing new under the sun. Day and night repeat, summer and winter repeat without tiring. Thus almost everything is a repetition. Philosophers like Democritus (460–370 BCE), Plato (428–347 BCE) and Aristotle (385–322 BCE) supported this point of view. The philosopher Aristotle was very sure that the world is eternal and said: 'The heavens are eternal, without beginning and without end, and contain time without end. Rivers are born and die, and the floods do not always go to the same places. Everything changes with time. The earth of yesterday is not the same as that of today.'

As is known, Alaska and Siberia formerly formed one and the same land, and the Bering Strait did not exist... The Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea were formerly each a different lake. It is when the straits of Çanakkale and the Bosphorus opened that the lands of Çanakkale and Gelibolu separated and were called the Anatolian side and the Rumeli side. That is to say, geography is changing with time.

These theories of Aristotle remained almost two thousand years as they were. These changes became more concrete when they saw that the earth had different layers due to volcanoes, and also the traces of fossils of fish in the mountains. When similar fossils were found in different places, geologists began to doubt that the years written in the holy books could correspond to the years of these fossils. Moreover, with Darwin's theory of evolution this doubt became more absolute.

George-Louis Leclerc, who lived in the years 1707–1788, for the first time pointed out that the world must have been part of the sun, and that it was torn off because of a comet. Leclerc calculated that 75,000 years passed until the earth became habitable. For the age of the world, he thought it must have more than ten million years. But in that era he did not have the courage to announce it, thinking that no one would believe him.

With Pierre and Marie Curie, who discovered radioactivity in 1905, Ernest Rutherford, basing himself on the disintegration of uranium, examined a uranium mine and noted that it was at least one hundred and forty million years old. After the Second World War the American Patterson thought of examining the meteorites that were formed at the same time as the world, and this opened the way to the answer of four billion five hundred and fifty million years. Thus scientists are working day and night to find a correct answer to the formation of the world. Adapted from the Encyclopaedia Universalis.

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What Was Done for the First Time

El Amaneser no. 182, p. 8–9, 8.4.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

We know that history begins with the Sumerians. They were among the first peoples to begin to write and to leave for posterity the things that happened in their times. They wrote down every day everything that happened, and thus we were able to discover contracts, letters, laws, sanctions and more things that they noted on clay tablets, using the style of letters called cuneiform, which are letters in straight and not rounded form. These letters were written on the tablets with a pointed metal before putting them in the oven. We are speaking of an era almost more than five thousand five hundred years ago. The Egyptians began to write after the Sumerians, but they wrote in the form we call 'hieroglyphic', where the words came from figures. Cuneiform comes from the Latin word 'cuneus', which means nail. Indeed, what they used to write on a clay tablet was like a nail that could leave traces in the still-soft clay, before putting it in the oven to make it solid, hard.

The Sumerians lived in the region we call Mesopotamia, a region where countries like Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait and a part of Iran are situated. Better said, between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates (Dicle/Fırat), and the peoples that formed this region were varied: those of Akkad, who were Semitic, the Hittites and still other peoples. Another thing that began for the first time with the Sumerians was copper. Before the Sumerians we have no example of any work done with copper. They were the first to see that with copper they could make many things. For the first time they made a mould mixing copper with tin (kalay) and obtained bronze more than three thousand five hundred years ago. The first objects they made of copper were arrowheads, which were very important for making war and for hunting, hooks for catching fish, jars and pitchers. They were also the ones who found the spinning wheel (çıkrık) 5,100 years ago. Thus they made the famous cloths with which the kings and queens of the neighbouring countries had sumptuous garments sewn.

The first work of literature we know, the epic of 'Gilgamesh', was written 5,400 years ago. This famous epic, where eternal life is sought, including the story of the Flood, was written long before Homer's epics of the 'Iliad and the Odyssey'. The whole epic was written on clay tablets. Another work of literature, also by the Sumerians, is 'The Instructions of Shuruppak'. These instructions were texts of wisdom, and to give a few examples, they say: 'A loving heart maintains the family, a hating heart destroys the family.' 'Do not pass judgement when you drink beer.' (Beer was a form of paying the employee. We have clay tablets where they mark bars for the quantity of beer the employee received as salary.) In the epic of Gilgamesh we also find the first urban plan. The cities of Ur and Uruk are described with great exactness of streets and buildings constructed of bricks and stones (5,500 years ago). This urbanization also greatly helped the development of the economy.

Let us not forget that the world knows Hippodamus as the first urban architect, born in our country, in Miletus, not very far from İzmir. He is known as the first architect who made beautiful streets in straight lines, crossing at 90-degree angles, but this was much later than the Sumerians. In tourism we give the names of Miletus and Priene as examples of ancient cities of our country that have this plan. This plan served in many cities of the United States of America and certain cities of Europe. Games resembling draughts or chess were played among the Sumerians, and tablets with signs of these games were found at 'Başur Höyük', the archaeological site in the south-east of Turkey, to the north of Mesopotamia, territory of the Sumerians. The

first soap for washing was made in Mesopotamia by the Sumerians. They mixed animal fat with ash and water. These first soaps were for the religious officials, who used them to purify themselves before prayer. The clay tablets also tell us that soap served to cure skin diseases.

Hammurabi, who lived in the 18th century before our era, is a king of the Sumerians, and it is said that the first laws of justice were made by him. But we have clay tablets from the 20th century before our era where we read laws of justice. These tablets are in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, translated by Prof. Samuel Kramer, known as the author of the famous book 'History Begins at Sumer'. These are tablets known by the name 'The Code of Ur-Nammu'. Ur-Nammu was the king of the Sumerians who lived in the years 2112–2085 before our era; he says that the damage one can cause to a human body can be paid with money or with similar objects of value. On the other hand, killing, adultery and the violation of young girls were punished by the death penalty. These laws were much more tolerant than the laws of Hammurabi, who lived 300 years later and who says 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. The Sumerians were a very brilliant light that illuminated for centuries the paths of humanity.

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Miracle of a Tree: Jabuticaba

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 20.5.2020 · original

The jabuticaba fruit, by its other name the Fruit of Brazil, is an extraordinary tree and the only tree in the world whose fruit grows on the trunk of the tree and not on the branches. When the fruit turns violet, it is understood to be ripe. Its countries of origin are Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina. The jabuticaba fruit is a summer fruit, very juicy, and refreshing on days of great heat.

Jabuticaba, as seen in the photos: the fruits are on the trunk of the tree. At the beginning of spring, when the violet flowers begin to come out on the trunk of the tree, little by little the flowers grow larger and change into the form of grapes. These fruits gradually take the form of a large strawberry and can be kept for quite a long time. The tree gives fruit every 2 years. With this fruit one can make jam, preserves or fruit juices that are very refreshing on days of great heat. It is said that this jabuticaba fruit is medicine for the tonsils, for asthma and for diarrhoea.

Nature still keeps many secrets that we must learn, and we must appreciate everything we have in our hands, to make use of it without damaging what forms part of the world's ecology.

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Communication among Trees

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 1.3.2023 · original

They noticed that the antelopes in South Africa were dying after eating the leaves of the acacia tree of the region. At first they did not understand the reason for this mortality. Later they noted that because of the drought in this region, the antelopes, having no grass, were eating the leaves of the acacia trees. Faced with a lack of clues to understand this mortality, an academic had the idea of observing the stomach of a dead antelope and found that the acacia leaves in the antelope's stomach were not digested. Analysing the leaves it was seen that they had an abnormally high quantity of tannin, something the leaves generally produce to protect themselves from parasites and microbes.

The scientists asked themselves whether there was a relation between the mortality of the antelopes and the high tannin in the leaves. They made another test: they struck the trees with force and saw that the proportion of tannin in the leaves rose far above normal. In nature the antelopes should eat their grasses, but because of the drought they had no other remedy than to eat the acacia leaves, and with this they were poisoned and died.

In his book 'The Hidden Life of Trees', Peter Wohlleben says that trees have a very elaborate language, special among themselves; a language formed of smells and of electrical signals. A language also through the roots, to communicate with one another and to give one another news of insects, of the dryness of the earth, to combat danger, to have a collective defence and to adapt to changes in the climate. The roots of the tree spread over an area double its height. This makes the branches of the roots contact the branches of the roots of the other tree, which makes the news propagate at 1 cm per second, and the other trees begin to defend themselves. What is interesting is that this defence is noted only in the forest environment; in the agricultural zone the vegetation remains mute. As the hand of man touched and changed the natural life of agriculture, the contact of root or of smell no longer functions. Another more delicious message is the perfume that certain trees send through their flowers to call the bees that transmit the pollen, which is necessary for multiplication.

What a great marvel Nature is, an endless world of secrets, and how happy we feel when we learn its secrets.

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On Cats

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 22.3.2023 · original

We have a cat at home. When we call her she does not come. Only when she wants, she puts herself on our legs. When she sees that we are at the table to eat, she already places herself on the third chair as a guest. It seems that cats were the first animals to become domestic, thousands of years ago. It is believed that they approached man to catch mice. The genetics of the cats that archaeologists found in the Middle East, in Europe and in Africa showed us that the first cat came out of Turkey more than 10,000 years ago. In Cyprus (Kıbrıs) they found a tomb from 9,500 years ago where the man and his cat are buried one beside the other. What is interesting is that cats knew very well how to travel from one place to another on the ships where they were taken to catch mice. Thus they found the DNA of Egyptian cats in the land of the Vikings, in the north of Germany. In China, in a tomb from 5,300 years ago, cat bones were seen buried beside humans, showing us that cats formed part of the human family.

A very curious friendship we find in the culture of the era of the Pharaohs, in ancient Egypt, where some cats were mummified and others were slaughtered as offerings in the temples. Again they say that the cats of Egypt came out of Turkey to go there. In Egypt they also found an old cemetery of more than 2,000 years, organized only for cats, where they buried cats with collars of iron or of precious stones. According to the famous historian Herodotus, the Egyptians shaved their eyebrows in respect for mourning the death of the family cat, as a sign of grief. In 2018 there was an exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum of Asian Art in Washington, D.C. on the importance of cats in Ancient Egypt. There they showed that cats can be on one side protectors, on the other side independent and wicked. The interest they had in cats makes us think that mice and snakes were the only reason for keeping cats.

Comparing cats and dogs, we see that dogs have many roles, whereas cats serve two things: catching creatures like mice and being an animal of company. When we go away from home for a few days and leave the key with an acquaintance to look after her, this person never manages to see our cat, because she hides until she feels alone. Cats detest those who are not of the house. Many times she spends hours hidden in a cupboard or under a piece of furniture. It seems that cats can sense the emotions of their masters and that they have very strong vision that allows them to see 6 times better than a human in the dark. Science has shown us that cats help lower the heart rate, the blood pressure and the negative moods of their owners.

If you want to have a cat at home, pay attention to the kitchen, because the cat is a good thief. She is not afraid to taste everything, and for this she puts herself at the table believing she is part of the family. Source: Live Science

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The Variations of Nature

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 24.5.2023 · original

This year we began winter with a summer temperature. A beginning of the month of February with so much sun and heat seems strange to us, but suddenly the snow fell on us. Today many articles speak to us of the climate that is changing, that we have drought, that it rains a lot and with the torrents that form, many streets flood or much damage occurs. These articles remind me of the interpretation of Joseph the Righteous of the dream of the 7 cows and the 7 ears of wheat, and what 'Kohelet' says: 'Nothing new under the sun.' That is to say, there were always years with much or little rain, with drought or abundance, with heat in winter or cold in summer. Let us not forget that there was a time when the Bering Strait did not exist, just as the Bosphorus strait of Istanbul did not exist.

Today there are islands that did not exist, just as there are cities of antiquity that are sunk in the sea. In certain deserts and mountains, remains of aquatic life are found, and even fossils of elephants, crocodiles, giraffes with a great quantity of pollen, which affirms the lost presence of green and abundant forests. Héctor Navarro wrote thus in 2019: 'Due to the cycles the sun has, in which it emits greater or lesser temperature, we have the phenomenon of "El Niño" and "La Niña", which alternate every ten or twelve years. There is another cycle of some five hundred years: between the years 850 and 1350 the world lived a global warmth that climatologists called the "Medieval Climatic Optimum". In this era the Vikings of Denmark colonized Greenland, where they harvested wheat and raised livestock (animals for meat) where now there are glaciers. When the cold cycle called the "Little Ice Age" began, which lasted between the years 1350 and 1850 approximately, the Vikings had to leave Greenland, which was unfortunately uninhabitable for man. However, since 1850 humanity is again benefiting from a cycle of warmth provoked by the sun, which led to the immense scientific, technological, economic, political and spiritual development we are enjoying at present. In a hundred years the average life expectancy doubled.'

We know that one of the reasons for these changes is the path our world makes around the sun. It is not a round line it makes, but an elliptical line. Another reason can be the variations in the sun's radiation, like the variations in the energy of the centre of the earth. With our own eyes we had seen that water drained from right to left or from left to right according to whether we were 2 metres north of the equator line or 2 metres south of this line. It is supposed that the disappearance of the Maya civilization was the result of a drought that brought a lack of food, and this caused the struggle to survive that ended with its disappearance. The storms seen especially in America, the 'monsoon' rains seen in India and in that part of the globe, the excessive floods seen in certain cities of the world — all these storms are due to the conditions I mentioned above. Most of these changes of climate took place over thousands of years, but there were times when these changes also happened suddenly. Thanks be to God that man knew how to adapt to every kind of change of climate and of living conditions, compared to certain races of animals that disappeared for not being able to adapt to these changes...

These changes are not in our hands. What is in our hands is the fight against the pollution of the air, the pollution of the earth, the pollution of the water and the pollution caused by plastic products damaging the world. We hope that throughout the world the new generations will be wiser in protecting our world, so tired of being mistreated.

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Things of Yesterday and Today (the toothbrush and other inventions)

El Amaneser no. 230, p. 20, 17.4.2024 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Today we have some things we use without realizing that they have existed for many years, even for many centuries. Among them, there is a heap of things that came to us from China. Silk. The oldest little piece of silk discovered in China dates from the year 2570 BCE (Before the Common Era). The transmission of the secret of producing silk from the cocoon to the other civilizations took many centuries, thousands of years, although the research of recent years shows us that in today's India and Pakistan too, the population that lived there knew silk. Silk in China was an instrument that, used in addition to paper — another thing invented by the Chinese — was used as a banknote (paper money). Silk caused a special road to be formed, going out from China as far as Europe, and it was called 'the Silk Road'. Porcelain. It was born in China between the years 200 BCE and 200 CE (Common Era). In Europe it had its success after the 17th and 18th centuries, in France and in Germany. Gunpowder, which was used for weapons, was born in China again on the same dates as paper, in what we call the time of the Han dynasty.

The toothbrush. It was born in China in the 7th century. The photo shows a replica of the first brush from China. Before this they used little pieces of wood as toothpicks, or little pieces of bone. The toothbrush entered Europe after the Renaissance. Before, in Turkey, people cleaned their teeth with what is called miswak, which is made from the branch of a special tree. Another Chinese invention is the kite (filandra). This word filandra I believe comes from Italian and I believe it means the flag that is hung on ships. The oldest text where the kite is spoken of is from the 4th century BCE. But this text was written much later than the invention of the first kite. At the beginning the use of the kite was military. Later they used it to send messages, to signal something, or to measure distances, to frighten the enemy. The kite reached Europe after the 12th century. In the Asian part of Istanbul, in Üsküdar, there is a kite museum that organizes kite competitions, just as is done in other countries like China or Japan.

Paper money. The Chinese began to use paper money from the 7th century. The weight of metal money made the Chinese print on paper the order to pay the same sum to the merchant who went from one place to another. This system came to Italy in the 14th century, and was accepted by all in the 17th century. Toilet paper. The Chinese knew it from the 2nd century BCE. The Romans used a sponge tied to a stick, as in the latrines we see at Ephesus and other ruins. In the Middle East and in the Ottoman empire it was water that served for cleaning. Dental filling. In China it was known from the 7th century CE. The Chinese doctor Su Gong, in the year 659, writes about a filling of tin (kalay) and silver to fill the holes in teeth.

Tea. It is a plant the Chinese used from the 27th century BCE. Tea reached Europe after the 16th century. From China it passed to Japan, to India, and from there to Europe. First it was the missionaries of Portugal who brought this plant. Then it was the Dutch, the English, the Americans — who protested against the English, throwing chests of tea into the sea. Tea entered the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. But local production begins from the year 1938 in Rize. Today in Turkey tea is the drink that comes after water. The fork. Archaeology found the fork in China from the 24th century BCE. This fork had only 2 prongs. Europe came to know this kitchen item through the Byzantines. From the Byzantines it passed to Italy and then to the other countries. The Ottomans, being neighbours, learned it before the Europeans. That is why the Jews expelled from Spain came to know the fork after coming to the lands of the Ottomans.

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Reflections, Family & Life

Refleksyones, Famiya i Vida · 10 articles



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The Coexistence of Science and Religion

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 15.1.2020 · original

This is a subject that carries a lot of water, because religion and science are mixed into politics as into social life. They have their parts of light and of shadow. Some say that science and religion are two things that cannot live together. Others say that the two can live together and in peace. Certainly, before the Renaissance religion dominated the whole people, generally uneducated, and the kings too had to accept what the religious men of the church said.

In the time of the Renaissance Galileo, so as not to be killed, accepted to say that the sun moves around the world; but leaving his trial he also says: 'Be that as it may, it is the world that moves around the sun.' Like Galileo many were tried and some killed. But with time scientists had no problem getting certain things accepted that were not written in the holy books.

The Nobel Prize in physics of 1993 was awarded to Joseph Taylor. He says: 'A scientific discovery is a religious discovery. The more we discover things about our world, the greater is the discovery of God.' Martin Luther King said: 'Science searches, religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man hokhma, which is control. Science deals with facts, religion with values, and thus they complete each other.' Albert Einstein said: 'Science without religion is a lame person, and religion without science is a blind person.' A sage says: 'Everything around us works like a clock. There must be an intelligence that directs this world. Some call it nature; others call it, like Darwin, evolution. And there are also many others who call it the Creator.'

Thus for many people science and religion go hand in hand. Both come to us from metaphysics. But we must accept that without the work of the laboratories and the curiosity of humans, we would have neither the computer nor electricity, nor would we walk on the moon, nor would we have the mobile phone. On the other hand, science does not try to discuss the roots of the universe. Scientists admit that even now we do not know where these roots are hidden...

Science tells us that every reality is reality until the contrary is shown. Religion tells us that what is written in the holy books is always the truth. Believing in religion does not prevent the scientist from continuing on his path. Science is the study of nature and its laws. The basis of religion is to believe, to have faith. For this reason one does not affect the other. For many people, the more you enter into the enigmas of science, the more your spirituality develops. Many think that science is a school of thought and of wisdom and is a method that has no dealings with religion. Some say the two contradict each other because science is evidence, religion is faith. Science can err, religion never. Science is based on reason and logic, while religion is based on faith and belief. Science acts with the brain, religion with the emotions. Science tells us what is. Religion tells us what ought to be. Science deals with the body, religion with the soul.

In reality, to have a healthy life, one must care for the body and the soul. The only important thing is not to forget that science and religion are like water and oil. The two can fit in one jar but they never mix.

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What May Happen

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 18.3.2020 · original

In the years to come I do not believe the mobile phone will exist. Even those who manufacture these phones today do not believe in their future. We are not yet in generation 4.5, and already generation 5 and 6 are being talked about. Every day we wake up, it seems to us that the world is the same as 30 or 40 years ago. But we know that within these 30 to 40 years many things are going to change and will not be what they are today.

Technology will change, music will change, the way of life will change and the point of view of the new generation will change totally. I mean that the way of living and of seeing events will change. This makes us think that every new thing in science seems to us like a marvel or even magic. Today it seems impossible to us, but we know that cars that will drive without a driver are going to be normal things of every day. Today those of us over 80 are told not to drive. With driverless cars this too will be very normal.

Our companion S. Aji says we are going to have lamb or beef without slaughtering the animal. Giving the cells the muscle, the fat, the blood and the nourishment they need, these cells, multiplying, will give us the tastiest chop or the tenderest leg without the animal disappearing. And so Sami reminds us to return to dried broad beans, which are full of proteins. It is also said that laughing is like eating two chops a day. To each his own taste... And the shochetim will have more time to rest.

Of course, from now on researchers are working on artificial intelligence, on robots. We do not know very well what will happen within 10 to 20 years, and perhaps it will make us say that all this is coming from other stars, from another world. Let us not forget that energy is changing. Solar energy, the energy of the wind, of water, of the seas and oceans are becoming much more common. All this will change the role of oil and coal... The Internet, which we did not know a few years ago, will of course become a banal thing.

With the instruments that are beginning to be seen in the world, those who speak for example in Japanese and want to be understood in Ladino — the words will arrive in Ladino via our holograms or devices that are already being used... I will speak in Ladino and the German will hear it in German. This is already being used, and easier ways are being sought to adapt it to the whole world without having language frontiers. So no need for translators, nor to learn another language for years. Perhaps what we think will pass into writing without having pen or keyboard. With the work of microbiology, the functions of the human body may change, such as organizing new limbs and giving them new functions.

Work to avoid the problems of old age and lengthen life, work to advance medicine and serve humanity to suffer less from diseases, will be much easier. Perhaps doctors will find medicine to prevent forgetting, and they have already begun to put chips inside the body to control from afar various functions of people. Perhaps pills for men to avoid causing pregnancies will be in everyone's pockets. But also many other easy ways of having children are already at the disposal of many people. Perhaps we will have electricity without cable and without socket. Professions will change in the twenty years to come. Kodak had 170,000 employees 20 years ago. Today this firm does not exist.

Dear readers, we will not stop dreaming, but we will try to live in peace the day the Creator grants us. Not to forget the past, not to be anxious about the future, and to live today in fullness.

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A Story by Sunay Akın

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 10.6.2020 · original

The year 1827. The city of Magdeburg in Germany. In this year Ludwig Carl Friedrich Dedloid was born. Growing up, he learned what the quarrels between his mother and father were, and he had a very troubled childhood. The relatives who loved Carl put him in an orphanage to keep him away from these sufferings. Carl stayed there until the age of 12. Here too they mistreated him and beat him without regard for the necessary pedagogy. Carl decided to run away, and one night he fled and reached Hamburg. In Hamburg he finds work on one of the merchant ships. After 4 months at sea, the ship passes through the Bosphorus... Carl, looking at the sea, sees from afar the Tower of Leander (Kız Kulesi). When the ship approaches the tower, Carl jumps into the sea and swims with all his strength to the tower. At that time the tower served to confine lepers. They catch Carl and take him before Emin Ali Pasha. The Pasha asks him: why did you flee from the ship? Carl answers: they were beating me and treating me very badly. The Pasha asks him again: you have been at sea for 4 months, why Istanbul? The boy shows him the tower and says: because of this tower. I liked this tower very much.

Of course the news that the boy threw himself into the sea in the Bosphorus reached Germany, and they ask Emin Ali Pasha to send Carl back. Ali Emin Pasha decides not to hand over the boy and becomes Carl's protector... The Pasha changes Carl's name and calls him Mehmet Ali. Mehmet Ali studies and becomes a soldier up to the rank of Pasha. He has a career full of bravery and represents the Ottoman Empire in many important cases. He marries and has 4 daughters. One of them is called Leyla Hanım. Leyla Hanım had a daughter named Celile. Celile is the mother of NAZIM HİKMET. One must know that Nazım Hikmet was the great-grandson of Ludwig Carl, Mehmet Ali Pasha. The 3rd of June was the day of commemoration of the death of Nazım Hikmet... This story has another continuation.

Nazım Hikmet was born in Salonika. We know that Nazım Hikmet entered prison in 1938. The reason was reading a poem that was written by one of his friends, Ömer Deniz, from the military school. One day the two went to the cinema. Leaving the cinema, his friend Ömer asked Nazım to read the poem he had written. This was the reason the two went to prison. After 7 years Ömer came out of prison and decided to study law to become a lawyer. As he had no money, he opened a small shop in Fatih to make wooden toys. With the income he paid for his studies and lived in this way.

One day a boy of 7 or 8 enters Ömer's shop and asks him whether he could work beside him. Ömer takes pity on the boy and accepts that he work beside him. One day the boy asked Ömer to make him a few toys and little dolls (puppets). The boy takes the puppets to his school and gives a presentation to his friends. This boy is called MÜJDAT GEZEN. Life is a novel of thousands of pages and an endless music that touches our heart deeply.

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After the Darkness

El Amaneser no. 189, p. 16, 11.11.2020 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

Many believe that the Middle Ages were an era in which reason did not exist and everything was governed only through superstition. Those who thought so did not realize that they were speaking only of the region of Europe. But in this region there was a country that left many things to humanity. This country was the Byzantine Empire, which in reality is the Eastern Roman Empire, which lived until the 15th century. First of all the Byzantine Empire, where people spoke Greek, transmitted the culture and the philosophy of Ancient Greece. We already know that the culture and wisdom of the library of Alexandria was known through the Arabs. Of course not everything was translated into Arabic. Most of the writings of ancient Greece were copied by the soferim of the Byzantine Empire, because they too spoke the same language. The Byzantines had no problem understanding and giving the correct sense of the writings of Ancient Greece. Moreover, the library of Alexandria was not the only library in the Mediterranean world. The library of Pergamon (Bergama) was a very great rival. The competition between these two libraries was enormous. Thus the Arabs transmitted what was not copied in the other libraries, so that these writings would not be lost for ever. Let us not forget that the libraries of that time did not preserve scientific studies but only literary studies.

Apart from these literary texts, the Byzantines introduced the 'fork' into the customs of everyday eating from the 4th century of our era. The Persians copied this in the 9th century and the Italians in the 11th century, and this long before other European countries, because the Italians had great sympathy for macaroni, and with the fork of three or four prongs one could eat with more ease, more elegance and hygiene. The Byzantines were lovers of art and good architects who built the great domes with corners we call 'pendentives'. We have in Istanbul the most famous work in the world of the 6th century, 'Santa Sophia' or Ayasofya. The dome of Ayasofya has a diameter of 31–32 metres. This was a miracle for the architects of the 6th century and continues to illuminate the architects of today. They also built bridges with pointed arches to be able to support the weight of the bridge better. They invented what we call 'Greek fire'. They sent with arrows a rag soaked in naphtha, which burned the ships or the soldiers who were fighting. They invented the 'trebuchet' (mancınık), sending far away explosives in flames and stone balls. Let us not forget that in that era the civilization in China with certain important dynasties, in America with the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas, were not inferior to those of Europe.

What was dark in Europe was the lack of food and the epidemic of the Plague. The Plague and Leprosy in the 14th century also caused the mistreatment of the Jews, by throwing the blame for the epidemic on them. What we today call the 'witches' of the Middle Ages we know was a calumny. And to take vengeance, they invented that certain women were witches and cast spells. Unfortunately some women were burned alive. In this same era we have names of philosophers, writers, scientists who changed the world's point of view. Among a few of them we can recall Shakespeare, Galileo, Spinoza, Newton, who gave light to the world and helped a great part of humanity advance. In many books we read that in the Middle Ages people did not wash and were very dirty, full of filth. Today, whether in archaeological excavations or in newly found manuscripts of that era, we know that the famous Roman baths were used by the Byzantines too. Of course 'hygiene' and the frequency of washing were not as today, but wash they did, even in the rural villages. What is more, the Jews prepared for Shabbat by washing, and so were clean to receive the sacred day.

What is also not said is that the public baths were always beside the bread ovens, to take advantage of the heat of the oven. Many people took advantage of the bath to wash and to eat in the nice hot bath. I remember from my childhood that when my mother took me to the bath, she also took a few little things to eat with the friends she met there, and they stayed for hours, as if it were a picnic. The most curious thing was that they also took quince (bimbriyo). The quince was broken (not cut) on the basin of the bath, and it was said that the quince had another flavour and came out juicier and tastier when it was broken in this way. We believed that in the Middle Ages everyone thought the world was flat. The intellectuals of that era knew very well that the world was round. This reality was already known since Ancient Greece. In all the representations of the Byzantine Emperors we see that the Emperor has in his hand the terrestrial globe (round form of the world) with a cross on top. This meant that Christianity would dominate the world.

Among other innovations of the Middle Ages one can count the way of printing books. The Jews brought this work from Spain to Turkey. Glass mirrors, spectacles, sails for boats, water mills and windmills, papers that served for paying (cheques) were used and found in this era called dark. What caused it to be called the Dark Age was mostly the struggle and the intrigues between the rulers so as not to lose their powers and to reign over an uneducated society. Another thing that gives it this title of darkness was that parchment and papyrus in this era became very scarce; very little was found, because it was very expensive to bring papyrus and to manufacture parchment. It is for this reason that we have few written details about this era. What we know is that every era has its qualities and its deficiencies. The darkness is cleared by the light of hope that illuminates the paths, with its scientific studies, works of art and philosophical ideas. May 2020

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Lviv, Lvov, Lemberg

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 13.4.2022 · original

The month just past was marked by the war between Russia and Ukraine, and there was no day we did not read or hear about a city of Ukraine called Lviv or Lvov or Lemberg. This city is the city where my father-in-law, Herr Duvid Locker, was born... On his way to America, in Istanbul, he met my mother-in-law, Fräulein Rachel Berkovitz. They married, and my wife Anna was born. Those were the first years in which the law to leave the fez and wear the hat was being enforced. A very serious duty for government officials and the military. My father-in-law, very capable at making hats, decided to stay here for a certain time, and he stayed until the end of his days. His hats were very famous in style and in models; even Atatürk was one of his clients. His expertise was seen more and more in the field of the navy, for the admirals and officers.

My father-in-law told me many things about Lviv or Lvov or Lemberg. At the end of the First World War the city passed for a short time to Ukraine, and then went back to being Polish again. It is after 1939 that it became part of the Soviet Union. Today it is a city of Ukraine with almost 700,000 souls, with minorities such as Russians, Poles, Armenians, Jews and Crimean Tatars. When my father-in-law left Lviv, the Jewish population was almost 100,000 persons, and it is said that industry and commerce were in the hands of the Jews. Under the occupation of Soviet Russia, thousands of Jews of Lviv who did not want to collaborate with the Russians and did not want Russian nationality were exiled to Siberia. Despite this exile, with the Jews who fled from Germany they came to more than 160,000. When the Germans took Lviv, the population of Ukraine was very happy and celebrated this occupation with ardour. This was the end of the Jews. The pogroms of the Ukrainian nationalists were not light in the ghetto of Lviv. Simon Wiesenthal too, in 1989, mentioned these cases.

What a pity that Lvov, before the war, was a cultural, religious and political centre for the Jews. During perestroika, the Sholem Aleichem Jewish Cultural Society built a monument commemorating the dead Jews of Lviv: a monument representing an old Jew praying and raising his head and arms to the sky. The name of Meir Balaban, the famous Jewish historian and writer of Lviv who lived at the end of the 19th century, was given to a prestigious avenue of the city. Sholem Aleichem, on his way to the United States, stayed a long time in Lvov waiting for his emigration papers, and praised the cleanliness and the beauty of this city. Sholem Aleichem was a champion of Yiddish, considering this language as an official language. He wrote many works in Yiddish and tried to revive it. Would that Ladino had the same luck.

From what my father-in-law told me, the little villages beside Lemberg were just like the shtetl of 'Tevye the Dairyman' and 'Fiddler on the Roof'.

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Power

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 18.1.2023 · original

'It is an observation that any person who holds power does not refrain from abusing it,' said Montesquieu in his famous book 'The Spirit of the Laws'. The philosopher Alain says: 'Every power without control brings madness.' Examples of abuse on the part of persons holding an authority or a power over other persons are not rare: scandals of finance, of justice, sexual, psychological or physical abuse, abuse in politics, in the press or similar channels, abuse in the police, including in religion. The question is to know whether the person who holds power abuses because this behaviour is based on narcissism (the state of a person who loves himself or his intelligence), on psychopathy (the state of a person who can commit a crime) or on megalomania (the state of a person who displays grandeur).

Studies show us that any person who holds power can have a tendency that favours adopting a negative behaviour. Many times we observe that the behaviour of a person driving a very expensive car is worse than the behaviour of a person driving a modest car in terms of observing the rules of traffic. Another study was practised among students who write the rules they want for the university. One of these students is set apart to supervise. The students are to be rewarded at the end with some very tasty biscuits. The biscuits are limited. There is only one biscuit more than the participants. It was seen that it was the supervisor who ate the two biscuits. They filmed this act discreetly and noted that the supervisor ate the biscuits with less manners than the others. They repeated this study with different students and saw that the behaviour of the supervisors was almost the same.

In the history of Political Science we have many examples of rulers who changed their personalities on holding power. One must agree with Montesquieu, who said: 'To avoid bad ends, it is better to think of having a divided and shared power.' Or: 'Allow an opposition that will criticize you and show you the defects.' This means the Separation of Powers: Legislation (making laws), Execution (applying the laws), and Justice. Let us not forget that many call Power a sickness, as we saw in those responsible for the Shoah. Source: National Library

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Knowing How to Survive

El Amaneser no. 222, p. 14, 9.8.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

A short time ago we read the news of the crash of a plane in Colombia and that 4 children of the same family survived some 40 days in the rain forest of the Amazon. In the plane that crashed on 1 May 2023 there was, apart from the pilot and his assistant, a family of 5 persons: the mother and the four children. The plane took off from Araracuara in Colombia to go to San José del Guaviare, deep in the Amazon, and fell in the middle of the rain forest in the Amazon. In this accident the children's mother, the pilot and his assistant died. Of the four siblings, the eldest, Lesly, was 13 years old, Soleiny 9, Tien Noriel 5, and Cristin, the youngest, only 11 months, barely beginning to walk. When the plane crashed, the children stayed beside the accident. They ate a little flour bread they found in the plane and set out to look for a river to drink water. Before going away, they took from the plane a cloth, a torch, a few clothes and two telephones, which ran out of charge in very little time.

All the days they remained in the Amazon they ate certain fruits and roots of certain plants they considered edible. This family belonged to the Uitoto tribe, natives of the Amazon. The children knew the forest very well and knew very well what they should eat and what they should not eat. During these days when they were being searched for, the children stayed near a river, drinking water from a soda bottle they took from the plane. The greatest miracle was that they had no injury from the fall of the plane, although their mother lost her life four days after the accident.

Eliran Arazi, an anthropologist of the 'Hebrew University of Jerusalem' and of the 'School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences of Paris', who made studies on this event, says that the children of these tribes, even before entering primary school, accompany their parents in many activities such as walking in the forest, in agriculture, in fishing, in hunting, in collecting honey and in knowing the wild fruits of the forest. From the age when they are very small, they already know how to open a path in the forest, how to find water to drink; they learn to know the wild animals by their smells and the tracks the animals leave, such as jaguars and snakes, so as to be able to protect themselves. It seems that the belief the children had in the shamans of their people also helped them to survive without losing hope. With the tales the elders tell them, the children know very well how to adapt themselves in the relations between animals, plants and humans. This gives them the wisdom for the protection of nature, without causing any damage — something that city-dwellers do not accomplish and something that is in danger of disappearing. This wisdom was formed over thousands of years in these people who lived in these places.

Another miracle at which the world marvelled was the capacity of the elder sister Lesly, 13 years old, who knew how to take care of her little brothers and sisters, and above all of the smallest, Cristin, who was only 11 months old. When they were found, she was saying that she was already hearing the announcements that were being made through helicopters telling where they were. Indeed they put loudspeakers that made the voice heard in a radius of a kilometre and a half. Know that in these tribes the elder sister becomes the mother to take care of her younger siblings. Eliran Arazi says it is a duty to preserve this knowledge, which has great value and gives life to miracles. We cannot allow ourselves to see it disappear.

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Education

El Amaneser no. 225, p. 20, 8.11.2023 — rubrika “Saver es Bueno” · original

I do not know whether you have noticed the difference in the form of education and school instruction seen between consecutive generations. Each generation admits that the education and school instruction received in its era were better than those given to the new generations. Each dor had a different way of dressing, a different form of social relations, a different taste in art, which is noticed most in the field of songs or dances. Speaking of dor, I believe we should think of the generation of the Covid-19 pandemic — whether this generation will recover the loss of school instruction, or whether these two years will have no importance at all in their professional careers. Apart from the difference in education, let us not forget that there always existed a difference of thinking between the generations. My father's dor, mine, and my son's had no common relation. When it is said that in our time we knew better than those of today, I do not believe it is always very correct, because today we learn many things from the young. But the saying 'If the old could, if the young knew' is also a reality we must respect.

Comparing the generations of past centuries, we do not see a great difference in personal or family relations. Nor do we see a difference in the behaviour of family members. There did not exist, as today, the freedom of young people who go to study in another country and stay there, or go to live and work in another place. The young of that time, barely finishing primary school, already had to work with their fathers or uncles to continue the family profession. Today we must finish the lycée, the university, the master's degree, military service, and begin to work seriously. Who thought 50 years ago that everything would be arranged with a mobile phone, with a machine called a 'computer' that directs our life according to what we order it.

The difference in education between generations was an important subject for the famous Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, who wrote a book on 'The Crisis in Education'. She says that teachers should be seen as the 'representatives of the world' before the new generations, and education should not be seen as giving a vision of the future to the young. For her, education must be the way of seeing the world as it is. On the other hand, the American psychologist and pedagogue Jerome Bruner says that pupils must be prepared for the uncertainty of the future, from the first classes of school, working on socially live questions. Contrary to Hannah Arendt, Jerome Bruner insists that the school help the pupil develop the capacity to ask the why, the wherefore, the how, and to find the answer to the question. So that in both cases, the confidence of adults in youth is at the centre of education. For Hannah Arendt, confidence means that youth must have the knowledge and the capacity to stand before the problems of the world the day they become adults. For Bruner, confidence is that youth, through education, must take part in the discussions of these problems and form a collaboration. Today the question is whether education and instruction should transfer knowledge, or teach how to acquire this knowledge.

The famous American billionaire Elon Musk began to invest in education with a programme that could not be imagined until today. In Los Angeles, on the campus of 'SpaceX', Elon Musk and Joshua Dahn built a school to give pupils the chance to learn the sense and the ability to struggle with problems like those of life. Elon Musk said that 'the things we teach children in schools do not have great sense, because they will never make use of them'. For this reason Musk and Dahn concentrated on education based on experiences. At the beginning the classes had only the children of Elon Musk and the children of the engineers of 'SpaceX'. Today the school has more than 5,500 active pupils and thousands waiting on the waiting list. If this pro-

gramme has great success, we believe that all countries will want to adapt to the same system.
Source: Prof. Philippe Forey

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The Soul

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 15.2.2024 · original

Sometimes my wife says to me: 'You are my soul. Without you I believe I am without a soul.' I begin to laugh and start to ask myself: 'What is the Soul?' We can say that the Soul is what gives life to everything that is alive. Some beliefs say that the Soul travels from the human to the animal and from there to the plant, or vice versa. I do not know whether the Soul makes this kind of journey, but I believe that everything that lives has a soul. Our brain makes it possible for us to think, to direct our life functions, to feel, to love, to suffer, to adapt, to learn, to judge, to decide. All this activity of the brain makes what we call the Soul. Pull the plug on the brain, the body dies and nothing remains of what was called Soul.

The Soul makes every human different. Even twins who resemble each other like a mirror each have their own Soul that distinguishes them from their twin. There is a belief that says the Soul never dies. This is true for the person who leaves a work before dying. Every time we remember their work, we remember this person, that is to say their soul. This also shows that believing is a function of the Soul. In Hebrew we have three words that resemble each other a great deal. One is Ruach. Another is Nefesh. The third is Neshama. We say 'Nefesh Yehudi', we say 'his Neshama went out of him', speaking of almost the same thing. In Turkish the word 'breath' (nefes) has the same root as 'Nefesh'. When we hear music we like very much, it is the Soul that shivers. When we read something we like very much, it is the Soul that trembles. Basing ourselves on Nefesh, we can say that it is breathing that makes us live, and when one does not breathe, in the end one dies. In the Torah we read that God breathed a breath into Adam and Adam began to live. This word in Latin is 'Anima'. From there come the words 'Animation' or 'Animal'. In Greek it is Psyche. From there came the word Psychology, the science of the Soul.

I do not know whether there are many people in the world who drink rakı, but there are also people who sing the song: 'I give my soul for rakı.'

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Importance

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 1.10.2025 · original

As we grow old there are many things that seem to us completely useless or without importance. First of all, we do not give the value we gave when we were younger to other people's opinion of our behaviour, our clothing, our way of judging. At our age today, we think it is not worth the trouble of tiring ourselves to impress, as we did in our youth. This liberation from anxieties must be one of the gifts our age offers us. Things that made us nervous, like waiting because of traffic when driving, like the neighbour's criticism, do not seem so important in old age as they seemed in youth. Not giving importance to things that today seem useless to us makes us much wiser.

One thing that is certain is that, without realizing it, we are changing with the years. The values we gave change, memories change, dreams change, ambitions change. The older we grow, the more we know ourselves. We know better what we want, what we can offer, what can displease us. With time we realize that success loses its importance. In youth, having a car, having a home in an apartment of a prestigious neighbourhood, having brand-name clothes seemed to us to be the keys to being happy. In old age what counts are the moments we live, when we say a long 'oooh', appreciating human relations. What counts is health. What counts is to flee loneliness. What counts is that we know the cold to appreciate the warmth, we know the dark to appreciate the light. What counts is that little time remains to us and we must not lose it.

We who were born in the 30s and 40s... have the chance of knowing 2 millennia, 2 centuries, life without a telephone — we waited ten years for our turn to come to put a telephone in the house — and life with a mobile phone, where we break into a sweat if anything happens to this little box where the whole history of our existence is found; life with radio, where we waited for the end of the story that had begun days before, knowing that this end would come after a few days; and life with black-and-white television, with a lamp and a belly like a pregnant woman's, and television as thin as a sheet of paper. Now artificial intelligence too has entered our life, treating us with the ethics of a more-than-human person, with honour and with kavod. In a short time I do not know whether we will remain what we are. Live and see. September 2025

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Humour — Riir es Bueno

Riir es Bueno · 8 articles



A Joke to Make You Smile · Jewish Mothers · Robbery in a Bank · Charlot and Einstein · How Did You Recognize Us? · The Jew on the Moon · The Whale or the Mermaid (a Fantasy) · Sayings about Woman

A Joke to Make You Smile

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 26.2.2020 · original

The man calls the waiter in a neighbourhood restaurant. 'Waiter, look here, drink this soup.' The bewildered waiter asks him: 'What happened? Isn't it hot enough?' The man insists: 'Drink this soup.' The waiter no longer knows what to ask: 'Did a fly fall in, is there a hair, or don't you like the taste?' The man insists: 'Drink some of this soup and you'll see what's there.' In the end the waiter accepts and looks to see where the spoon is! 'The spoon isn't here,' he says... The customer gets irritated: 'You see, there's no spoon, and that's why I called you'...

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Jewish Mothers

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 11.5.2022 · original

All mothers are sacred; but the Jewish mother has something else that gives her a sweet flavour not found in any other nation. The grandmother is explaining to her grandson, who wants to come and visit her, the address of her new house: 'You'll press number 140 with your elbow. The lift is on the right; going in, you'll press button 14 with your elbow. On the 14th floor get out and press the button of door 140 with your elbow.' 'Grandma, I understood you, but why do you tell me to press the buttons with my elbow?' 'What, you're going to come empty-handed?'

We have a daughter who lives in London. The other day she phones and asks her mother: 'Mama, how are you?' The mother answers her: 'My daughter, I'm very thin.' 'What's the matter, why have you got thin?' 'It's fifteen days that I haven't been eating.' 'What happened, why aren't you eating?' 'Because I didn't want to have my mouth full at the moment you were going to call me.'

The Jewish mother makes this announcement on the telephone: 'For Shabbat evening, if you want chicken, press 2; if you want almodrote, press 3; if you want gaya with avramila, press 4. And if you want to know how I feel, this number is wrong, because until now you haven't asked me how I am.'

The Jewish mother takes her little daughter to school, telling her: 'Precious one, sit quietly in class. Little lady, don't get dirty. Little light, don't run in the garden.' On her return in the afternoon, the mother asks her: 'Tell me, little heart, what did you learn today?' The little girl answers: 'I learned that my name is Sara.'

Mrs Levi goes to visit her son Moris, who lives with his girlfriend Rina in the same house, and realizes that her son's girlfriend is more than beautiful. From the way she was looking at the girl, the son says to his mother: 'Don't think I have relations with Rina; we each sleep in separate rooms.' After a few days Rina says to Moris: 'Since the day your mother came, the bonbon dish has disappeared; I don't believe she took it, but we can ask her to make sure.' So Moris writes to his mother: 'I'm not saying you didn't take the bonbon dish, and I'm not saying you took it; but since the day you came to see us, the bonbon dish has disappeared. Kisses, Moris.' Madam Levi answers: 'I'm not saying you don't sleep with Rina and I'm not saying you sleep with her; but if Rina were sleeping in her own bed, she would have found the bonbon dish since the day I came to visit you. Kisses, Mother's pasha.' So never tell lies to a Jewish Mother.

Madam Kohen gives her son two ties as a present. After a few days the son puts on one of the ties to go and see his mother. Scarcely has she opened the door than she asks her son: 'Albertiko, didn't you like the other tie?'

Mrs Behar goes to the park with her two grandsons. They ask her: 'How old are your grandsons?' and she answers them: 'The doctor is 6, and the lawyer will be 4 soon.'

'Tell me, Roza, what do you think about the wedding of David and Sara?' 'I don't think it will last long, because I know David's mother and Sara's mother. They are two Jewish women who don't like each other.' The Jewish mother forgives and forgets, but she never forgets what she forgave.

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Robbery in a Bank

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 27.7.2022 · original

I read a joke and tried to translate it into Ladino. Some robbers enter the bank and shout: 'The money doesn't belong to you. But each one's life does belong to him.' Everyone in silence, and slowly they lay down on the floor. This is called: CONCEPTS TO CHANGE MENTALITIES. Changing the conventional mentality of thinking in the world.

At this a woman placed herself in a provocative way on one of the tables. The robber shouted at her: 'Woman, this is a robbery, not a rape.' This is called: BEING PROFESSIONAL. Giving all your attention to what you are specialized in doing.

After taking all the money from the bank, the young robber, who had graduated from university with his MBA (Master of Business Administration), said to the other, old robber, who had not even finished primary school: 'Come, let's count what we took.' The old robber answered him: 'Don't be a fool, this is too much money to count. Let's wait for tomorrow's news to know how much money the bank lost.' This is called EXPERIENCE. Experience is more important than a paper from an academic institution.

Once the robbers had gone, the director of the bank said to call the police. To this the chief answered: 'One moment, let's not forget the 5 million we are missing from last month. We can add it to what the robbers took.' The director said: 'You're right.' This is called: MANAGING WITH STRATEGY. Taking advantage of a situation that was not favourable.

Again the robbers counted the money they stole and it came to 20 million, but the next day the news was saying that they stole 100 million. Hearing this news, the robbers began to think: 'We risked our lives for 20 million, while the directors of the bank stole 80 million. Apparently it is better to study and know the system of what goes on than to be a robber.' This is called: KNOWLEDGE IS AS VALUABLE AS GOLD.

The director of the bank felt very happy to see his loss on the Stock Exchange solved by the robbery. This is called: TAKING ADVANTAGE OF CONDITIONS. The moral of this story: Give a man a weapon, and he can rob a bank. Give a man knowledge, and he can conquer the world.

Correction: In the article on 'THE SACRIFICE' that came out in the last issue of 'Şalom', the word 'ONA', which means 'SAISON', 'SEASON', 'MEVSİM', was printed by mistake as 'ZONA', which means 'PROSTITUTE'. The word 'ONA' comes from Hebrew, but Ladino too used it as its own. That is how I heard it from my parents.

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Charlot and Einstein

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 24.8.2022 · original

'What I admire most in your art,' says Albert Einstein to Charlie Chaplin (who for us is Charlot), 'is its universality. You don't say a single word and everyone understands you.' 'It's true,' answers Charlie Chaplin, 'but your fame is much greater. The whole world admires you and no one understands you!'

The very rich man has dealings with an Italian woman. One night when they met, the Italian woman tells him she is pregnant. So as not to ruin his reputation and his family life, he promises to give her a large sum of money if she accepts to go to Italy, to have the baby there, and on the condition that he will take charge of the newborn until the age of 18. The Italian woman accepts and asks him how he will get news of the baby's birth. He answers her: 'At the birth, send me a card where you write only "spaghetti"' The months passed, and one day, coming home, he finds his wife a little dizzy, who tells him: 'A rather odd (curious) card came for you in the post today.' The man reads the card, turns completely white and faints. The wife reads the card: 'Spaghetti, spaghetti, spaghetti. Two with meatballs, one without.'

The year is 2032 and Sara Goldstein has been elected the first Woman and, above all, the first Jewish person as President of the United States. After some weeks, she calls her mother saying: 'Mama, I hope you'll come on inauguration day.' The mother answers her: 'I don't think so, precious. It's 10 hours' drive, and your father isn't as young as he was, and me suffering with my legs...' 'Don't worry, Mama, I'll send you the presidential plane of the United States for the trip there and back home, and a limousine will wait in front of the door.' 'I don't know, everyone will be very chic and I don't know what to wear.' 'I'm sure you'll have a dress made by the best designer there.' 'You know I can't eat the rich things found at these dinners.' 'Mama, it's the best catering service here that will organize the dinner and everything will be one hundred percent kosher. I want you to come too.' So the mother accepted to be there on 20 January, when Sara Goldstein will take the oath as President of the United States. Seated in the first row, the mother leans towards the Senator beside her and says: 'Do you see this woman who has her hand on the Torah and is going to be President of the United States?' 'Yes,' says the Senator, 'I see her.' 'Her brother is a Doctor!!!' (For the Jewish mother, the precious son has another value.)

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How Did You Recognize Us?

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 7.9.2022 · original

Two priests decided to go to Goa in India for their holiday, and so as not to be recognized as priests, they decided to go to the beach, buying the most modern swimsuits, dark glasses, sun hats, and they sat on the deckchair looking around, when a girl with the tiniest bikini passes in front of them greeting them: 'Good morning Father Pavlo, good morning Father Pedro!' The next day the two priests, who did not want to be recognized, decided to change the swimsuits, the glasses, the hat, and lying on the deckchair they saw the same girl with an even smaller bikini passing in front of them and saying: 'Good morning Father Pavlo, good morning Father Pedro.' One of the priests asks the girl: 'How do you know we are priests?' The girl answers: 'What? Didn't you recognize me? I'm Sister Maria!'

One day a woman goes to the dentist and asks him: 'How much does it cost to pull a wisdom tooth?' The dentist answers her: '500 liras.' 'That's very expensive, isn't there a cheaper way?' 'Yes,' says the dentist, 'if you don't want anaesthesia it comes to 300 liras.' 'Still very expensive, cheaper?' 'If you want it without anaesthesia and with pliers, it comes to 200 liras.' 'Still a lot.' 'My student who is in the first year of university will do it for you for 100 liras.' 'That's fine,' says the woman. 'Book an appointment for tomorrow with your student for my Mother-in-law!'

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The Jew on the Moon

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 28.9.2022 · original

What can happen if the Jew goes to live and settle on the Moon or Mars or another planet? How will he manage with his traditions of the Halakha? When the first man walked on the Moon, my grandmother used to say to me: 'Come on, silly, they're deceiving you. How is it possible for a person to walk on the Moon?' Today we know that this deception came true, and one day we will see colonies of people on the Moon or Mars or another Planet. Surely my years will not allow me to see that this could be realized, but my grandchildren, I believe, yes, they will be able to see it. Today when we say 'he has passed to the other world', tomorrow this will be said not for death but for another Planet than ours.

Thinking that this is going to be realized, how is the Jew going to live if he wants to fulfil his duties of the Halakha? If he wants to fast on the day of Yom Kippur or of Tisha B'Av, how will he check the calendar? The astronaut Luca Parmitano, on the International Space Station (ISS), says that in one day of 24 hours they saw the sun rise and set 16 times. If he wants to eat according to kashrut, where will he find the chicken, the fish, the lamb, the cow that live on Earth?

Rabbi David Lister, a rabbi from London, writes in his book 'Intergalactic Judaism' that there need be no conflict between the study of Science and Judaism. Rabbi Lister tells us that Science is the accumulation of wisdom. As Judaism accepts that the Creator is the most powerful sage with an endless wisdom, every innovation and every discovery of science will not be against the sacred writings. But for many thinkers Judaism cannot exist outside our World, because for these thinkers Judaism is the form of relations between the Creator, Humanity and the World. And the Halakha was written for the Holy Land and not for worlds outside ours. On the other hand, if the Jew is not going to take part in astral journeys because of the Halakha, then in the future we are not going to see Jews on the other stars. Let us not forget that climate change is going to oblige humanity to seek refuge outside our World.

In the end, we can believe that the World Bet Din will find the solution of permitting Jews to live in the future in another World than ours of today.

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The Whale or the Mermaid (a Fantasy)

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 14.12.2022 · original

Einstein says that everything is relative. He speaks of science, but I believe that in life, in the world, everything is relative. Every idea is interpreted in a different way. Everything depends on the point of view, on the angle from which one looks. In the window of a fitness centre (for getting into shape) an advertisement shows a very shapely woman in a bikini, sunbathing, almost inviting you to swim. The text says: 'This summer, do you want to be a mermaid or a whale?' A woman with a body very far from the one in the advertisement sends the centre her interpretation of the advertisement:

— The friends of whales never leave them in a corner. They have admirers like dolphins, seals, even curious people... — They have an active sex life, they get pregnant, they give birth to very sweet baby whales. — They swim in the sea, they play, they even have the luck to see marvellous places like the corals of the islands of Polynesia. — They know how to sing cheerful songs. They even have a CD they brought out not long ago. — Apart from certain humans, there is no creature that approaches them to harm them, to mistreat them.

Speaking of the mermaid, to begin with, there never was and never will be a mermaid. — Accepting that they exist, they will have a great balagan to know what identity they have, making long queues in front of the psychologist to know whether they are fish or woman. — They have no sex life. And they do not have what is necessary to live a sex life. — They cannot have children. And what man will approach a woman who smells like fish?

— In the end, I prefer to be a whale. The advertisements show only thin people as beautiful. But I prefer to lick an ice cream with my children, have a cheerful chat with my husband, share a chocolate with my friends. With time we are putting on kilos, because we are putting so much wisdom into our heads that it no longer fits and is being distributed to the other parts of our body. For this reason we are full of culture, well educated and very happy. — Einstein said that everything is relative. This woman said: 'Give me fat, I'll give you beauty.'

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Sayings about Woman

Şalom (Judeo-Espanyol), 12.3.2025 · original

In love, women are professionals and men amateurs. (François Truffaut)

To explain a woman, words are not sufficient; and to understand a woman, life is not sufficient.

A woman can forgive everything but never forgets. (Confucius)

Woman dominates man without a sword and binds him without a rope. (Tolstoy)

Woman is poetry, but her poet is anonymous. Woman is a flower whose scent you long to breathe. Woman is a breeze that blows timidly. Once it breaks, it destroys everything like a storm.

If a woman has grown cold towards you, the reason is not that she does not love you; the reason is that you do not take care to make her love you.

Woman in herself is neither rose nor thorn. If you know how to breathe her scent, she is a rose; if you do not know how to hold her, she is a thorn. (Refik Halid Karay)

Woman wants one single man who will fulfil all her wishes. Man wants all women who will fulfil his single need. (Dostoevsky)

The deaf husband with his blind wife are the happiest.

Quality lies in the gold that does not melt before the fire, in the woman who does not melt before gold, and in the man who does not melt before the woman.

Woman is the lover of the young man, the friend of the mature man and the nurse of the old man.

If a man slaps a woman, the fault is the man's. If a woman slaps a man, again the fault is the man's.

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About İsak

Pieces by others that mention him

- **La ruta sefardí de Turquía / Türkiye'nin Sefarad Yolları – coloquio con el director del Instituto Cervantes** — Instituto Cervantes de Estambul, 2021-03-17. Event page lists Isak Eskinazi and Anna Eskinazi (guías turísticos) as speakers. link
- **Newspaper brings hope for dying language of Sephardic Jewish community in Turkey (by Sümeyra Tansel)** — Media Diversity Institute (also republished by Get The Trolls Out), 2022-01-27. Isak Eskinazi (83) quoted at length about Ladino and El Amaneser. link
- **El atako de los Amerikanos kon los Israelyanos kontra los Iranianos – column by Silvyo Ovadya (opens with tribute to Izak Eskinazi)** — Şalom (salom.com.tr), 2026-03-04. Names him: 'eskrivano del Amaneser Izak Eskinazi, marido de Anna Eskinazi'; funeral at Kilyos. link
- **Golden Age dostlarının keyifli yaz gezisi** — Şalom (salom.com.tr) – archive, 2012-07-18. Mentions 'Golden Age dostlarından İsak Eskinazi'. link
- **Reviews from guests naming Isak as guide** — Eskinazi Tours & Events (eskinazi.com). Family company site; multiple testimonials addressed to Isak. link
- **Isak and Anna Eskinazi – forum thread** — TripAdvisor forum, 2011. Travellers describing tours with Isak. link

Chronological list

All articles in order of publication

Date	Title	Where	Topic
31.7.2019	The Name of Jerusalem	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
28.8.2019	The Market of Ashkelon — Buy Cheap, Sell Dear	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
4.9.2019	The Age of the Earth	Şalom	Science & Nature
2.10.2019	When It Is Rosh Hashanah	Şalom	Jewish Holidays & Tradition
30.10.2019	The Flood of Babylon	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
6.11.2019	The Education of Children in Antiquity (1)	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
13.11.2019	The Education of Children in Antiquity (2)	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
20.11.2019	Important Products of Antiquity (1)	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
27.11.2019	Important Products of Antiquity (2)	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
18.12.2019	Important Products of Antiquity (3)	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
8.1.2020	This Is Nes Gadol: One More Who Was Saved from the Ship Struma	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
15.1.2020	The Coexistence of Science and Religion	Şalom	Reflections, Family & Life
22.1.2020	The New Year in Antiquity	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
12.2.2020	What Our Fathers Ate	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
26.2.2020	A Joke to Make You Smile	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
18.3.2020	What May Happen	Şalom	Reflections, Family & Life
8.4.2020	What Was Done for the First Time	El Amaneser	Science & Nature
28.4.2020	Immigrants with Blue Eyes	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
6.5.2020	What Happened to the 'Turkey'?	Şalom	Customs & Language
6.5.2020	Outings	El Amaneser	Istanbul & Turkey
20.5.2020	Miracle of a Tree: Jabuticaba	Şalom	Science & Nature
3.6.2020	On the Archaeological Ruins of Synagogues	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
10.6.2020	A Story by Sunay Akın	Şalom	Reflections, Family & Life
24.6.2020	The Beer of the Jews	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
1.7.2020	The Arameans and the Syriacs	Şalom	Istanbul & Turkey

1.7.2020	The Cisterns of Constantinople	El Amaneser	Istanbul & Turkey
28.7.2020	The 'Cupping Glass' of Masada	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
12.8.2020	The Jews in the Conquest of Istanbul	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
19.8.2020	The Name of Israel in History	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
14.10.2020	The Library of Alexandria	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
4.11.2020	The Tree of Life	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
11.11.2020	After the Darkness	El Amaneser	Reflections, Family & Life
11.8.2021	A Jewish Gladiator	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
8.9.2021	The Dove	El Amaneser	Jewish Holidays & Tradition
1.12.2021	The Figures on the Rocks of the Negev	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
22.12.2021	The Minorities	Şalom	Istanbul & Turkey
29.12.2021	The Week of Christmas	Şalom	Customs & Language
19.1.2022	Roots of the New Year	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
26.1.2022	Holocaust	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
9.2.2022	Hammurabi	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
16.2.2022	Jews in Asia Minor	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
23.2.2022	Jewish Chocolate	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
16.3.2022	Purim	Şalom	Jewish Holidays & Tradition
23.3.2022	Snow in Istanbul	Şalom	Istanbul & Turkey
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13.4.2022	Women's Day	El Amaneser	Customs & Language
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8.6.2022	Sephardic Culture in the Ottoman Empire	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
29.6.2022	Tintin in Haifa	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
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20.7.2022	Byzantine Laws on the Jews	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
27.7.2022	The Samurai Who Saved Thousands of Jews from the Nazis	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust

27.7.2022	Robbery in a Bank	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
10.8.2022	Forgiving Baruch Spinoza	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
24.8.2022	Charlot and Einstein	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
7.9.2022	How Did You Recognize Us?	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
28.9.2022	The Jew on the Moon	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
12.10.2022	The Evil Eye	El Amaneser	Customs & Language
19.10.2022	Clothing in Antiquity	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
9.11.2022	Eating in Antiquity	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
23.11.2022	The Jew's Hat	Şalom	Jewish Holidays & Tradition
7.12.2022	Rubbish in Antiquity	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
14.12.2022	The Whale or the Mermaid (a Fantasy)	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
14.12.2022	Diwali	El Amaneser	Customs & Language
28.12.2022	Beauty in Antiquity	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
11.1.2023	The New Year's Pine Tree	El Amaneser	Customs & Language
18.1.2023	Power	Şalom	Reflections, Family & Life
25.1.2023	Adolf Eichmann	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
8.2.2023	Paris: The House of Camondo	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
1.3.2023	Communication among Trees	Şalom	Science & Nature
8.3.2023	The Khazars	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
22.3.2023	On Cats	Şalom	Science & Nature
29.3.2023	Eyebrows	Şalom	Customs & Language
12.4.2023	The April Fool	Şalom	Customs & Language
10.5.2023	The Khazar Correspondence	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
17.5.2023	Mothers' Day	Şalom	Customs & Language
24.5.2023	The Variations of Nature	Şalom	Science & Nature
21.6.2023	Fathers' Day	Şalom	Customs & Language
9.8.2023	Knowing How to Survive	El Amaneser	Reflections, Family & Life
13.9.2023	Joy in the Festivals	El Amaneser	Jewish Holidays & Tradition
11.10.2023	Some Curiosities of Yesterday	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
8.11.2023	Education		Reflections, Family & Life

		El Amaneser	
23.11.2023	The Library of Alexandria	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
29.11.2023	On Hannah and Hanukkah	Şalom	Jewish Holidays & Tradition
13.12.2023	Mount Moriah	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
10.1.2024	The Sea in Istanbul	El Amaneser	Istanbul & Turkey
14.2.2024	A Woman Doctor in Antiquity	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
15.2.2024	The Soul	Şalom	Reflections, Family & Life
13.3.2024	On Esperanto	El Amaneser	Customs & Language
17.4.2024	Things of Yesterday and Today (the toothbrush and other inventions)	El Amaneser	Science & Nature
8.5.2024	The Nuremberg Tribunal	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
30.5.2024	The Yin-Yang in Turkey	Şalom	Istanbul & Turkey
12.6.2024	The Mother	El Amaneser	Customs & Language
28.6.2024	On Qumran	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
10.7.2024	Health in Antiquity	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
10.7.2024	On Jerusalem	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
24.7.2024	Ivan Moscovich	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
14.8.2024	Killing Hitler	Şalom	Jewish History & the Holocaust
28.8.2024	Shaking Hands	Şalom	Customs & Language
23.10.2024	Abdiel and Joseph the Righteous	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology
13.11.2024	The Synagogue	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
11.12.2024	The Oldest Synagogue of Istanbul	El Amaneser	Istanbul & Turkey
8.1.2025	The Olympic Games	El Amaneser	Antiquity & Archaeology
12.3.2025	Sayings about Woman	Şalom	Humour — Riir es Bueno
16.4.2025	Jews in Spain	El Amaneser	Jewish History & the Holocaust
1.10.2025	Importance	Şalom	Reflections, Family & Life
19.11.2025	Rubbish	Şalom	Antiquity & Archaeology