

English abstracts

Yom Tov Assis: **Sexual behaviour in mediaeval Hispano-Jewish society**

Relations between men and women quite naturally play an important part in the daily life of any society. Such relations vividly reflect on socio-economic, religious and political conditions and attitudes. Yet scarcely any sphere of life has been so subject to censorship and distortion as has sexual behaviour.

Our knowledge of this subject is, not surprisingly, impaired by a lack of documentation, because such relations tended to remain, as their intimacy required, hidden from outsiders. Legal records report only a small proportion of the total number of crimes and transgressions, leaving unknown to posterity numerous instances of deviant and illicit sexual conduct. The fear and shame of the victims frequently caused this silence. Ethical works, critical of sexual laxity, sometimes present a realistic picture; others tend to idealization. On the other hand, literary sources tend to reflect the lives of the upper classes and ignore the majority of the population.

Standards of sexual behaviour in mediaeval Christian and Muslim Europe were indeed shaped by their respective religions. The condemnation of physical pleasure and the insistence on the procreative function of marriage in Christianity go back to its early formative period (although this was not a natural development of any trend emanating from the Bible). Chastity and virginity were praised while sexual attraction was ignored or suppressed. One can infer from the frequent condemnations and prohibitions that the gap between theory and practice in the mediaeval Christian world was wide. As a general rule, sexual

morality in mediaeval Western Europe was certainly very low, if we judge it by the standards set by canon and secular laws.

Even greater laxity and permissiveness characterized Muslim society. The upper classes in Moorish Spain led an extremely permissive life, notwithstanding criticism from pietists and ascetics. Even the puritan waves of conquerors from North Africa, the Almoravids and the Almohads, were unable to do away with the Muslim élite's taste for dancing, music, wine, women and young men. Homosexuality was widespread and practised openly in all classes of society.

The Jews of Spain were exposed to influences from both Christian and Muslim societies. On both sides of the ever-changing border in the Iberian peninsula, they were more deeply involved in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the land than was any other mediaeval Jewish community. Iberian Jewry served not only as a bridge between Franco-German Jews and the Jews of Islam, but also as a meeting point, where divergent concepts and approaches to life intermittently clashed and fused. Torn between extreme and contradictory trends, Hispano-Jewish society found itself characterized by sexual laxity to an extent unknown elsewhere in mediaeval Jewry.

The article analyzes the various aspects of sexual life and morality of the Jews in the Iberian peninsula, drawing information from ethical works and *responsa* literature, particularly from Solomon ben Adret, which reflect the conditions prevailing in the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon. The main topics dealt with in the article are as follows: courtship and love, husbands and wives, concubines, premarital and extra-marital sex, prostitution, adultery, illegal marriages and incestuous relations, rape, and homosexuality.

The evidence presented shows how deeply the Jews of Spain were influenced by their wider milieu. Jews, Christians and Muslims responded differently to various situations as a result of their distinct cultural and religious traditions, but they all shared a wide range of common sensibilities, including sexual mores, which were governed by their social and economic status. Despite the fact that family affairs and sexual relations could be an area almost entirely controlled by Jewish law and traditions, sexual behaviour among the Jews was much influenced by the standards which prevailed in the society at large. Virtually all sexual practices found among Spanish Jews have their parallels in non-Jewish society.

Sexual laxity was prevalent among Jews of all classes. It is, however, undeniable that it was particularly widespread among members of the upper social stratum, just as it was among their non-Jewish counterparts. In these ways Jewish society in the Iberian peninsula anticipated some of the problems and challenges that would later characterize modern Jewish life.

Josep M. Llobet i Portella: Documents from Cervera Jews (15th century) mentioning titles of books

A rather confusing article was published in 1974 entitled «Les juifs à Cervera et dans d'autres villes catalanes» (*Sefarad* [Madrid], 34 (1974), p. 79-114) signed by A. Duran Sanpere and M. Schwab (despite the fact that the latter author had passed away in 1918!), discussing a list of books that had belonged to Jews in Cervera. The names of these books had been brought to light from a few documents dating back to the 15th century. Even though the texts that were transcribed and discussed in that article lacked any archival reference which might allow them to be tracked down, after persistent research in the Cervera archives we have succeeded in finding some of these texts again, which are appended to the present paper (numbers 1, 5, and 7) together with a few other 15th-century documents also dealing with books that were a part of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people of Cervera.

Since knowledge of the books owned by Catalan Jews in the Middle Ages has is of undeniable cultural importance, we thought it would be proper to offer a transcription (in some cases only of the relevant passages) of the seven texts known to us, preceded by a few remarks about the works mentioned in these documents. The documents involved (dated between 1422 and 1484) are an estate inventory, a will, an acknowledgement of the payment of a debt, a summons, and the delivery of a bequest. It is worth pointing out that some Christians appear alongside the Jews as witness in these documents and that the Bible, as in many other Jewish documents in mediaeval Catalonia, is called *Magdesia* [< Miqdaš-Yah] in document number 5.

Eduard Feliu and Jon Arrizabalaga: Shem Tov ben Isaac's introduction to his Hebrew translation of the *Taṣrīf* of Abū-l-Qāsim al-Zahrawī

The Hebrew translation of the *Taṣrīf* of the Andalusian physician Abū-l-Qāsim al-Zahrawī, known as Abulcasis, made by Shem Tov ben Isaac (*circa* 1196-1267) is preceded by an introduction written by the translator, who was a Jewish physician from Tortosa but resident in Provence, in which he shows us the intellectual and practical concerns of the medical élites of the Jewish communities in the Western Mediterranean about the middle of the 13th century.

Abulcasis' *Taṣrīf* is a voluminous medico-surgical encyclopaedia written around the year 1000 and is considered the crowning achievement of twenty-

five years of medical practice and teaching in the field of the healing arts in his home town of Al-Zahra, near Cordoba. It is made up of thirty books or tractates dealing not only with medicine and surgery but also with a wide range of related subjects, such as pharmaceutical preparations, cosmetics, dietetics, midwifery, and psychotherapy. During the Middle Ages, the *Taṣrīf* was either completely or partly translated into Hebrew, Latin, Occitan and Catalan. The most popular tractates were the 1st, the 2nd and the 28th. There are several documentary data proving that Abulcasis' work was widely disseminated throughout the length and breadth of the Occitano-Catalan lands. The existence of a Catalan translation can be inferred from some historical data, particularly a document issued in 1313 by Jaume II, king of the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon, ordering the payment of one thousand *solidi* of Barcelona to Judah, son of As-truc Bonsenyor, on account of the translation of an Arab medical work, which according to Cardoner i Planas, is the *Taṣrīf*.

In that introduction Shem Tov informs us that he began the translation in the month of Elul of the year 5014 (= 1254 CE), when he was 58 years old (which means that he was born around 1196) and that he revised it in 1261. He also tells us that when he was 30 years old, i.e., in 1226, he travelled to Akko (Acre) in connection with his overseas trading activities. It appears that on his way back from that travel, he stopped in Barcelona and decided to give up these activities and to engage in the study of the religious sciences, which he affirms to have carried out from then until the time when he began to translate the *Taṣrīf*, twenty-eight years later. It stands to reason that he reconciled both activities. Shem Tov implies that he took that drastic decision as a result of a profound spiritual crisis and that he undertook the new phase in his life under the guidance of Rabbi Isaac ben Meshullam, in whose home he devoted himself to the study of the Bible for a certain time. From his words, we learn that Marseilles was undoubtedly the place where he practised medicine and where he translated Abulcasis' work, since he prides himself on having Christians among his patients in that town. But at the same time he paradoxically complains about the fact that Jews used to put themselves in the hands of Christian practitioners, contravening, because of the circumstances prevailing in those times, the admonitions of the ancient Doctors of the Talmud.

Shem Tov's words bear witness to the important translation movement of medical works from Arabic to Hebrew that took place in the 13th century within the Jewish communities. These activities were made possible by the increasing maturity of the Hebrew language as a vehicle of scientific knowledge, beyond its traditional use as the language of worship. Moreover, the movement reflects both the fascination of Jewish practitioners with Arabic medicine and

their gradual loss of acquaintance with Arabic, which was the reason behind such translations.

Shem Tov addresses his translation to medical students and to all those practising medicine within the Jewish communities, because the *Taṣrif* contains everything required for healing. But at the same time the book will be of use to non-professional people who are curious to know the mysterious ways of drugs and cures, or stand in need of a self-help tool. Shem Tov makes the book available to rich and poor, to nobles and common people, thereby reflecting the dual model of health care peculiar to mediaeval Jewish and Christians communities alike.

Shem Tov describes the art of medicine as «the most distinguished and eminent of all arts» and emphasizes that «nobody can rob the perfect and skilled physician of his wealth, as his wealth is his wisdom». He adds that the pity shown by physicians for their fellow man can compare with the compassion of those who «give clothes and food to the poor». On the other hand, he underlines the importance of astrology as a practical skill derived from astronomical knowledge to be used in the choice of «the most auspicious moment to administer purgatives, which is during the time of the conjunction of the Moon and the dominant constellation». This is hardly surprising, because medical astrology was an essential ingredient of late mediaeval Galenic medicine and enjoyed great prestige among Arab and Jewish physicians. The study of the works written by the greatest authorities, the periods of training spent at renowned institutions alongside eminent physicians, and clinical practice are the three pillars on which the making of a physician is based. Shem Tov severely dismisses the physician who is ignorant of the foundations of his art. By emphasizing the essential character of theoretical studies in the training of physicians, Shem Tov asserts his moral and intellectual rejection of all empiricism; by repeatedly referring both explicitly and implicitly to the first aphorism (*Ars longa, vita brevis*) and to the oath of Hippocrates, he wishes to make it very clear that he identifies with the Hippocratic tradition. It is, moreover, necessary that the medical student attend hospitals and other places where there are sick persons with a view to doing their hospital training and having an opportunity to exchange views with skilled physicians about the treatment of diseases.

There is no other question on which Shem Tov puts greater emphasis than on the mistakes made in the recognition of the simples, which was a very common error at that time, as well as on the very grave risks that the patients run due to this kind of confusion.

Shem Tov's medical morals are inspired in two sources — the Hippocratic oath and the biblical tradition, that is to say, the Torah. In accordance with the

Hippocratic precepts, he insists that the physician should lead an honest life, practise justice, be wise, know how to keep a secret, and be prepared to teach his art for love to anybody who wishes to learn it and is worthy of it; finally, he should not prescribe any poisonous or abortive substance. On the other hand, he places great emphasis on being faithful, humble, righteous, honest, magnanimous, compassionate, God-fearing, always doing good and shunning evil.

The article includes a full Catalan translation, with notes, of Shem Tov ben Isaac's introduction, the Hebrew text of which was published by S. Muntner in the journal *Sinai* [Jerusalem], 1958 (*Sefer ha-Yovel*), p. 324-334.

Harry A. Wolfson: *Emanation and creation ex nihilo* in Hasday Crescas

Emanation and creation *ex nihilo* are two theories about the origin of the world that are usually set against each other. Emanation is a philosophical conception derived from Plotinus, despite the fact that Arab thinkers before Averroës—including Maimonides—would also attribute it to Aristotle. Creation out of nothing, on the other hand, is based on the *Second Book of the Maccabees* (7,28), even though Maimonides and most mediaeval thinkers would trace it back to the history of creation in Genesis. Both theories have in common the idea that the formation of the world depends on a first cause, namely on God; but they differ in the way in which they explain that formation by God's causality. According to the emanation theory, the world came out of God's substance, while the theory of creation out of nothing affirms that the world was created by God out of nothing, that is to say, from an absolute privation or absence of all reality.

Crescas deals with these two theories in one of his reflections on the theory of creation put forward by Levi ben Gerson, in which Crescas strives to demonstrate that the idea of nothing does not mean that 'nothing' is the substratum from which the world emanated, but rather that the world existed 'after' its non-existence or privation. Also the idea of emanation should be understood in the sense that «matter and form emanated together after their privation». Considering that the two conceptions mean the same, Crescas came to the conclusion that they are one single conception despite their being expressed in different words. On that score, he points out that emanation can be by necessity or by will, and explains the difference that exists between the two conceptions in relation to the voluntary nature of creation and its temporal beginning.

In the present article, the author confines himself to a discussion of the sources and parallels of three of the points dealt with by Crescas in that reflec-

tion, namely: (1) that the expression 'out of nothing' means that it exists after nothing; (2) that emanation can also be voluntary, and (3) that emanation and creation out of nothing, i.e., *ex nihilo*, indicate one and the same thing.

Crescas's attempt to prove that the expression 'out of nothing' means 'after nothing' can be traced back to a chapter in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* where the philosopher concerns himself with the various meanings of the word 'of', *ex*, which indicates, among other things, (a) the matter out of which something is made and (b) the condition of coming after in time. Also Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Maimonides, has recourse to that distinction when he comes to deal with the creation *ex nihilo*. Maimonides says subtly that all those who believe in the Torah of Moses accept that (a) the Creator made the world come into existence *post privationem veram et absolutam* or (b) that the Creator did not make anything come into existence *de aliquo* (according to the Latin terminology used in the mediaeval translation of the *Guide*).

The identification of emanation with creation out of nothing that Crescas carries out had already found its way into Christian and Arabic philosophy, as well as in the Jewish kabbalah. However, there is some difference between Crescas's opinion and that of his predecessors. His predecessors admitted firstly the doctrine of emanation as a fundamental belief regarding creation and subsequently—just as a concession to believers in the traditional doctrine of creation—accepted the expression 'creation out of nothing' and interpreted it as a kind of matter in agreement with the doctrine of emanation. Quite the contrary to these thinkers, Crescas's fundamental belief regarding creation is the traditional one—creation out of nothing, i.e., the creation of being *after* non-being. Then, having accepted the belief in the creation out of nothing in accordance with its traditional meaning, Crescas's endeavours to prove that the real sense of the doctrine of emanation, when objectively examined, is the same as the creation of being after privation, that is to say, the creation out of nothing.

Crescas's influence on Spinoza is quite clear in the identification of the doctrine of emanation with creation out of nothing.

Jordi Casanovas i Miró: Notes on mediaeval Hebrew epigraphy

The aim of this article is to report on the new materials that have recently been found (1999-2000). Of the collection of lapidary inscriptions presented here, two belong to the Barcelona necropolis and three belong to the Girona necropolis.

The two stones from the Montjuic Jewish cemetery in Barcelona tell us very

little from the textual point of view, since most of the formulary preserved on them is already well-known. Their interest lies rather in the fact that they were found in a sector of the building which until now had yielded no fragments.

The absence of any tombstones from the excavation carried out in Girona in 1999-2000 is to some extent compensated for by three new fragments having been found in a building owned by the Ochoa family; the building stands on the site of the Jewish necropolis in Montjuic on land which belongs to the Ochoa family. The three tombstones, which have been acquired by the Girona City Council and currently form part of the Museu d'Història dels Jueus de Girona, date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Eduard Feliu: *Yona Wallach or the wild light*

Although it may be unnecessary to place Yona Wallach in the frame of a specific country or of a given time in order to appreciate her poems, it can nevertheless be useful to give the reader some essential biographical data that may in some degree allow him or her to understand more deeply the despairing cry in Wallach's poems. Yona was born in Kfar Ono, a suburb of Tel-Aviv on the 10th June 1944. Her father, Mikhael Wallach, was killed in Israel's War of Independence in 1948. To honour his heroic death, a street in Kfar Ono was named after him. The memory of her father, converted into a myth, is one of the most active elements in Yona Wallach's poetry. She was an awkward adolescent, full of problems with her mother and driven by ambivalent sexual tendencies. She refused to finish high school, but studied art in Tel-Aviv at the Avni Institute of Art in 1961. At the same time, she wrote poetry, for which she had had a passion since reading Walt Whitman at thirteen. Among the events that marked her life, we should bear in mind that during the winter of 1964, the year in which her first poems were published, she committed herself to a psychiatric hospital owing to her symptoms of phobia and hallucination. While still very young, she had an abortion (see the poem «Absalom» in relation to the ambiguous feelings prompted by that incident). In the early sixties Yona Wallach became part of a group of avant-garde poets seeking new directions in the formulation of Israeli poetry. The group formed around Wieseltier and included Hurwitz, Shabtai, Shammas, Someck, Silk, and others with whom Yona maintained deep literary relations and shallow love affairs. She was hospitalized again in 1972 following a suicide attempt. In December 1982, doctors diagnosed the breast cancer that was to lead to her untimely and painful death in September 1985. She was 41 years old, like Rachel, the famous poetess

(1890-1931), of whom she came to believe in all sincerity that she was the reincarnation.

Yona Wallach's poetry means not only the demolition of all barriers in the expressive possibilities of the Hebrew language, but also the overcoming of all kinds of taboos in contemporary Hebrew literature. Anything goes. Anything is poetic experience. Yona Wallach's iconoclastic attitude does not shrink from any subject however delicate or impudent it may be, if it can be useful to express her feelings or ideas, nor does she confine herself to any specific aesthetic form. She shows her corporal or mental, even psychedelic, experiences in the raw, basing herself on the facts that make up her own life. Poetry was also the vehicle for her psychoanalytical confessions.

In the works of Yona Wallach women are aware of being manipulated to meet men's immoderate desires; she challenges the sociocultural role that women have always been expected to play. Her poems mark a historical milestone in the feminist revolution that is taking place in Israeli society. Yona Wallach denounces the exploitation of men and women alike by the bourgeoisie, the sway that religion still holds over the moral conscience of the individual, as well as all kinds of sly political and social repression. The rebellious lives of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Sexton, among others, show through Yona Wallach's poems. Her poetry is a poetry of inwardness, exploring the inner processes of emotion and perception and revealing the inner life of self as person and as poet.

Regarding the literary form of Yona Wallach's poems, we should emphasize that most of them are made up of a rush of words and elliptical sentences that sneer at grammatical rules, which together with several typographical subversions, give the impression of disorder. There can be no doubt that the language transgressions are meant to reflect the transgression of the principles of the moral life prevailing in Jewish society. When the reader succeeds in establishing a relationship with Wallach's poetry, he finds himself in the presence of an impressive work of literary creation, coming out of a remarkably genuine though provocative personality. Modern Hebrew literature, or at least those sectors that have always been aware of serving a national mission, needed the straight punches dealt by Yona Wallach to wake up to new realities.

Her poems have made a profound impact on the spirit of readers of poetry in Israel. In 1982 a record appeared with her poetry set to music by famous singer-songwriters. Yona Wallach chose to challenge at all costs the political, social and religious values prevailing in Israeli society, with the idea of being free to think and to love. Poetry was the weapon she brandished to claim that right. Who would dare to blame her?

The article contains the Catalan translation of forty-three poems gathered from the various books published during Wallach's lifetime or after her death.

Pere Casanellas: **Biblical and Jewish studies in the age of the Internet. Computer tools**

Sociologists and historians concur in saying that the computer science and the Internet have ushered us in a new world, a new age in the history of the human society, namely, the *digital era*, the effects of which are bound to be deeper than those caused by the invention of printing in the 15th century or by the Industrial Revolution in the 19th. In the early nineties the proliferation of personal computers (PC) made it possible for the new communications network—known under the name of *Internet*—to spread world-wide and to become the World Wide Web in which we are *nolens volens* caught. The linkage of personal computers and communications networks is transforming and certainly speeding up the scientific research in all its fields. In 1996 there were around thirty million users surfing the Internet. In the course of the present decade that number is expected to increase up to a thousand million.

The Internet is the new intricate dimension in which all the spheres of our human activities will be compelled to walk. As far as Biblical and Jewish studies are concerned, there is no doubt that the Internet furnishes us with the possibility of acquiring (mostly free of charge) wide information about all kind of subjects, particularly bibliographical data; and it makes the communication between researchers easier and faster, not to mention the making up and transmission of texts, including Hebrew documents. Since it is wise to provide ourselves with the tools or rather with the vehicles that should enable us to go deeper into the new roads, we are offering in this paper the addresses (URL) of about four hundred web sites related to our field of activity. It is just a guide, which we have for this purpose divided into thirty-two sections under the following headings: 1. Limited area search engines; 2. Portals and other general web sites on Judaism; 3. Portals and other general web sites on Bible and ancient Near East; 4. Catalan associations for the study of the Bible and Judaism; 5. Hebrew; 6. Aramaic and Targums, Syriac and Peshitta; 7. Greek and Septuagint; 8. Ugaritic; 9. Phoenician; 10. Yiddish; 11. Archaeology, paleography, Dead Sea scrolls, chronology; 12. On-line libraries and electronic texts; 13. Downloadable Bible texts and translations; 14. On-line electronic journals and newsletters; 15. Listservers and distribution lists; 16. Bibliographies; 17. Catalogues of libraries and archives; 18. Bookshops and publishing compa-

nies; 19. Higher education or academic institutions offering the possibility of completing Biblical or Jewish studies via Internet; 20. Radio news in Hebrew; 21. Israel (general information on present-day Israel, including Hebrew courses); 22. Software sites; 23. Fonts; 24. Keyboard utilities; 25. Word processors; 26. Optical character recognition (OCR) programmes; 27. Translation software; 28. Free programmes for learning Hebrew and Greek; 29. Programmes for learning Hebrew with the use of CD-ROMs; 30. Free downloadable Bible study software packages; 31. Commercial Bible study packages; 32. Other CD-ROM databases.

Bibliographical notes

I. A list of publications that contain the bibliography of more than 470 scholars (archaeologists, linguists, Biblical scholars, exegetes, historians), whose work concerns the Ancient Near East, the Bible, the Hebrew language and the life and the culture of the Jews in the Talmudic age and the Middle Ages. This is an expanded version of the bibliography published in *Tamid* 2 (1998-1999), p. 253-268.

II. A bibliography on medieval inventories, wills, lists, and news about mediaeval Hebrew books. This is an *addenda* to the list published in *Tamid*, 2 (1998-1999), p. 228-240.