



Cherezli's *El Paradizo*

Before Modern Hebrew Became the National Language of the Jews

Michele (Mike) Heath

The Cherezli family in 1928. Saloman is second from the left, with his wife, his children, and his wife's mother. Source: www.cherezli.com

The bulk of the popular historical literature on the question of Israel and Palestine examines the conflict today, and merely extrapolates backwards into history in order to explain how the events of 1882 have progressed in a simple and straight line to the tragedies of today. The authors of such work do their readers a great disservice, attempting to overlay an overly-simplified contemporary nationalist historiography onto a complex historical reality. All too often Jew and Arab become mutually exclusive terms, obfuscating a history that did not categorize people into binaries. In this way, the identity of the Arab Jew disappears, replaced by the 'Mizrahi.' In the words of Salim Tamari: "'Negation of the diaspora,' through which the Zionist project attempted to transcend the 'abnormal' condition of the exile by creating the new Hebrew culture...led effectively to the negation of the memory of the *galuti* (exilic, with a connotation of 'ghetto mentality') Jew, including the Mizrahi Jews, and simultaneously of Palestinian memory".¹

A number of scholars have recently begun to penetrate the veneer of Zionist and Arab nationalist histories. Salim Tamari, Ruth Kark, Joseph B. Glass, and Abigail Jacobson all recently published articles in the *Jerusalem Quarterly File* that transcended nationalist historiographies. These fantastic social histories focus on the lives of those who lived in late Ottoman Palestine and under the British Mandate. What the reader finds are stories of the lives of Jews, Muslims, Christians, Arabs and Europeans. Unlike in the nationalist historiography, there is a strong interplay across these cleavages, which highlights the inadequacy of nationalist historiography for understanding a population that was more complex than the categories of ‘Jew’ and ‘Arab’. It is in the model of these scholars that I attempted to understand the life of Salomon Israel Cherezli and his newspaper *El Paradizo*.

Salomon Israel Cherezli, known by the Hebrew acronym ‘Shayish’ to his friends and family, was a writer, translator, publisher, and bookshop keeper in Jerusalem. The Cherezli family migrated from Serres (present-day Greece) in 1803 to Jerusalem, establishing themselves as a family of distinguished and highly respected Sephardic rabbis. Shayish was born in Jerusalem in 1878 and followed a path quite different from that of his rabbinic forefathers. Although he lived during the rise of Zionism in Palestine, and was a personal acquaintance and business partner of Eliezer ben-Yehuda, his life cannot be easily explained through the paradigm of Zionism and nationalism. While he followed a ‘modern’, secular path, he did not equate modernity with Zionism. Paradoxically, Shayish was very ‘Jewish’, yet did not don a beard and *kippa*. He was very ‘Jewish’, but was not an ardent Zionist. He was what I term, a ‘pan-Judaist’.

What is meant by pan-Judaism? Although the history of pan-Africanism and pan-Islam is long and well-documented, scholars rarely, if ever, refer to figures in history as pan-Judaic. Theodor Herzl’s famous sentence in his work *The Jews’ State* boldly and proudly proclaims the fundamental essence of what I term pan-Judaism: “We are a people, *one* people” (Herzl 129). Yet I do not mean to imply that Shlomo Israel Cherezli was a Herzlian Zionist, nor that Herzl himself was a pan-Judaist. The fundamental difference between pan-Judaism and Zionism is that while pan-Judaism recognizes a ‘Jewish people’, it does not carry that recognition to the nationalist conclusion that Zionism eventually would. Where Zionism asserts Hebrew as the language of the Jews, pan-Judaists recognize the multiplicities of Jewish existence and the languages which frame those existences, be they Ladino, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, English, Persian, Arabic, or any other language in which Jews communicate with one another. Although Zionism is a splintered movement (as evidenced by socialist, revisionist, religious and other strains), Zionists share the belief that Jews should act as a unified nation, speaking the same language, practicing the same Orthodox religion, and generally merging into the *sabra* culture. Pan-Judaism, as I use the term, embraces the differences among Jews, while recognizing a fundamental commonality between them. In a sense, pan-Judaism is a form of post-Zionism.²

The most striking difference between the paradigms of Zionism and pan-Judaism is

the issue of language. Nationalism, of which Zionism is one flavour, necessitates a common language. Indeed, of all the characteristics that a ‘nation’—in the nineteenth-century sense—should share, language is supreme. “All over Europe, processes of nation-building have been accompanied by processes of language standardization, in which a certain vernacular was selected as the national language, to be fortified, enriched, and disseminated through the educational system of the state”.³ Thus, Modern Hebrew has become inextricably linked to Zionism: “The Hebrew language is a constitutive element of Zionist ideology, which gives its adherents a clear sense that the Jews are a nation with a language”.⁴

This Hebrew revival was not always a requirement of Zionism. Herzl persuasively argued against the use of Hebrew in *The Jews' State*:

*It might be suggested that our want of a common current language would present difficulties. We cannot converse with one another in Hebrew. Who amongst us has a sufficient acquaintance with Hebrew to ask for a railway ticket in that language! Such a thing cannot be done. Every man can preserve the language in which his thoughts are at home. Switzerland affords a conclusive proof of the possibility of a federation of tongues. We shall remain in the new country [Israel/Palestine] what we now are here.*⁵

This view did not view all languages as equal, however. Herzl took for granted that the Jews in the “new country” would speak European languages like French, English or German, but not Ladino or Yiddish: “We shall give up those miserable stunted jargons, those Ghetto languages which we still employ, for these were the stealthy tongues of prisoners”.⁶ Herzl was specifically attacking Yiddish, often referred to as “jargon” or “zhargon” by Jews, but he likely was no friendlier to Ladino, Yiddish, Judeo-Farsi, Judeo-Turkish, and Judeo-Arabic.

These Judaic languages were perceived as signs of oppression, exile, and ghettoisation, the very things that Zionism sought to negate. The concept of ‘negation of the Diaspora’ [*'shelilat ha-galut'*] is one of Zionism’s most fundamental ideas: “The Zionist binary model of Jewish history portrays Antiquity as a positive period, contrasted with a highly negative image of Exile”.⁷ Yael Zerubavel attributes this attitude not only to Zionist leaders but to settlers from Eastern Europe: “For the Zionist settlers who left eastern Europe after pogroms, persecution was their final and decisive association with Jewish life in exile, both personally and collectively. They projected those memories back onto the period of Exile as a whole, enhancing the anti-exilic attitude that had already marked Zionist memory”.⁸ In order to repudiate or negate the Diaspora, the ‘New Hebrew’—i.e. the Zionist pioneer—must transcend his or her exilic characteristics. This meant transforming not only the historiography, but also a change of clothes from Eastern European garb into pioneer garb, a name swap from the exilic Eliezer Yitzhak Perelman into the new Hebrew Eliezer ben-Yehuda, and a



Salomon Cherezli as a young man.
Source: www.cherezli.com

discarding of exilic language such as Yiddish for modern Hebrew. The Hebrew language signified strength, nationalism, and in general masculinity, whereas languages like Yiddish and Ladino signified weakness, oppression, and femininity.⁹ It is in this context that one must understand the Ladino newspaper published by Shayish.

Shayish and the ‘New Jew’

Shayish’s upbringing was rather traditional until he finished his studies at a Sephardic Talmud Torah school, where he learned Torah, Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish. Following Talmud Torah, Shayish matriculated at the Ecole Profesionale of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, eschewing the traditional path of yeshiva. The Alliance was founded in 1860 in Paris and its founders were dedicated to the ideas of the French Revolution

that had influenced the emancipation of the Jews in that country in the eighteenth century. The mission of the Alliance was threefold, to work throughout the world for the emancipation and moral progress of the Jews; to help effectively all those who suffer because they are Jews, and to encourage publications designed to achieve these results.¹⁰

In line with the ethos of the French Revolution, Alliance members felt that the Jews of the East, including those in Palestine, needed to undergo a fundamental regeneration just as the French Jews had (or believed they had) during the French Revolution.¹¹ Alliance interest in North African and Middle Eastern Jews, though, were not entirely philanthropic. After winning a hard-fought battle for equality, and proving to the French authorities that Jews could be ‘modern’, the Alliance leadership was deeply embarrassed by the ‘backwardness’ of Eastern Jews.¹² In the name of Jewish solidarity, progress and regeneration, the Alliance opened schools around the Middle East and North Africa dedicated to shaping the ‘new Jew’. In this way, the Alliance ideology was a forerunner to later Zionist ideas about the ‘new Hebrew’.

The overall Alliance platform, however, was quite different from Zionism. Alliance goals were closer to those of European Enlightenment, with an emphasis on regeneration and integration, while Zionism is more akin to European nationalism. Where the Alliance sought regeneration, Zionism wanted ethnic nationalism. And where Zionism brought Jews from Europe to Palestine in order to make the ‘new Hebrew’, hoping that Middle Eastern Jews would follow their lead, the Alliance went to Palestine to train Middle Eastern Jews to become the ‘new Jew’.

The Ecole Professionnelle enrolled Jewish students from around the Mediterranean and North Africa, as well as a number of upper-class Christian and Muslim students from Jerusalem.¹³ The degree to which Shayish's interactions with his fellow students influenced his worldview is mostly unknown, with the important exception of his tutee Itamar ben-Avi, the son of Eliezer ben-Yehuda.¹⁴ Shayish greatly impressed Itamar with his orderliness and honesty. Eventually, Shayish asked if he could visit Itamar's father's printing house. Itamar agreed and introduced Shayish to Eliezer ben-Yehuda. The tutor was struck by the one-room printing house; he marvelled at the typefaces that had arrived that day from Vilna, which were destined to be used in the first printing of ben-Yehuda's dictionary. That same day, Shayish informed Itamar that he wished to be Eliezer's partner. A few months later, ben-Yehuda sold the printing house outright to Salomon Shayish along with the rights to one of ben-Yehuda's publications.¹⁵

Hemda ben-Yehuda, Eliezer's wife, remembered Shayish fondly. She said that it was as if he were "pouring water on ben-Yehuda's hands"—a reverent description of his loyalty. "Sometimes Ben-Yehuda was deciding [sic] on one font, and then decided to change it, regardless of the long hours that Shlomo [Salomon] needed in order to comply with Ben-Yehuda's wishes. He never complained, nor did he disagree to do something for Ben-Yehuda".¹⁶ For Shayish, Eliezer ben-Yehuda was an idol, "a well from which Shlomo was drawing life".¹⁷ The relationship with the Ben-Yehuda family gradually soured, however. Beginning in 1902, Itamar ben-Avi gradually became hostile towards Salomon Cherezli's goals. This coincided with the first of Cherezli's forays into the Ladino newspaper business, a fortnightly literary magazine entitled *The Garden of Jerusalem*. Some of the content was produced by the Jewish *yishuv* in Jerusalem, but most of it was translated, likely from French. This proved to be the beginning of an ideological battle that would eventually destroy the friendship.¹⁸

In 1909, Shlomo Israel Cherezli published the first issue of *Ha-Pardes* [*The Orchard*], having received a *firman* from the government in Istanbul allowing him to start a new newspaper. Ben-Avi would later write: "This I could not forgive him for." The grave transgression that Cherezli had committed was to simultaneously publish *Ha-Pardes* in Yiddish and Ladino, alongside the Hebrew edition.¹⁹ For a dedicated Hebrew speaker like Ben-Avi, whose very existence was a reflection of the renewal of Hebrew, this was unacceptable. For this son of Eliezer ben-Yehuda, Cherezli's actions were tantamount to treason against Zionism and Hebrew culture. And herein lies one of the most fundamental differences between pan-Judaism and Zionism.

Writing to the Jewish Family

"With this issue, we begin to publish this newspaper that we hope will bring advancement, information, and benefit to all our readers,"²⁰ read the first line of Cherezli's *El Paradizo*, the Ladino version of *Ha-Pardes*. The newspaper was a combination of political news, commercial news and serialized novellas spread

over four pages, published twice weekly. The reason that Cherezli chose to publish in Ladino was not because he hated Hebrew, but because he wanted to reach as many Jewish readers as possible. He feared for the future of both Ladino and Ladino speakers, and wanted to preserve the language.²¹ Moreover, his choice to also publish *Ha-Pardes* as the Yiddish *Der Pardes* was spurred by a commercial sense and his desire to also bring news to the Yiddish speakers of Palestine.²² Interestingly, there are no similar records of Ashkenazim publishing in Ladino.²³ The lack of an Arabic version of Cherezli's publication indicates that, although he came into contact with Arabs at the Alliance, he did not view it important to publish in Arabic—possibly because the Arabic press was already flooded.²⁴ Alternatively, Cherezli—true to pan-Judaism—saw a need to reach as many *Jewish* readers as possible, regardless of the Zionist antipathy towards Ladino and Yiddish. During his years at the Alliance, he met students speaking a variety of native tongues, and sought to expose them all to modernity, which he called “advancement and innovation.”

The Battle over the Chief Rabbi

After the Committee of Union and Progress orchestrated the successful 1908 rebellion against Sultan Abdul Hamid II, Jewish newspapers throughout the empire praised the fall of the old government in extremely enthusiastic terms.²⁵ But not everyone in the Jewish community was happy with the reforms brought by the revolution. In Jerusalem, Shayish covered in *El Paradizo* the related controversy over the appointment of a *locum tenens* for the chief rabbi of Jerusalem. He often addressed his appeals for Jewish unity to Haim Nahum, the newly-appointed chief rabbi of the Ottoman Empire.

Haim Nahum was born in 1873 into abject poverty in Magnesia, in Ottoman Anatolia. As a child his grandfather took him to Tiberias, where he studied Talmud and Arabic. He eventually went to Paris on a grant from the Alliance, where he attended seminary and received degrees in religious sciences, Arabic, and Persian. In 1897, he began teaching in a rabbinical seminary in Istanbul, which the Alliance funded. Esther Benbassa writes of Nahum's selection for the job of modernizing the Istanbul rabbinate: “Who better suited to the task of teaching in such an establishment than Haim Nahum, himself an example of the modern rabbi?”²⁶ Upon arrival Nahum began to assemble marginalized notables who were dissatisfied with the traditional communal leadership. Under the banner of the Alliance, these notables coalesced to form a ‘progressive’ opposition—at least in comparison to the establishment. When he began teaching French at the Ecole Supérieure du Génie et de l'Artillerie in the early 1900s, Nahum came into contact with many of the future leaders of the Young Turk Revolution, and these contacts would later help him secure the post of chief rabbi. At the time of the Young Turk Revolution, Nahum was residing in Paris, having returned from a mission to the Beta Israel in Ethiopia. Upon hearing the news, he returned to Istanbul within a week. In mid-August, Nahum was elected to be acting chief rabbi, but the position was far from secure.²⁷



A page from *El Paradizo*, Cherezli's Ladino newspaper. Source: www.cherezli.com

rabbis who risked losing power to the 'progressive' Alliancists also opposed Nahum, on the grounds that he would support their rivals.²⁸

Nahum finally won the election for the post in January 1909.²⁹ And ironically, Nahum then intervened with the Ottoman authorities to relax restrictions on Zionist land purchases, even though Zionist leaders were attacking him. This attitude, while surprising, stemmed from Nahum's desire to be the leader of *all* Jews, regardless of their political affiliation.³⁰

The importance of the appointment of the *haham bashi* was more symbolic than it was practical. The *haham bashi* did not have the authority to appoint local chief rabbis to the provinces; rather, he was a figurehead and a symbol for the Jewish community. His official Ottoman status legitimized his opinions, and when elections were to be held, the recommendations of the *haham bashi* carried with it the considerable respect due a highly-regarded rabbinical leader.³¹ In Nahum's own words, writing to the secretary-general of the Alliance, Jacques Bigart:

The Alliance had not supported Nahum in the election, opting for his more politically bland father-in-law, Abraham Danon, but the group was soon forced to accept his success. It faced a united front determined to keep the Francophile Alliance-affiliated candidate from becoming the *haham bashi* (the confirmed chief rabbi of the Ottoman Empire). The opposition to Nahum was led by the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, founded in Germany in 1901, and the Zionist Organization, which had officially entered Istanbul the day after the Young Turk Revolution. The Hilfsverein, as a Germanic version of the Alliance, opposed Nahum because it feared that French influence might jeopardize its efforts to spread German language, culture, and influence in the area. Zionists and Alliancists were opposed to each other on political grounds, as the Alliance attempted to spread French liberalism (and assimilation), whereas Zionism intended to awaken a nationalistic movement among Jews. Additionally, the Orthodox

Then the [German] ambassador asked me if, as spiritual leader of Ottoman Jewry, I was able directly to appoint and dismiss rabbis! This was probably the purpose of the interview. Furthermore, I was aware of all the manoeuvres and intrigues the orthodox in Germany had engaged in on the matter of [Rabbi Eliyahu] Panigel. I replied that our communities were autocephalous in principle; they themselves appointed their chief rabbis; leaving confirmation to the chief rabbi of Turkey and likewise dismissals.³²

Despite downplaying his role here (likely due to Franco-German colonial tensions), Nahum did have significant clout in the dismissal and appointment of local chief rabbis. Before he was officially elected, conflicts over the dismissals of acting provincial chief rabbis erupted throughout the Ottoman Empire. He refers in the above letter to the dismissal of Rabbi Eliyahu Panigel, Jerusalem's *locum tenens* as of 1907. Panigel's dismissal, and subsequently Nahum's actions, were widely covered by Cherezli in *El Paradizo*. (Panigel was aligned to the Zionist coalition, while the anti-Panigelistas were Alliancists.³³) Indeed, the second front page story in the newspaper's inaugural issue is dedicated to this dispute. The article, entitled "El Echo del Gran Rabinu" ["The Profession of the Chief Rabbi"], criticizes both parties as short-sighted and greedy:

The state of our Sephardic community is losing prestige and being humiliated over the recent events of the selection of a chief rabbi in our city (Jerusalem); the combatants of both parties are not looking to be in accordance, make peace, or put an end to the conflict that is growing each day with these thorny disputes.

The Panigelistas (followers of Panigel) and their adversaries, who are against them, are all blinded, and they aren't seeing the sad fate that will overtake our community...

It has been more than two months that his eminence the reverend Rabbi Hezekiah Santi, Chief Rabbi of Khalep [Aleppo], came to our city as the proxy of the Chief Rabbi...[but] to our great regret, he did nothing. What is it that is slowing the election? He said that there are things he cannot divulge that prevented him from beginning. What are these secrets?³⁴

Cherezli then proceeds to explain the political wrangling between the Panigelistas and the anti-Panigelistas, pointing out the anti-Panigelistas' objections to the holding of free elections and their preference for bringing in a chief rabbi from another city. To this Cherezli vehemently objects. If this happens, "there will be more conflict,"

he writes, “it will fuel a third party, which will bring more disgrace [to Jerusalem] than there [already] is, and it will completely destroy our poor community”. Cherezli concludes by recommending that new free elections be held, with all sides putting aside their current disputes.

Did Cherezli support the Panigelistas over the anti-Panigelistas? Although Cherezli attended Alliance schools, he does not seem to support the anti-Panigelistas in any real way. At the same time, he does not advocate for the Panigelisto party, but rather feels that each group is acting in its own self-interest—to the detriment of all Jews. In this, Cherezli is a pan-Judaist. He cares less about the power struggle between Jewish factions, than the common good of the Jewish community in Jerusalem. This interpretation of “El Echo del Gran Rabinu” is confirmed by Cherezli’s editorialized “Open Letter” to Rabbi Haim Nahum.

***Open Letter to his Eminence the Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum
and Communal Council of Constantinople***

Respectable Gentlemen!

Seeing the terrible sufferings of our brothers in the holy city (Jerusalem), caused by the change of locum tenens of Chief Rabbi of our city, allow us to address you with these words:

When the Rabbi Nahman Batito was nominated to the post of Chief Rabbi of our city, although he was elected only by part of ten to fifteen people, anti-Panigelistas—we call them thus, since we do not know how to name them, being that not one of them [the anti-Panigelistas] wants the same thing—we believed that he, with his science and his accuracy, would look to approach the Panigelisto party...and make peace.

We counselled him to form a provisional committee, composed of the two parties with an even number of members. But, we saw, with great regret, that he did not do anything at all, but give himself entirely to those that chose him, who told him to lead where they wanted...as if he were clay in the hands of the potter...

We were misled about the capacity of this person. For one thing, in the manner that he manages this we understand that he seeks nothing...other than to further blacken the hearts of the adversaries. On another issue, we believe that this Rabbi cannot occupy the post of Chief Rabbi...seeing that he [illegible—never?] studied French, and that it has been eight or nine years since he studied Turkish.

Thus there is not a single hope that he can do anything...we request to your eminence the Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum and to the Communal Council, to accelerate and quickly nominate someone to the post of Chief Rabbi, in our city. With this you will save, without a doubt, the entire community [...] oppressed by the ten to fifty people that seized power with force...

At this time, we want to be thankful, honoured gentlemen, our respects.

*Shlomo Israel Cherezli
Publisher and Director
of El Paradizo³⁵*

This open letter reiterates Cherezli's main points from "El Echo." He does not care a great deal who controls power. In fact, he requests that Haim Nahum nominate a candidate, an event that he must have known would support the anti-Panigelisto party he relentlessly criticized in "El Echo." Cherezli's remarks that Batito is wholly unqualified due to his lack of proficiency in both Turkish and French are also significant. Cherezli obviously sought a chief rabbi who would be more than just a spiritual leader, but also a political intermediary with the Ottoman government and European diplomats.

Nahum was well aware of the conflict brewing, and wrote to the secretary-general of the Alliance, "Feelings are still running very high, and I receive telegrams every day from the different communities in the Empire asking me for the immediate dismissals of their respective chief rabbis. Jerusalem, Damascus, and Saida are the towns that most complain about their spiritual leaders."³⁶ But in Jerusalem, the problem was not to be solved for years. Haim Nahum wrote in 1910: "The state of anarchy that afflicts the community in the Holy City; the civil wars between parties that are quarrelling over the post of Rishon le-Zion; the moral and material damage that this situation causes, summon me there. I have therefore decided to make a tour to Palestine to put an end to this anarchy and establish lawfulness."³⁷

El Paradizo: Logistics and Writings

Shlomo Israel Cherezli published the first issue of *El Paradizo* on Tuesday, February 9, 1909. A year's subscription for delivery inside Jerusalem cost six francs, while a half-year's subscription cost three and a half francs, to be paid in advance. For delivery outside of Jerusalem, a subscription cost eight francs for the year, and four-and-a-half francs for the half year, again to be paid in advance. If purchased at a newsstand, the first page cost 75 centimes, and the second page cost 25. Cherezli published the paper twice weekly in Jerusalem. Its address is given in French, with



Cherezli, age 32, on his wedding day to his second wife, Hana, age 20, on 4 September, 1911. They had 13 children. Source: www.cherezli.com

Latin characters: “Salomon Israél Cherezli, Quartier Ohel Moché 104-105, Jérusalem (Palestine)”.

This information is notable in a number of respects. The fact that Cherezli was compelled to set pricing for delivery outside Jerusalem indicates that its readership was not merely local. Where it was delivered outside Jerusalem, though, is unknown. Second, the pricing of the paper in francs indicates his French influences from time at the Alliance, as does his Romanized name “Salomon,” rather than the Hebrew/Ladino “Shlomo.” Most notable, though, is the address of “Palestine”. While Palestine did not exist at that time as a territorial unit, Cherezli saw himself as living there.

The paper carried a variety of articles of interest to Cherezli’s audience. Every issue carried a third-page serialized story about Henry the Fourth of France. Advertisements were relegated to the back page, while letters to the editor, when published,

were typically the first story in the paper. There were articles praising the equal rights given to Jews in the Ottoman Empire, alongside news from Jewish communities both inside and outside the Ottoman Empire: Izmir, Alexandria, Paris, Yanina, Adrianople, Thessaloniki, Berlin, New York, Sofia, Lemberg, and Austria, among others. Science was not excluded from the newspaper, and the fourth issue carried a story about 20 “professors” from England, France, Germany America, Belgium, Holland and Jerusalem who were studying the “Sea of Salt”—the Dead Sea.³⁸ Underneath a story reporting on the election of Haim Nahum ran an article about an attack on the Jewish quarter of the Greek city of Yanina. The front page of the fifth issue carried a long article about “Our Spanish Rabbis,” and the sixth led with a story on “The Rabbinic School, Doresh Tzion.”³⁹ The paper did not report exclusively on Jewish subjects, as several articles are dedicated to a feud between Arab and Greek Orthodoxy in “Palestine”. News from as far away as the United States was newsworthy; Cherezli even published a brief article about the inauguration of American President William Taft. Cherezli strove to bring the outside world to Sephardic Jews, not in a foreign language, but in their own Judeo-Espagnol. Unlike Zionists, he did not believe that

people must speak Hebrew if they wished to be modern, but rather that they could maintain their traditional languages and still learn about the “modern” world.

Cherezli also kept tabs on the fledgling Zionist movement. In at least three different articles, Cherezli reported on the purchase of land near Wadi Hanin, the harvest at the colony of Yavniel, and the creation of a Russian Zionist society. This reporting differs in a significant way from the style of reporting on rabbinic politics and Jewish communities. In all three of the articles, the word “Jewish” is never used to describe the Zionists; rather they are always referred to as “colonists.” This stands in sharp contrast to the terminology of “our Jewish communities,” “our Spanish rabbis,” “our city,” and “our brothers” that appears elsewhere. Although Cherezli never explicitly distinguishes between native Jews and Zionists, he makes an implicit distinction between them, as seen in the following examples:

Help to the Colony

Some colonists from the colony ‘Wadi Hanin’⁴⁰ purchased with the help of Dr. Y. Lui [sic?], director of the Anglo-Palestine Bank of our city (Jerusalem), 6000 dunams of land near the village of ‘Reuven,’ close to ‘Wadi Hanin.’⁴¹

In Palestine

The harvest of the colony ‘Yavniel’ in the year 5668 (1907-1908). 5150 dunams of land were sown in this colony. 2200 Dunams were sown with wheat that yielded 81,065 kilograms; 203 dunams of barley yielded 65,535 kilograms; 617 dunams of broad bean (fava bean) yielded 15,320 kilograms. 1400 dunams of legumes yielded 50,910 kilograms.⁴²

Society for Founding New Colonies

Under the name of ‘Jordan’ a society to establish new colonies in Palestine is founded in Kremensog, Russia. Each member of the society must give five hundred roubles, of which a hundred roubles must be paid up front.

The society will begin to occupy itself with working to collect the sum of 50,000 roubles.⁴³

Cherezli constantly used the word ‘Palestine’ to describe the land in which he lived, but surprisingly never once identified a person as ‘Palestinian’. Rather, Cherezli writes of the Arabs of Palestine, the Greeks of Palestine, the Jews of Palestine, the Spanish Jews of Palestine, etc. This is an important distinction from the Arab periodical *Filastin*, for example, which was published in Jaffa beginning in 1911. While both newspapers recognize an entity of Palestine, *Filastin* also referred to its readers as ‘Palestinian’.⁴⁴



The Ladino-French dictionary of Cherezli.

Source: www.cherezli.com

After 18 issues, the *El Paradizo* archive in the UC Berkeley library abruptly stops. The last known issue was published on April 20, 1909, but others may exist elsewhere. There is, however, reason to believe that this may indeed be the last issue. In the seventeenth issue, the newspaper's subject matter changes from commerce, politics, and literature to politics and literature. Conversely, the final issues do contain advertisements, indicating that the paper continued to generate revenue. One notable advertisement comes from the United States. "J.D.

Eisenstein, 165 East Broadwey [sic], New York (America)" placed advertisements for the Encyclopaedia Hebraica at a cost of 15 francs for each "beautiful volume" published in "Nueva York." These advertisements may have simply appeared in all the newspapers under Cherezli's control: *Ha-Pardes*, *Der Pardes*, and *El Paradizo*.

Unfortunately, extensive searches turn up no archives of the other two newspapers, so it is impossible to know their content and lifespan. However, it is logical to believe that the content in *Ha-Pardes* and *Der Pardes* would have been different than that in *El Paradizo*, as the Ladino version discussed Sephardic news at length.

If Shayish continued to publish newspapers beyond 18 issues, his entire business was certainly destroyed by World War I. Although he attempted to bribe his way out of the military twice, he was eventually drafted into the Ottoman army, where he served as an assistant medic in Anatolia (while also teaching Hebrew to Turkish Jews). Cherezli was forced to sell his printing press at this time, and never published newspapers again. Upon returning from the war, Shayish opened an antiquarian bookstore that specialized in books in Judeo-Espagnol and Hebrew. In his time, he was considered to be a great scholar of Judeo-Espagnol. He published 63 books in Judeo-Espagnol, and 52 in Hebrew, that he himself translated from French. His bookstore was renowned in Jerusalem for being a place that a scholar could find a rare book. Even the librarians at Oxford University knew of Cherezli, and they often turned to him to find antiquarian books in Judeo-Espagnol. The bookstore also served as the unofficial office for the Ha-Marpeh, a social service group that he had co-founded in 1926, in order to provide health care to the indigent.⁴⁵

Before his death from diabetes in 1938, Shayish began two projects that he never completed. The first was a Ladino-Hebrew dictionary. (Shayish had already compiled

a Ladino-French dictionary, although it is unclear how many volumes were ever published. The first volume was published in 1898, and sold for a price of six piasters.)⁴⁶ Cherezli's second project was a monumental encyclopaedia of science. He had been collecting articles for the project for a number of years, and by the time of his death, had thousands of entries in his bookstore.⁴⁷

Shayish was a renowned figure, well-respected and loved by his community. Upon his death, Avraham Almaliah, a leader of the Knesset Israel party, eulogized him: "If we see now in Israel daily Hebrew newspapers opening in very large numbers, it is important to relate them to the pioneering work of Shayish. He smoothed the way, with what he published. He was the editor of the Hebrew newspapers of Israel in his time." As a testament to his renown, the City of Jerusalem memorialized him with a small street in the Nachlaot neighborhood, Shirizli Street. Today, though, the life of Shayish is mostly forgotten. History and historiography have moved past him. With the rise of the dominant Hebrew paradigm, his exploits in the field of publishing in Judeo-Espagnol and Yiddish are almost entirely forgotten.

Personal and social histories can never replace conventional histories of political, economic and religious leaders; that is not social history's purpose. What social history can do, however, is to give voice to the previously inaudible. As historical discourse is all-too-often shaped by nationalist historiography, social history allows the existence of lives from the past that do not conform to this historiography. Even Ben-Yehuda's memoirs never mention the renegade publisher who made the news available to all Jews in Palestine and the Ottoman Empire, regardless of whether or not they subscribed to the ideological shift towards Zionism and Hebrew.

It is unfortunate that the search for *Ha-Pardes* and *Der Pardes* was unsuccessful. If copies of these two newspapers are ever found, they may shed light on whether the views published in *El Paradizo* were really Cherezli's own, or merely a form of yellow journalism. Still, what we know about Shayish is breathtaking. He was a renowned linguist, an accomplished translator, the publisher of newspapers in three languages, a disciple of Eliezer ben-Yehuda (despite the later shunning), and a man of science. He never gave up his love for the Ladino language, even when society turned its back on it. Rather than merely immerse himself in French or Hebrew culture like so many others, he attempted to bring the outside world to his Ladino readers. Rather than switch to publishing only in Hebrew when it became clear that Hebrew would be the dominant language in the Jewish community, he attempted to compile dictionaries to keep the language alive.

Had Shayish given up on Ladino and Yiddish, then maybe he would be remembered today as a colleague of Eliezer ben-Yehuda, a mythical father of Hebrew regeneration. Cherezli's love of the exilic languages demonstrates his unique character, neither cookie-cutter Zionist nor typical Alliancist. He was modern, but not a slave to Europe. He was a proud Jew, a pan-Judaist, but not a Jewish chauvinist.

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Endnotes

¹ Tamari, Salim, "Ishaq al-Shami and the Predicament of the Arab Jew in Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly File* 21(2004) 15.

² Use of the term, 'pan-Judaism' is problematic inasmuch as those who I describe as such did not view themselves in precisely those words. For example, they might call themselves, 'Alliancists'.

³ Kuzar, Ron, *Hebrew and Zionism: A Discourse Analytic Cultural Study* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001) 6.

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Herzl almost certainly means Western Europe. At the time of the publication of *Der Judenstaat* he was rather ignorant of Eastern European Zionism and Judaism. Herzl, Theodor, *The Jews' State*, Trans. Henk Overberg (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1997) 196.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Zerubavel, Yael, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 17.

⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁹ Kassow, Samuel D. "Review of *East European Jews in Two Worlds Studies from the Vivo Annual* by Deborah Dash Moore," *Slavic Review* 53 (1994) 1124.

¹⁰ Rodrigue, Aron, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1990) 7.

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹² Ibid., 9.

¹³ Ibid., 166 and Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University, 1997) 59-60.

¹⁴ Ganichovski, Dov, "Kavim Lidmuto Shel Shlomo Israel Cherezli – Shayish," <http://www.cherezli.com/TNG/histories/Portrait-Shelomo-Israel-Cherezli.rtf> viewed on 22 January, 2005,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "El Paradizo," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (9 February, 1909) 1.

²¹ Ganichovski.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Smith, Charles D., *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict; A History with Documents*, 4th Ed. (Boston: Bedord/St. Martin, 2001) 45.

²⁵ Nahum Haim, trans. Miriam Kochan, trans. *Haim Nahum: A Sephardic Chief Rabbi in Politics, 1892-1923*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1995) 9.

²⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁷ Ibid., 9-13.

²⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

²⁹ Ibid., 13.

³⁰ Ibid., 18.

³¹ Benbassa, Esther, "Zionism and the Politics of Coalitions in the Ottoman Jewish Communities in the Early Twentieth Century," *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*. ed. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992) 231.

³² Kochan, 151.

³³ Benbassa, 230-232.

³⁴ "El Echo del Gran Rabinu," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (9 February, 1909) 1.

³⁵ "Karta Abierta a su Eminensiyah el Gran Rabinu Haim Nahum y el Konsilio Komunal del Konstantinople," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (19 March, 1909) 1.

³⁶ Kochan, 146.

³⁷ Ibid., 165.

³⁸ "La Mar de la Sal," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (19 February, 1909) 1.

³⁹ "La Eskwela Ravinika 'Doresh Tzion'," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (26 February, 1909) 1.

⁴⁰ Wadi Hanin was an Arab village at the time. In 1883, Reuven Lehrer, a Russian Jew, immigrated to the village and built a house on the coastal plain. Lehrer was born Reuven Zangvil Patchornik in 1833, but took the name 'Lehrer' after he fled Russia and worked on the estate of a German family of the same name. He eventually became wealthy himself and in 1881, traded his land in Odessa to a German Templar in exchange for a tract of land in Wadi Hanin. In 1883, he started

his own colony at the age of 50, based around the agriculture of beekeeping, and he was later joined by several other settlers. (Patchornik, Abraham, *The History of Nes Tziyona* <http://www.weizmann.ac.il/Organic_Chemistry/nestziyona.shtml>.) Wadi Hanin was razed to the ground in 1948, replaced by the Israeli municipality of Ness-Ziona.

⁴¹ "Ayuda a Koloinstos," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (5 March, 1909) 3.

⁴² "La Segada de la Kolonia 'Yavniel' (Yama)," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (19 March 1909) 2-3.

⁴³ "Sojeto por Pundar Mwebas Kolonia," *El Paradizo* [Jerusalem] (19 March, 1909) 3.

⁴⁴ Smith, 45.

⁴⁵ Ganichovski, Dov, "Kavim Lidmuto Shel Shlomo Israel Cherezli – Shayish" <http://www.cherezli.com/TNG/histories/Portrait-Shelomo-Israel-Cherezli.rtf> viewed on 22 January, 2005.

⁴⁶ Petit Dictionnaire Photo. Personal Photograph by unknown n.d. <http://www.cherezli.com/TNG/showphoto.php?photoID=39>

⁴⁷ Ganichovski.

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