

PEDIGREE, ERUDITION AND PIETY; INVOLVEMENT AND
MOBILITY: THE LIFE STORY OF RIBI DAWID BEN YA'AQOV
PARDO A CASE STUDY IN THE MAKING OF TRADITIONAL
SEPHARDIC HAKAM

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Resumen: La forja del sabio sefardí Ribí Dawid Ben Ya'áqov Pardo toma como punto de partida los aspectos fundamentales que, tradicionalmente, habían ido configurando, desde un ámbito general, la formación intelectual, moral y social de la figura del rabino; otrosí, desde un punto de vista más singular, se ha señalado cómo en este sabio sefardí han confluído aspectos tan notorios como el abolengo familiar, la vasta formación intelectual y la erudita producción bibliográfica, sin soslayar su permanente disponibilidad e implicación en el seno de las distintas comunidades judías de los Balcanes.

Abstract: The forge of the Sephardic Rabbi Ribí Dawid Ben Ya'áqov Pardo takes as a starting point the main aspects that, traditionally, haven been shaping, from a wider approach, the scholar, moral and social background that nourished the rabbi as such. At the same time, from a much more specific point of view, well-rooted aspects as pedigree, erudition and treatises production have being clustering round this Sephardic rabbi together with a permanent involvement and disposition as regards the Jewish communities dwelling in the Balkan countries.

Palabras clave: abolengo, erudición y piedad; compromiso y disponibilidad; vida de Ribí Dawid Ben Ya'áqov Pardo. Forja de un sabio sefardí

Key words: Pedigree, erudition and piety; involvement and disposition; life story of Ribí Dawid Ben Ya'áqov Pardo. The forge of a Sephardic Rabbi.

Throughout Jewish history numerous religious masters and leaders were recruited from the ranks of the common people, solely on the basis of their personal achievements, learning and piety. Still, one is left with the impression that the number of legal authorities, authors and thinkers coming from a rabbinic family background is exceedingly larger. Having in mind the breadth of the obligatory literature and all the difficulties related to accessing and mastering it, the phenomenon does not strike me

as surprising. Jewish law is basically a precedent law – therefore the decisions of all previous courts, arbiters and legal experts have the force of law. Consequently, they are considered legally binding and are not easily dismissible by a later court. Anyone aspiring to become a *dayyan* [rabbinical judge] or a *poseq* [arbiter of Jewish law] is expected not only to master the Sacred Scripture and the different codex of the Jewish law and practice (such as *Mišna*, *Tosefta*, *Sifra*, *Sifre*, *Talmud Yerušalmi* and *Talmud Babli*, with their classic and accepted commentaries) – but also the infinite volumes of rabbinic responsa of the post-talmudic generations (including hundreds of volumes and thousands of long and elaborated legal decisions) as well as the different medieval and later codifications based on them. Obviously, mastering such a voluminous literature requires, besides the necessary intellectual skills, a tremendous amount of time, numerous books, professional guidance and some financial support. Consequently, it was much easier for the decedents of rabbinic families who were born straight into the world of learning, intellectual endeavor and legal reasoning; who have had access to expensive and rare manuscripts and who, not less significantly, could count on their family financial support to dedicate their lives to the ideal of mastering the Law and becoming its arbiters. This certainly did not mean that the doors of learning were closed to the youngsters from the “lay” families. It was just less likely that a boy from such a background would make a career as a rabbi, unless he was especially gifted. In such a case, the young talent would swiftly be absorbed into the rabbinic elite, first through marriage (while still a student of Rabbinics) and later by becoming a rabbi himself. Learning and erudition were the highest Jewish values at the time. People were brought up with the utmost reverence for the learning and for the learned ones. The total dedication of one’s life to the study of Torah was considered the highest level of existence and of human perfection. The majority that could not dedicate their lives to learning was taught, encouraged and expected to help the few chosen to learn. Promoting the study of Torah was considered one of the most pious deeds. So great is the Talmudic reverence of learning and its contempt for the unlearned that it proscribes the Torah scholars to wed their daughters outside the consecrated circle. The acceptance of this dictum as a norm by the early rabbis and their students contributed tremendously to the evolution of the

rabbinic circle into a defined class – yet one open to absorb and assimilate any gifted individual that would accept its worldview and values.¹

However, even though the rabbis in a fact created a family-based ruling class, there are very few rabbinic families that have managed to stay in the center of the stage for so long a period of time as the Pardo family. This family has provided the Sephardic world with rabbis for generations. Its sons served as judges in rabbinic courts, teachers in rabbinic academies, as recognized arbiters of Jewish law in many centers of Sephardic Diaspora – such as: Thessalonica, Amsterdam, Venice, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Ragusa,² Spalato³ and Jerusalem. Only Rabenu Dawid ben Ya'aqob Pardo, the most prolific author to come forth from this family, served (or at least tried to obtain positions) himself in five out of the eight mentioned cities. Ribí Dawid Pardo was born in the year 5479 [1718/19], in Venice.⁴ Some say⁵ that the stronghold of this branch

1. For a better understanding of rabbinic Judaism and of the role by a rabbi in Jewish society at the time the following should be stated: rabbis and their students were, in essence, the only eminently Jewish aristocracy that endured as such in the first centuries upon the destruction of the Second Commonwealth. It was through Ribí Yehuda I (who was appointed by the Romans to rule the province in their name) that the members of this intellectual elite were given public responsibility and authority, becoming finally the ruling class of Roman Palestine. Inter-marriage between the prominent rabbinic families contributed to the development of a defined class mentality that has clear joint interests. Interestingly, a similar arrangement would be made in Babylon, the biggest center of Jewish life (for several centuries ninety percent of the world Jewish population lived there), where Jewish secular (ethnarchs – the remnants of the Davidic dynasty, who were recognized as vassal-rulers of the gentile king) and religious (rabbinic) aristocracy were given the power to rule over the Jews in the name of the king. Many times, there were tensions between the ethnarchs and the leading rabbinic figures - as their prerogatives and relations were not defined. Later, the remnants of the Davidic dynasty lost all the gentile-government-given authority and recognition. From that moment on, the Jewish subjects in Christian and Muslim lands were ruled solely by rabbis (who were empowered by the king and earthly rulers). This monopoly will be taken from the hands of the rabbinic class only at the dawn of modernity, when Jews are recognized as full citizens of their respective countries, and their autonomy and personal law is abolished.

2. Today Dubrovnik in Croatia.

3. Today Split in Croatia.

4. In the fashion of the time, when writing to Venice he used to add the words "Wenešiya, 'ir moladti" ["Venice, my native city"] – comp. *Miktam le-Dawid*, section *Orah Hayyim*, resp. 10.

5. Levy, M. 1925.

of the family was in Ragusa, and that it was from there that Ribī Ya'aqov Pardo and his wife Yustina,⁶ Ribī Dawid's parents, left for Venice. Indeed, Ribī Dawid completes the introduction to his commentary on Mišna, named *Šošanim le-Dawid*, by expressing his gratitude to all those who have helped the publishing of this work, ending it with these words:

And among those that deserve the blessing are also: each and every individual from the Holy Community of Ragusa, may God protect it, as they have also strengthen my hands – and, amongst them, especially my brothers and friends, the merciful souls from my family and my father's house: lords, erudites and excellent people; sons of his excellency: Ḥakam, our honorable master Ribī Ya'aqob son of honorable Ribī Abraham Pardo, may his memory be a (source of) blessing, the five brothers whose acronym is IŠ YAD.

At the end of the introduction to *Maškil le-Dawid*, once more the author expresses his gratitude to the members of his family in Ragusa – this time in an even less revealing manner:

And to conclude: so much the more should be blessed be my kinsmen and my loved ones IŠ YAD who are in the Holy Community of Ragusa, with all those attached to them – may they all be fat and flourishing!⁷

It is possible that, at the time these lines were written, their somewhat esoteric tone could have been understood as a sign of special intimacy and closeness. In any case, it is hard (if not impossible) for a modern investigator to reach some sound and tenable conclusion concerning the degree of kinship between our author and the five brothers from Ragusa.

6. Usually, very little is known about the female members of rabbinic families: mothers, spouses or daughters. – However, in the introduction to his commentary on Raši's commentary on Torah, named *Maškil le-Dawid*, Pardo discloses to us that one of the reasons for naming the work the way he did is to be found in the fact that the numerical value of the word "maskil" (400) is approximate to the numerical value of the sentence "Ya'aqob we-Yustina holidu" [Ya'aqob and Yustina gave (him) birth] (403).

7. Comp. Psalms 94:15.

The possibilities range from brothers or half-brothers (after all their father's name is Ya'aqob ben Abraham Pardo) to cousins four times removed (with a common great grandfather). Personally, I am more inclined towards the second option and would argue that the name of five brother's grandfather, Abraham, was added to their father's name, Ya'aqob, in order to make a differentiation between their father: Ya'aqob ben Abraham and Ribī Dawid's father: Ya'aqob (whose name is always brought without a patronymic). Since it is hard to imagine two brothers having the same name (Ya'aqob), one would have to assume that Ribī Dawid's father Ya'aqob and Ya'aqob ben Abraham were actually first cousins (probably the firstborn sons of two brothers – thus both given the common grandfather's name). However, the option that the five brothers from Ragusa are the children from Ribī Ya'aqob's first marriage, while Ribī Dawid is his son from a second marriage, even if less convincing, is still possible. Maybe the difference in age and the fact that Ribī Dawid was born abroad, in Venice, are enough to explain what strikes us as too formal a relationship between the alleged brothers.

In any case, Ribī Ya'aqob dies during Dawid's youth – but, since the youngster was the offspring of so distinguished a rabbinic family (whose pedigree includes outstanding rabbinic figures such as Ribī Šemuel ben Ribī Abraham Abuhaḇ⁸ and Ribī Yosef Pardo)⁹ it was made possible for him to complete his studies. Ribī Ya'aqob Belilius, a member of the rabbinic court of the city of Venice and himself a renowned Talmudist,

8. Known also by the acronym MaHaRŠA, Hamburg 1610 – Venice 1694, head of rabbinic academies in Verona and later in Venice, one of the most prominent opponents of the Sabbatean movement, author of *Deḇar Šemuel* (collection of response), *Sefer ha-zikronot* (collection of rituals, laws and customs, a collection of homilies and an abbreviation of Maimonides's codex of Jewish Law – *Mišne Tora*). In his already mentioned commentary on *Mišna (Beraḳot 8:8)*, discussing a legal opinion issued by Ribī Šemuel ben Ribī Abraham Abuhaḇ, Pardo says: "And, since I am a descendent of this holy man..."

9. He died in the year 1620, in Amsterdam. He was a rabbi in Thessalonica, and later in Venice and Amsterdam. Three of his sons, Yišḥaq, Abraham and Dawid were also rabbis: Abraham in Thessalonica and later in Amsterdam; Yišḥaq in Thessalonica - and Dawid in Amsterdam. Dawid's son Yošiy'a emigrated to Curaçao – and served there as a rabbi. Dawid Pardo, the rabbi of the Portuguese community of Surinam, was probably his son.

opened his home and his *yešiva* for this young rabbinic student.¹⁰ Major centers of learning, such as Venice, for example, were supplying the rest of the Jewish world with rabbis, judges and teachers. Many young graduates from rabbinic academies, who could not count on receiving a position in the city of their studies, would leave the academy and the city after the completion of their studies and look for positions elsewhere, many times in the cities of their origin – or, at least, in the cities where they had family relations and contacts.

While Moše David Gaon, himself originally from Bosnia, in his illustrious encyclopedia of Sephardic sages and intellectuals of all generations does not disclose any steps in Pardo's career prior to his arrival at Spalato;¹¹ Dr. Maurice Levy claims that after leaving Venice, the young talmudist has first arrived at Ragusa – but, since this small community could not offer him any public position, he left for Sarajevo, spending there a few years and proceeding to Belgrade.¹² All of this happened, according to Levy, before Pardo settled in Spalato – first as a teacher in the local Jewish school - and later as the rabbi of the city. After a limited success in Spalato, Pardo will make his second (equally unsuccessful) attempt to become the rabbi of the Belgrade Jewish Community. Only his second appearance in Sarajevo will bring him closer to the fulfillment of his aspirations. The *Encyclopedia Judaica*, on its part,¹³ would also have Pardo try his luck in Sarajevo before he obtains the position of a children teacher in Spalato [“*approximately in 1738*”] – but it is unaware of any of Pardo's attempts related to Ragusa. The reason why Pardo had to leave Sarajevo, according to this source, is a dispute

10. In his introduction to *Šošanim le-Dawid*, Pardo recalls the five-years long period he spent under Ribī Ya'aqob Belilius tutelage: “Who is able of telling all his mighty deeds, his strength and his wonderful works [according to Psalms 78:4] – as from my childhood he brought me up as a father, the king has brought me into his inner chambers [according to Song of songs 1:4]. He used to show me his innovations and tell me: ‘Pay attention to this in order to be able to do like that yourself...’”

11. Gaon, M. D. 1938, 539.

12. See footnote 5 above, p. 120.

13. Entry: Pardo, David Samuel ben Jacob (1718 – 1790). The additional first name (Samuel) was adjoined by mistake. Rabbi David Samuel ben Jacob Pardo is a different person. – Actually, he is Ribī Dawid Ben Ya'aqob's's grandson (through his son Jacob) – and he served as a rabbi in Verona.

over some inheritance. In any case, from his own collection of responsa, named *Miktam le-Dawid*, we learn that as late as year 5500 [1739/40] he was in Spalato. In responsa num. 2, in the part *Yore De'a*, he informs us (in a retroactively written *tešuvah*) of the following:

Here in the city Espalatro, may The Exalted One protect it – Amen!, in the year 5500 I've seen a very strange being – namely: a ram that had six horns, two miembros viriles - and it was passing water through both of them at the same time. Also, it had four testicles, in two sacks – and at its back it had two holes – again, using both of them. Also, it had two additional legs at its back – which had the form of additional legs – but they were not reaching the ground. At that moment I have said: 'How numerous are your deeds, oh Lord'. And then I was asked, on the spot, whether it was permissible to eat the meat of such an animal – and this is what I've responded in a haphazard manner at the moment. The answer: ...”¹⁴

From the last words of the query one can learn that the answer was written from memory, some time after the event had happened. Also, from the words “here in Espalatro” one can deduce that even if the responsa was written some time after the event described in it took place – it was still written in Spalato and not in some other city.

Pardo's way of writing the name of the city is not haphazard either. – Rather, it is the result of a premeditated and consistent position on the matter. In responsa num. 9 (unfortunately undated) in the section *Even ha-'Ezer*, Pardo publishes his opinion concerning the proper way of writing the name of “this city where I am serving” in a divorce bill.¹⁵ He starts his three-pages long answer by stating the discrepancy between the way the name of the city is written in Latin script and the way it is pronounced in spoken language.

14. What follows are two pages of elaboration over the matter which do not betray any haphazardness. The final conclusion: The ram should be slaughtered without the blessing – and its insides should be checked. If it is found to have only one intestine – than all other duplicated or triplicated members are considered as non-existent – and the meat is *kašer*.

15. Divorce bills are known to be most formal official documents in Judaism.

It is the way of all those writing in Christian script, whether they are writing an epistle or an unofficial document, to write Spalato – but, when they come to utter the name of the city orally, they add the letter reš and say Spalatro. And the sons of our own people who speak among themselves in the way of Spanish language add a syllable alef-yud (e) at the beginning of the word and say Espalatro. I have checked – and this is the way that I've found it written in all the marriage contracts and the rest of documents that were issued at this place since ancient times and in all of them it is always written with the syllable alef-yud (e) at the beginning...¹⁶

The English translation does not resemble all the peculiarities of Pardo's style. He considered the responsa literature as a formal art that must be acquired through practical means such as imitation, practice and repetition. For this reason he encouraged his students to write responsa on hypothetical questions. It seems that this exercise of analytic mind was quite an important part of the curriculum of rabbinic academies under his tutelage: in Spalato, Sarajevo and Jerusalem.¹⁷ Devoted to his idea of

16. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of rabbinic responsa for the enrichment of our knowledge concerning the life of different Jewish communities. While in the Christian world the court decisions are kept in the archives of the respective courts in which they were issued – in the less institutionalized Jewish world, these were considered the intellectual property of the judge or the arbiter – and they (or their sons and students) would collect them and publish them. Thus, decisions signed by a famous legal authority in one city were soon quoted and taken into consideration in the rest of the Jewish world, becoming *res publica* – common wealth and common legal patrimony. Histories of Jewish communities in these parts were written (even in two cases where the author himself was a rabbi) without much attention (if at all) being paid to the immense quantity of information on the life of the community, its relations with its Christian or Muslim neighbours, its relation with the government, its role in the economic life of the city; the level of observance and erudition of its members, their number, their internal relations, their linguistic habits, the exceptional customs, etc. – that can be deduced from the responsa literature, if nothing else – than, at least, the one written by the local rabbis. In its second stage, this necessary (but still only desired) investigation would have to reach out to responsa literature in general – looking for all the places where Sarajevo, Ragusa, Spalato, etc. were mentioned.

17. This approach seems to be an accepted norm in the Venetian rabbinic academy – for in *Miktam le-Dawid*, section *Orah Hayyim*, responsa num. 1, we find that immediately upon his arrival at Venice (where he came in order to supervise the printing of his first

sharpening his students minds through challenging them to reconsider their positions and to perceive the issue at hand from all different angles and perspectives - he also encouraged them to write responsa on each other's responsa. Many times in *Miktam le-Dawid* he proudly brings the responsas written by his students or sons, passing his judgment on the offered solutions and giving the final word. More so, this is not the only place in the anthology where Pardo retroactively writes down an oral answer given to an oral question, writes an answer to a set of questions that were raised during the joint learning in the academy¹⁸ or writes his own instructions in question-answer form. Asking rhetorical questions and elaborating upon hypothetical questions seem to be part and partial of the Italian rabbinic tradition that Pardo brought with him to the furthest borders of the Venetian Republic (Spalato) – and, later, even beyond them (Sarajevo, Belgrade and Jerusalem). Studying each corpus of the classic rabbinic literature separately and on its own terms was also a respective Italian tradition. In contrast, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, following the tradition established in Babylonian academies, based their studies almost exclusively on the Babylonian Talmud, studying only *mišnayot*¹⁹ and *beraytot*²⁰ that were included in it (and even those only in its present Talmudic context, isolated from the original one). Consequently, most of the commentaries on extra-talmudic codexes were written by Italian rabbis. This method of contextual reading and approaching every codex on its own terms was actually a part of tradition of the academies in the Land of Israel - and it is from there that it spread all over the Roman Empire (Egypt, Syria, Greece and Italy) - not reaching, however, the

work), Pardo was handed by one of the heads of Venetian rabbinic academy, Ribi Ḥayyim Voltera, a multi-angled question concerning the carrying and opening an umbrella on Sabbath. The question, probably handed to all the students, ends with words: “may the word from signore come to decide between the two opinions and show which of them is preferable”. It is interesting that Pardo chooses specifically this particular *tešuvah* to open his collection of responsa – as if looking for a thread that will link him to the place of his spiritual birth – or for a way to stamp his work with the seal of the Venetian academy.

18. Comp. *Miktam le-Dawid*, section *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, responsa num. 3, “concerning the question that was raised in the academy...”

19. The smallest literary unit of Mišna is called *mišna*.

20. Talmudic term applied to early rabbinic traditions that were not included in Mišna – but were brought in other classic collections – such as Tosefta, Sifra, Sifre etc.

Babylonian Jewry (and its North African and Spanish branches) which developed its own methodology. A descendent of the expelled Spaniards, raised and educated in Italian rabbinic tradition, Pardo was destined to disseminate his Italian contextual approach among his Sephardic brethren in the Orient, reviving the old Israeli tradition of learning – first in Spalato, later in Belgrade and Sarajevo – and finally in the Land of Israel itself. His first work, *Šošanim le-Dawid*, as already stated, is a commentary on Mišna (later he will write commentaries on two additional corpuses of pre-talmudic rabbinic literature: Tosefta and Sifre) and it was written during his years as a teacher in Spalato.

In any case, on the front page of *Šošanim le-Dawid*²¹ Pardo is already termed as the “teacher of righteousness”²² of the Holy Community of Espalatro. It is difficult to ascertain exactly when Pardo was appointed by the Jews of Spalato as their rabbi. Levy, for example, claims that he was appointed in the year 1750 [5510], after Ḥakam Papo passed away.²³ However, in responsa num.2, in the section *Orah Hayyim*, written in the year 5501 [1741/42], Pardo tells how Jews of Spalato were misled to break the laws of Sabbath because of the wrong instructions given by a semi-learned person:

And it is known that from early days a rabbi or a teacher of righteousness was never appointed here, except for our teacher and master Ribī Abraham Dawid Papo... who himself came here by accident - and went to sleep like the way of man²⁴ and it was for a little before us – so that we had the privilege of seeing his light.

Obviously, Ḥakam Papo died a while before 1750, as the quoted responsa was written in the year 5501 [1741/42]. Therefore, we will have to conclude that Pardo was appointed as the community rabbi sometime before 5512 [1751/52] (the year his commentary on Mišnah was printed), independently of Ḥakam Papo’s death. Pardo held his predecessor in

21. Venice 5512 [1751/52].

22. A synonym for a rabbi.

23. Comp. Margaliyot, Sh. E., 5750 [1989/90] who also claims that Pardo was appointed after the death of Ḥakam Papo – but he does not bring the year.

24. = he died.

great esteem. In his introduction to *Šošanim le-Dawid* he tells us how after his arrival at “the city *Espalatro* which is in the province of *Dalmatia*”, looking for a sustenance and the way to proceed with his learning, he found there

A precious light... the elder of law, a unique expert – who is an excellent rabbi, pious and saintly, a jewel crowned with modesty - his excellency, our master and teacher Ribi Abraham Dawid Papo, may the memory of the righteous and saint be a (source of) blessing...

It seems that in the year 5508 [1747/48] Pardo was already serving as the appointed rabbi of the Spalato community – as a formal question was sent to him from Ribi Šelomo Luzzena, concerning the moral duty of the Jewish Community of Ragusa towards the Sarajevo Jewish Community. The Jews of Sarajevo relied on the Jews of Ragusa to provide them with the four species necessary for the Suko rituals, at their accepted market price, as every year. – However, that year it happened that the Ragusa Jewish Community had only one single *etrog*²⁵ - and the question arose whether the Jews of Ragusa (after fulfilling the biblical commandment related to the first day of the holiday, and the rabbinic commandment during part of the rest of the days) were supposed to send the *etrog* to the Jews of Sarajevo (to fulfill, at least, the rabbinical commandment for the remainder of the holiday). Pardo's unequivocal position was that in such a case it is obligatory to enable other communities to partake somewhat in the commandment.²⁶

In subsequent years we find Pardo leading his small community, writing his responsa, starting a small circle of students²⁷ and dedicating himself to a new work: a clarification of Raši's commentary on Torah.

25. Citron – one of the four species used during the Feast of Tabernacles.

26. *Mikṭam le-Dawid*, section *Orah Hayyim*, resp. num. 6.

27. There is no doubt that after the publication of his commentary on Mišna he became a well known name in the world of Rabbinics, and it seems that his fame was already enough to attract to his small community students from other cities. In addition to a Spalatian, Šabetay Ventura, we find among Pardo's students, already at this early stage, one student from Sarajevo – namely, Dawid Pinto, son of the famous merchant Benyamin Pinto.

The completion of this work, called *Maškil le-Dawid*,²⁸ will also signify the completion of Pardo's Spalato period - and in that same year he was already courting the more numerous and more influential Belgrade community, offering its council his services. It seems that his fame became too great for him to be satisfied with the minute position of a rabbi in such a small community as Spalato. However, he did not leave his flock unattended. His student, Ribī Šabetay Ventura was raised to the position of community rabbi before Pardo's departure.²⁹ The master and the student kept a close relationship for the rest of their lives – as is reflected in their correspondence published in Pardo's or in Ribī Aḅraham Penso's responsa.³⁰

At that time, Ribī Šelomo Šalem, who served in the Belgrade community for nine years, left for Amsterdam³¹ where he was appointed

28. Published in Venice 5521 [1760/61].

29. In the year 5534 (1773/74) Ribī Šabetay Ventura publishes in Amsterdam his book *Nahar Šalom* (legal innovations, disputations and explanations on the first section of *Šulḅan 'Aruḅ - Oraḅ Ḥayyim*). On the front page of the book the author is described as “the head of the rabbinic court and of the rabbinic academy in the Holy Community of Espalatro”. In accordance with the fashion of the time, the book opens with recommendation letters written by the leading names of the rabbinic world of the time. Among ten such letters we found also those signed by “the master of the author, the head of the rabbinic court and the rabbinic academy of the Holy Community of Bosnia, Dawid son of the honorable Ribī Ya'aqov, may his memory be a blessing, Pardo”; by Ribī Šelomo Šalem “the head of the rabbinic court and the rabbinic academy of the Holy Community of Sepharadim here in Amsterdam” and by his Ashkenazi counterpart Ribī Šaul Ḥone as well as those signed by the *dayyanim* of Firenze, Hague, Rotterdam; by the heads of rabbinic academy in Venice – etc. It seems that Ribī Šabetay Ventura was recognized as an arbiter of Jewish law at his time. The author's own introduction is followed by one written by his student, Ribī Aḅraham Yona, which ends with a poem in the honor of the author. Unfortunately, little (if anything) is known about these two Spalatian rabbis and their biographies are still waiting to be written. Neither of them is mentioned by Gaon (footnote 11 above) in his encyclopedia of Sephardic sages.

30. *'Ezraḅ mi-šar*, Jerusalem 5755 – 1995, published for the first time from the Author's Autograph Manuscript by The Manfred and Anne Lehmann Foundation and Yeshivat Hevrath Ahavat Shalom.

31. Being related to Rafael Ruso, the head of the local Jewish Council (through the marriage of his daughter to Rafael Ruso's son), Šalem was sure that the community would be talked into accepting him as non-residential rabbi. This arrangement basically meant that he received a full salary for what can be described at best as honorific function – since

as a head of the rabbinic academy 'Eš ha-Ḥayyim.³² Ženi Lebl seems to be correct in assuming that:

It is probable that David Pardo's arrival was not accidental. He was convinced that he will be appointed as the chief rabbi of the community, not knowing that the hands of the community were tied by the contract with rabbi [Šalem] that resided far away. Pardo was trying to show his qualifications by giving his legal advice³³ to the city council presided by Rafael Ruso.³⁴

It did not take a while for Pardo to recognize that the Belgrade community could stay in its unresolved status with its non-resident rabbi³⁵ – so he did not hesitate to accept the invitation of the Sarajevo community whose rabbinic seat was vacant since the death of Ribī Yeošu'a Yiaq Machoro³⁶ in the year 1763.³⁷

his distance made any real involvement in the daily life and problems of his flock extremely complicated, if not impossible.

32. Comp. Lebl, *Ž.*, 2001, 68.

33. Comp. *Miktam le-Dawid, Hošen Mišpaṭ* - responsa num. 6 and *Hasde Dawid*, Leghorn 1776, p. 70.

34. Lebl (footnote 31 above), p. 69.

35. Indeed it was only after 11 years that Belgrade community had hired a new residential rabbi, Ribī Yišakar Abul'afiya – comp. Lebl (footnote 31 above, p. 69).

36. In *Miktam le-Dawid*, section *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, resp. num. 4, we find a practical legal question (concerning the possibility of blessing over the phylacteries of Rabbenu Tam in case that these are the only phylacteries one has or one wants to put on or in case that these are the only phylacteries one prays with in the afternoon prayer) posted by Machoro to Pardo. The question ends with the phrase: “may he show us the way to go and the practice that should be established.” – Obviously, Pardo's legal advice and instruction were sought even by the rabbis of communities bigger than Pardo's own. From the intimate tone of the correspondence one receives the impression that these two rabbis were personal friends – and this strengthens the claim that Pardo spent some time in Sarajevo prior to 5524.

37. Levy (see above, footnote 5, p. 121), probably according to the now missing second *Pinqas* [Protocol] of the Sarajevo Jewish Community. The first *Pinqas* was destroyed in the fire during the Prince Eugene of Savoy's siege on the city of Sarajevo. This second *Pinqas*, established by Ḥakam Yišḥaq Ševi, was bereaved from the community by the German forces in 1941. This sad fact gives even more importance to those passages quoted by Levy in his article or in his PhD thesis on Bosnian Sephardim (see Levy, M., 1996). The later work was very popular, as can be deduced from the fact

It seems that as early as the year 5524 [1763/64] Pardo was already installed in Sarajevo, serving there as the head of the rabbinic court and head of the rabbinic academy. In any case, in the introduction to his book *Lamnaṣea le-Dawid*,³⁸ printed the next year³⁹ in Thessalonica, he already expresses his gratitude to:

*... all the members of my congregation, who are my allies, amongst whom I stand to serve and assist, all of them - including the feeble amongst them, the Holy Community which is in Bosnia, may God protect it, which is called Saray... ”*⁴⁰

Interestingly, the official contract between Pardo and the community was signed only four years later, on the 1st of Ševaṭ 5528 [1768],⁴¹ as if both sides were interested in checking each other during some “probational period” – before “committing” to formalize their relationship.

At that time, Sarajevo, the capital of the northeast Ottoman province, was a very important location on the mercantile map with a vibrant and constantly growing Jewish community. The city had already developed all the traits of an important center of Jewish life – but it still could be seen as a satellite of Thessalonica – the most important center of Jewish life and learning in the Balkans, at the time conceived by many as *La Republica Judia* (Jewish Republic). Just like many other small Jewish Communities developed originally by Thessalonica émigrés, the Jewish Community of Sarajevo was looking up to Thessalonica for guidance and instruction. With Pardo’s arrival at Jewish Sarajevo will undergo a transformation from a small community that gravitates towards a great center – into an independent center of Jewish learning. From now on, the

that it was published twice in German (1911 and 1996), twice in Serbo-Croatian (1969 and 1996) and once in Judeo-Spanish (5693 - 1932).

38. Explanations of some difficult passages in Talmud.

39. 5525 [1764/65].

40. Judeo-Spanish name for the city of Sarajevo.

41. Levy (see footnote 5 above) brings a facsimile (p. 121) of the contract from the *Pinqas* of Sarajevo Community and its translation to Serbo-Croatian (p. 125). Those interested in details of rabbinic salaries and conditions of rabbinic contracts should consult this interesting source.

surrounding small communities will gravitate towards Sarajevo. They will be sending their best sons to its rabbinic academy – and look up to it for the instruction and fashion. The nucleus of Pardo's *yešiva* was the Spalato-group: Pardo himself, his two older sons, Ribī Ya'aqob and Ribī Abrahām and his senior student, Ribī Dawid Pinto (who has now returned to his native city to proceed with the learning of Torah from his teacher). The new students have joined in Sarajevo – such as, for example, Ribī Abrahām Penso. It is possible to receive some impressions concerning the curriculum of the academy from the responsa (especially the theoretical ones) collected in Pardo's anthology or in Penso's own.⁴² In the year 5532 [1771/72], eight years upon his arrival at Sarajevo, the *Miktam le-Dawid* anthology was printed in Thessalonica. The collection was edited and prepared for print in Sarajevo. Pardo announces the following:

*May You, oh Lord, have mercy on me and raise me up –
to build a house, a dwelling of the aged -
as I have commenced to explain the words of sages,
[who are] the seraphim and the ophanim,
rabbis – the ministering angels,
who are the arms [strength] of the world and its rudiments,
[brought by] the anonymous Tosefah
which is by Ribī Neemyah...
Since zealously I've been zealous,
why should it [Tosefah] be like one who cloaks [hides],⁴³
rather – as the young woman⁴⁴
on the throne of the Lord,⁴⁵
it should certainly step forward.
Oh, Lord – Master of the Universe,
give me the strength to melt the brick,
to bless over the accomplished in the coming years -
and may, please, Israel say:
Hasde Dawid faithful are they ...*

42. See footnote 30 above.

43. According to Song of songs 1:7.

44. According to Isaiah 7:14.

45. According to Exodus 17:16.

Pardo's most fruitful years were in Sarajevo. It was there he began to work on his masterpiece: *Hasde Dawid*, a commentary on Tosefa that remains unsurpassed until this day. By doing so, he fulfilled the instruction of Hillel: "In a place where there are no man strive to be a man",⁴⁶ demanding satisfaction for this long neglected codex. If there were few sages who dedicated themselves to the explanation of the Mišna – even fewer (if any) dedicated themselves to the explanation of Tosefta. There were not many traditions concerning in depth learning of Tosefta on its own – and if until now Pardo was going in the path of his predecessors – here he was in fact creating a path that would be followed by all those who were to come. Pardo's commentary is for Tosefa what Raši is for Talmud – an inescapable classic.

Only four years after the public announcement of his intentions, in the year 5536 [1775/76], the *Hasde Dawid* on the first half of Tosefta⁴⁷ was printed in Leghorn. *Hasde Dawid* on the fourth section of Tosefta⁴⁸ were printed in Leghorn in the year 5550 [1789/90], almost a decade after Pardo's departure for the Holy Land. Ribī Abrahām Penso, one of the most gifted Pardo's students, played a significant role in bringing this work to print.⁴⁹ The author was not privileged of seeing *Hasde Dawid* on the fifth⁵⁰ or the sixth⁵¹ sections of Tosefta in print – as the former were published a hundred years later – in the year 5650 [1889/90], while the latter were published in three volumes during the seven years period – 5730 - 5737 [1969/70 – 1976/77], both in Jerusalem.

However, Pardo did have the privilege of seeing his offspring going in his path, sitting on the seat of judgment, teaching Torah to Israel and contributing to its literature. In the year 5544 [1783/84], his firstborn son, Ribī Ya'aqob Pardo, head of the rabbinic court in Ragusa and "one of the

46. *Mišna, Avot 2:6.*

47. On first three sections (*Zera'im, Mo'ed and Našim*).

48. *Neziqin.*

49. For more on this see Lehmann's introduction to Penso's collection of response (see footnote 30 above), p. 18.

50. *Qodašim.*

51. *Ḥahorot.*

greatest rabbis of his generation in revealed and hidden sciences”⁵² publishes his first work: *Qehilat Ya'aqob* (a commentary on the Early Prophets). The introduction was written by Ribi Dawid, in his new home in Jerusalem.

In Elul [August/September] 5541 [1781], the representatives of the Jewish Community of Sarajevo noted in the community Protocol that they have decided to answer favorably upon Pardo's request that community should give him a pension which would make it possible for him to ascend to the Holy Land. The committee allowed for pension of 250 groshes per year⁵³ (paid from the community taxes) on condition that Pardo does not accept any position in any other community, and to dedicate a part of his learning to the merit of the Jewish Community of Sarajevo.

After 17 years⁵⁴ of service, at the age of 62, Ribi Dawid ben Ya'aqob Pardo left Sarajevo, leaving the seat of judgment in this city to his son Ribi Yiṣḥaq (who served as head of the rabbinic court and head of the rabbinic academy from 1781 – 1810)⁵⁵ and to his student Ribi Abraham Penso (who followed in the footsteps of his teacher - and ascended to the Land of Israel sometime after 5561 [1800/01]).⁵⁶

Ribi Dawid's youngest son, Abraham, moved together with him to Israel and married there with Levana, the daughter of Ribi Yosef Dawid Azulay, the second greatest sage of the time. Her brother, Refael Yeš'aya Azulay, was married to one of the daughters of Ribi Šelomo Šalem – a fact that illustrates perfectly the phenomenon mentioned at the beginning of this research...

52. Gaon, (see footnote 11 above) p. 540.

53. Half the salary he was receiving while serving as a rabbi.

54. According to Gaon (see footnote 11 above) Pardo moved to Israel in the year 5546, after serving in Sarajevo for 14 years. Obviously the precise data as recorded in *Pinqas* and brought by Levy (see footnote 5 above) were unknown to him. Margaliyot (see footnote 23 above) brings accurate year of emigration to Israel – but his claim that Pardo served in Sarajevo for only nine years is totally unsupported by the evidence.

55. See Kamhi, H., 1996, 274. According to Kamhi, Ribbi Yiṣḥaq Pardo died in Sarajevo and was buried on its Jewish cemetery. Gaon (see footnote 11 above), however, claims that at his old age Ribbi Yiṣḥaq Pardo went to visit his sons who were in Skoplje and that on the way from Skoplje to the Land of Israel he passed away.

56. Comp. Lehmann, (see footnote 49 above) p. 21.

Ribi Dawid's daughter, whose name I have not found yet in the available documents, was married to Abraham Pinto – and their son, Hayyim Dawid ben Abraham Pinto, who was a rabbi Belgrade, published in the year 5578 [1817/18] his grandfather's manuscript *Mizmor le-Dawid* - an elaboration of a complicated legal issue from the section *Yore De'a* of *Šulḥan 'Aruk*.

Another Pardo's important work, *Sifre deve Rav* - a commentary on *Sifre* [a tannaitic Midraš on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy] was also printed posthumously, in the year 5559 [1798/99], in Thessalonica. It is considered to be one of the most important commentaries on this rarely elaborated codex.

Pardo died in the year 5552 [1791/92], in Jerusalem. During the last decade of his life he was a head of the rabbinic academy "Ḥesed le-Abraham" in Jerusalem.⁵⁷ His sons, and the sons of his sons followed in his footsteps. Ya'aqob's son Dawid Šemuel was a rabbi in Verona. Yišḥaq's son Abraham was a rabbi in Belgrade. Among them were prolific authors. In addition to his already mentioned commentary on the Early Prophets, Ya'aqob authored ten additional works. Yiḥḥaq became famous for his *To'afot Reem*,⁵⁸ commentary on Ribi Aay Gaon's *Šiltot*. In the year 1862, four books written by his son, Ribi Abraham, were printed in Belgrade, posthumously. They were published by the author's son: Hayyim Šemuel ben Abraham Pardo.

57. Pardo's poetical and liturgical works are beyond the scope of this research.

58. Thessalonica, 5577 [1816/17].

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