

MIZMOR LE-DAVID:
STUDIES IN JEWISH LANGUAGES
PRESENTED TO PROF. DAVID M. BUNIS
ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

INTRODUCTION

Katja ŠMID, Ora (RODRIGUE) SCHWARZWALD
and Ofra TIROSH-BECKER (eds.)

It is our collective pleasure, editors and contributing authors alike, to present this book, *Mizmor le-David: Studies in Jewish Languages*, to our distinguished colleague, Prof. David M. Bunis, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

Prof. David M. Bunis is one of the world's foremost scholars of the Judezmo (Ladino, Spaniolit, Judeo-Spanish) language and its literature. In his studies Prof. Bunis has promoted an interdisciplinary approach, combining methodologies from linguistics, sociolinguistics, and Jewish studies to explore the many facets of the Ladino language and its culture. On the one hand he studies Judezmo as reflecting the unique experience of Sephardi Jews, and on the other he charts the traits this language has in common with other Jewish languages, such as Yiddish. His many publications, which include six monographs and more than one hundred academic papers, have become essential reading material for scholars in the broad field of Judezmo and Sephardic studies. The breadth of his academic work spans detailed linguistic characterizations of the language and

Judezmo in the context of Jewish languages, the geographic dialectology of Judezmo, Sephardic sociolinguistics, studies of the Hebrew component in Judezmo, and the contact between Judezmo and other languages that shared the same territory, including Slavic languages and Turkish. Over the years Prof. Bunis' research has progressed from empirical to theoretical aspects. While many of his early works were empirical in nature, dedicated to documenting and preserving the Ladino language that is on the verge of decline, his later works are more theoretical, dealing with subjects such as the Judezmo orthography as a religious and national symbol, and the theoretical implications of using a Hebrew component (Hebraisms) in Judezmo, Ḥakitia and Yiddish. His comparative studies of Judezmo and Yiddish have made a major contribution to the development of the field of Jewish interlinguistics.

Prof. Bunis' monographs are groundbreaking and have become an indispensable resource for every scholar in Judezmo and Sephardic studies. His first published book, *A Guide to Reading and Writing Judezmo* (New York: ADELANTRE! The Judezmo Society, 1975) has taught many people to read the cursive *soletreo* script traditionally used by Judezmo speakers. His *Sephardic Studies: A Research Bibliography* (New York: Garland Press, 1981) surveyed all the literature on Judeo-Spanish published until 1980; it is an important tool for every researcher in the field. His book *Judezmo: An Introduction to the Language of the Ottoman Sephardim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999) is a valuable grammatical description of this language. The book, which culminates twenty years of research, features the fundamentals of Ladino grammar together with a representative sample of authentic texts, a Judezmo-Hebrew/Hebrew-Judezmo dictionary, and extensive updated bibliography. The book's introduction offers a comprehensive discussion of the history of the Ladino language. The book is cast in the mold of Uriel Weinreich's iconic monograph *College Yiddish* that serves as a portal to Yiddish for laymen and scholars alike. Indeed, Prof. Bunis' grammar of Judezmo is an invaluable contribution to the preservation of Ladino and to its transmission to future generations, as it is a thorough gateway to the study of Ladino in universities.

Prof. Bunis also made seminal contributions to the study of the Hebrew and Aramaic component, which is a conspicuous trait common to many Jewish Languages. His exemplary book, *A Lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Modern Judezmo* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), published in 1993, was groundbreaking within the field of Jewish Languages. This book is a comprehensive dictionary of Hebraisms in Judezmo, with more than 3000 entries and many thousands of authenticated textual ex-

amples. This dictionary is the first of its kind, laying a lexicographic foundation to the study of the Hebrew and Aramaic component in other Jewish Languages. The dictionary is accompanied by a historical overview of the Hebrew component in earlier periods of Judeo-Spanish. To date, this *Lexicon* is considered a model for anyone wishing to compile a dictionary of Hebrew and Aramaic components in any Jewish Language.

His book *Voices from Jewish Salonika* (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim and Thessaloniki Ets Ahaim Society, 1999) focuses on the uniqueness of Salonika (Thessaloniki) as the center of popular Sephardic culture and of what Prof. Bunis termed a 'Judezmo ideology' and Judezmism, a subject that was also discussed in several of his important papers. The book has two parts. The first part, which comprises 350 pages, includes a wide-ranging discussion of the linguistic, socio-historical, and culture-folkloristic aspects of Salonika's Judezmo culture, as well as a glossary. The second part, encompassing no less than 649 pages, is a scientific edition of extensive humoristic serial dialogues published in Salonika Ladino periodical journals between the two World Wars. The book was received with tremendous enthusiasm by the Salonika Jewish community as well as by scholars.

Prof. Bunis is also studying the Turkish component in modern Judezmo, exploring this topic from lexical as well as historical and sociolinguistic perspectives. The lexicon of the Turkish component in modern Judezmo, which Prof. Bunis is compiling, is expected to encompass the entire Ottoman period of Judezmo and include more than 5000 lexical entries. In two other monographs Prof. Bunis laid important bibliographic foundations for future research. His book *Yiddish Linguistics: A classified bilingual index to Yiddish serials and collections, 1913-1958* (New York: Garland Press, 1994), published together with Andrew Sunshine, compiles studies in Yiddish linguistics published between 1913-1958.

In addition to these monographs, Prof. Bunis published more than 100 research papers. In these papers he makes seminal contributions to many diverse topics within Ladino studies, including the names of this language, the development of Ladino language and literature over time and across lands, Judezmo dialectology in the Ottoman Empire and in Morocco, Hebrew traditions of the Ladino speakers, the Hebrew and Aramaic component as well as the Turkish and Balkan component in Judezmo, writing Ladino in Hebrew and Latin scripts, Judezmo sociolinguistics and literary genres, Ladino Bible translations, rabbinic literature in Judezmo, Judezmo lexicography, and more.

Prof. Bunis edited the volume *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2009), which includes research papers on a variety of Jewish languages. Since 2010 he is co-editor, together with Prof. Ofra Tirosh-Becker, of the journal *Massorot: Studies in Jewish Languages and Language Traditions*. A double volume, vol. 21-22 of *Massorot* has recently appeared in 2022. He is also a co-editor (with Ivana Vučina Simović and Corinna Deppner) of *Caminos de leche y miel: Jubilee Volume in Honor of Michael Studemund-Halévy* (Barcelona: Tirocinio, 2018). Prof. Bunis is on the editorial boards of academic journals, including *El Prezente: Studies in Sephardic Culture*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *Estudios Sefardíes*, *Caligrama: Revista de Estudios Románicos*, and the *Journal of Jewish Languages*.

Prof. Bunis has dedicated a significant part of his time to the teaching of the language and its dissemination. He has been teaching Ladino language and literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for more than 40 years and had taught some courses at Tel Aviv University as well. Prof. Bunis also taught Judezmo at universities abroad, such as Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, and the University of Washington at Seattle. Many of his students have become prominent academic scholars of Ladino language, literature, folklore, and history, holding senior positions at major universities in Israel and abroad. As a renowned scholar of Ladino, Prof. Bunis is a magnet for students worldwide who travel to Jerusalem for the opportunity to study with him. After returning to their home countries some of these students have become accomplished scholars in their own right.

In 2006 Prof. Bunis was awarded the Ben-Zvi Lifetime Award for his many contributions to the study and teaching of Ladino, and in 2013 he was awarded the prestigious EMET prize under the auspices of the Israeli Prime Ministers' office for his contributions to the investigation of Ladino. Prof. David M. Bunis' lifetime achievements place him on a pedestal of his own among the greatest Ladino scholars. He was appointed an academic corresponding member of the Royal Spanish Academy, and he is a member of the Ladino Academy in Israel. He is internationally acclaimed and has made a long-lasting impact on Judezmo and Sephardic studies and on the preservation of the language for future generations.

We are proud that the present book, *Mizmor le-David: Studies in Jewish Languages*, which includes 26 papers written by colleagues and scholars from all around the globe, discusses topics that are close to Prof. Bunis' heart: Judezmo, Jewish languages, languages in contact, the Hebrew component of Jewish languages, analyses of texts in Judeo-Spanish, and

the like. The book is trilingual—the Hebrew part includes six papers, the Spanish part holds six papers, and the English part consists of fourteen contributions. Unfortunately, Tracy Harris could not contribute a paper, but her words of appreciation to Prof. Bunis were integrated with ours above. We thank all the contributing authors for their effort and acknowledgement, and for their enthusiasm to participate in this gift that we present to Prof. Bunis on his seventieth birthday.

We would also like to thank the Editorial CSIC for including this book in their series of *Publicaciones de Estudios Sefardíes* in the collection *Estudios Bíblicos, Hebraicos y Sefardíes*. Our special thanks go to the Editorial CSIC editor, Isabel Martín Jiménez, for her diligent work and kind cooperation. We would also like to thank the language editors—Nicki Weinberg for English, Miriam Nahon for Spanish, and Bat-Sheva Vardi for Hebrew—for their invaluable contributions. The following organizations provided us with financial support: Moses Mendelssohn Akademie, Halberstadt, with the recommendation of our colleague, Michael Studemund-Halévy; The National Ladino Academy in Israel and The Salonika and Greece Jewry Heritage Center; The Ladino National Authority; The Salti International Institute for Ladino Research of Bar-Ilan University; and The Center for Jewish Languages and Literatures at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel. Without their help this project could not have been completed.



David M. Bunis