BARUCH UZIEL

THE JEWISH FISHERMEN OF SALONIKA

Translated from the Hebrew by Sharon Kessler, with Illustrations by Lior Schiller

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In memory of the poet, Rachel Uziel Farchi

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In the days of the Ottoman Empire, not only did the Jews of Salonika conquer the city by mere force of number, capture its center and disperse in its neighborhoods, and not only did they take command of its economy, leaving upon everything the mark of their way of life and culture, they also conquered its port and its sea.

What set the Salonika community apart so distinctly from other Diaspora communities was that its sons worked in all the maritime trades and ruled the sea indisputably as sailors and as fishermen (although there were also Greek fishermen in the city).

This essay pertains to only one type the maritime worker in this great Jewish metropolis—the fisherman, and the following chapters are an attempt to describe his life and work as these took shape in the last generations before the destruction, insofar as the author succeeded in gathering this material from first-hand sources, before it is lost, and insofar as he could benefit from the memories of his youth.

1. Types of Fishermen:

There were two types of fishermen: (1) Grippari and (2) Moros[1].

Both caught their fish in Salonika Bay. This is a large, enclosed, quiet bay that made the place an important port city. This bay covers several kilometers and is enclosed by two inlets, one known by the Jews of the city as La Punta Chika (the small point, i.e., cape), which also served as a hiking spot for the young men of the city, and the other—La Punta Grande (the big point), more distant and longer, and which encloses the bay so as to leave only a narrow entrance. In Turkish these inlets were called küçük kara burun and büyük kara burun.

Although all the fishermen fished from their boats in the bay, the Grippari fished near the shore and slept at night on the beach, whereas the Moros fished only from small craft on the open sea and did not approach

[1] I was unable to clarify the exact meaning of the word "Grippari," but it is certainly a Greek word whose meaning pertains to fishing, and as for "Moros," its meaning is just what it sounds like—"Moors." [See endnotes for further discussion of the origin of the word Grippari. —Trans.]

land even at night. They fished in the same areas as the Grippari but farther from shore in deep waters.

2. The *Taifas* (Guilds):

The fishermen worked in groups called *taifas* (a Turkish word—taifa, in the singular, meaning "group," with a Spanish plural form), as did the port workers, sailors, and porters. The Grippari groups numbered 20-30 men each, each group with a net (*la red*) and 4-5 boats; one of these was the main boat, which bore the name *la trata*[2]. It carried the net and was twice the size of the other boats, called *barkitas*[3]. At the head of each group stood the *capitan*, who was usually also the owner of the business and who ran the taifa with an iron hand, everyone obeying his commands. His authority derived mainly from his experience at sea, his bravery, and his ability. At sea he piloted the trata, while each of the other boats was piloted by one of the fisherman, also known as the boat captain. The boats and the net belonged to the company owner, whether the captain or someone else, with the other workers usually being hired laborers. These would sometimes move from group to group (as they put it, "from net to net"–*de una red al otra*), usually because of social incompatibility. The fishermen were of all ages: from about 20 or so to old men with white beards.

Every taifa was named for the captain who commanded it (for instance, "the taifa of Moshon Pisacha"). In addition to the aforementioned captain, an old fisherman I spoke with also remembered the names of the following (Grippari) captains: Mordechai Strug (or Strugo), David Tzvi (they called him David Lera), and Tio Yaakov Nachman.

The Moros went out fishing in taifas of 3 boats, each numbering tenmen. In Salonika there were 20-25 Moros groups,
among them the families Saragussi, Almosnino, Aronakos, Daginas, Rosales, and others.

3. The Fishing Grounds

The Grippari fished in Punta Chika, Punta Grande, near the Greek village Katerina in the vicinity of Mt. Olympus, and sometimes closer to the

[2] A Spanish word meaning commerce and also trafficking in slaves. [See endnotes.–Trans.]
[3] That is to say, little boats.

city in the vicinity of the slaughterhouse[4], and as far as the place they called Eleftihori (which is the village Elftheria Hori). This area close to the city was called by the fisherman *por lo seco* (in the dry place). It took 8-10 hours by boat t get from Salonika to Katerina and from Eleftihori to Katerina 2-3 hours. In Katerina they docked about an hour's walk from the village. The villagers didn't bother them, nor could they bother them because the Jews were violent and in the days of Turkish rule felt themselves to be lords of the manor. They chose their fishing grounds in accordance with the season and the types of fish to be found there. If they didn't find fish in one place, they raised their sails (*f 'azer las velas*) and sailed to another place. It sometimes happened that they were surprised by a storm at sea, and if it was a big storm they stopped fishing and fled to the shore "with lowered sails" (*f 'azer vela chika, making a small sail*).

The Moros, as mentioned above, fished in the open sea and even spent the nights on their boats, spreading their sails above them like tents, all week long, and only on Sabbath evenings did they "rest their feet upon the ground" (*meter pie in tierra*). Sometimes, during the fishing season, they would stay at sea for even a month at a time without returning to the city (sending their catch to shore daily), although on the Sabbath they returned to the nearest spot of land and camped outdoors. In the case of a storm they fled to a jetty (*liman*).

4. Fishing Times

They fished all day long and sometimes even at night, all in accordance with the time of year and kinds of fish in season. From before Purim until the end of the Passover holiday they fished mostly at night. The beginning of the fishing season before the Purim holiday was called *el tiempo de Sarachusti*, that is, Sarahosti time, and it refers to Purim Saragossa, celebrated every year by the Saragussi (or Sarahussi), Alhadis , and Meissa[5] families in Salonika, and very well-known to the Jews of the city. After Passover and during the summer they fished mainly during the day, and only occasionally at night (when there was no catch during the day). When they fished at night they lit up the boats with glass lanterns that held grease candles.

[4] Called "zarana" by the Jews (a corruption of the Turkish word "zar-hani"), near the bay in the northwest part of the city. [Apparently *salhane*, Turkish for slaughterhouse.—Trans.]

[5] Apparently corruptions of the names Alhadef and Matsa.

They would go out to fish on Sunday morning (or sometimes earlier, after the Sabbath, if they were fishing at night), and remain at the fishing grounds until the approach of the Sabbath, returning to the city either Friday morning or around noon.

Two generations ago, each household in Salonika still had a large oven in a large kitchen, in which, each Thursday, the women would bake the weekly bread, and the *borekas* and the *pastil* for the Sabbath. The Grippari ridiculed the ignorant Moros, who didn't know the days of the week, and only the smoke rising from the chimneys of the stoves of all the homes in the city every Thursday was their signal that tomorrow was indeed the Sabbath eve. Some think the Grippari themselves depended on this signal to return to the city at the week's end.

Upon returning to the city, they devoted Friday to repairing their nets (*meramet, repairs* in Turkish), and sometimes even painted the net to prevent it from rotting.

At noon or shortly thereafter on Friday, they would return home after getting their salary and a fish *rista*[6] for the Sabbath and drinking together a few rounds of arak bought for them by the owner of the net at one of the taverns in the popular La Abashadika de la Plasa—an alley at the bottom of the hill near the Plasa Judea (Jewish market), or somewhere else near the sea.

When fish were plentiful, they stayed at the fishing grounds over the Sabbath in order to go back to work immediately after. Then on Friday evening they would pull their boats out of the water, pray the afternoon and evening prayers, and on the Sabbath they rested and mostly slept. They did not always prayer the morning prayers because they did not have their prayer shawls. On Saturday evening they would again pray the afternoon and evening prayers and then go off to work, and when placing their boats in the water would say *kon el nombre del Dio semanada buena*, ("in the name of the Lord a good week").

At night they slept by the fishing grounds in their boats in the field, in open boats in the summer, and in the winter they made a *baraka*, that is, turned the sails into a kind of tent over the boat.

In the dead season they wove a new net in the well-known place in

[6] Fish strung together head to head with plant fibers.

Salonika called Bechtchinar, the public garden by the sea at the northern end of Salonika. The work took 5–6 days, at the end of which they celebrated with a *kara*[7] (sheep heads and fish in the oven and wine), paid for out of the week's salary.

5. Fishing Methods

The Moros trawled with nets that were called *ditis*[8] and were made of thin ropes with small floats; the Grippari trawled with regular nets. Each net of this sort (Grippari) had two ropes at each end. One fisherman stayed on the shore holding the end of one of the ropes, the trata boat moved away from shore with the net, and the rope was stretched for as many "rope-lengths" (1-3) as the captain wanted. Every rope had 100 *brasadas* (*arms*, that is, standard measures). In the water, on each end of the net, stood about 10 fishermen, who wore harnesses diagonally across their shoulders that were tied to the nets and called *roncanis* or *fashas de roncan*" (roncan strips)[9] and pulled the net. When the rope held by the fisherman on the shore reached its end, the trata made a 90 degree turn and continued to the left, spreading out the net in the water. When this was done the trata made another 90 degree turn back towards the shore, with the fishermen in the water pulling the second rope tied to the net towards the shore as well, until they reached it, and thus the net was spread. The fishermen waded in where the water reached to above their knees, barefoot in the summer and in boots in the winter. When the net was spread the small boats stood at either end, two on each side, and those on board watched to see whether the fish had entered the trawl, and informed the fishermen in the water. When the net was full they pulled it to shore. Afterwards they removed the fish and piled them up on dry land. The captain received the catch and the fishermen began the sorting, that is, they divided the fish into kinds, and for each kind sorted the large ones from the small and placed them in flat, oval baskets called *kanistros*, which were usually placed in one of the small boats. Before the sorting, and right after the trawling was complete, they gathered the net and the ropes and placed them in the trata.

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[7] [Word of uncertain origin. See endnotes. – Trans.]

[8] A corruption of the Greek word "dichtis," meaning net (according to Mr. Albert Amario.) [Refers to δδίχτυ, nets. – Trans.]

[9] I did not manage to clarify the meaning of the word 'roncan.' One of the meanings of this word in Spanish is "roughly" or "crudely," and perhaps refers to the rough fabric these belts were made of. [See endnotes for further discussion. – Trans.]

6. Transporting the Fish to the City

The catch was sent to the city the next day on one of the barkitas, piloted by the captain with one or two workers. The fishermen brought the fish to the city in turns, sometimes arguing among themselves, because everyone coveted this errand in order to see his family. Those who transported the fish to the city spent the night there and received an *oka*[10] of fish to take home. The boat that transported the fish was called *el djardaro*.

The djardaro came to shore (*molo*) opposite the fish market, which was called "La Peshkaderia"[11], where they were greeted by the *kafaf*, who was appointed by the group sending the fish, or was a contractor who advanced money to the group, or sometimes the net owner, who had remained in the city. Special porters called *maryagis*[12] brought the fish in for *miri*, that is, for weighing, and weighed them, and the *miriji*, the tax collector who assessed the tax[13], set the price. He, in the words of the fishermen, "lorded over the sea." The miriji was Jewish. The kafaf would write out and calculate the bill and give it to the captain of the boat, who would return to the fishing grounds with this paper.

7. Income

The Grippari's fishing income was shared by the collective but the captain received 10 portions whereas every member of the taifa received only one. The kafaf also got one portion, but if he owned the net and the boats, he got eleven. The money was divvied up on Friday, when they returned to the city. The kafaf would get the money for the week's catch, they would go into the tavern, work out the bill, and divide up the money.

In addition to a salary, each fisherman also got fish for the Sabbath, for transporting the catch to the city, and for his food out at sea. This is how the fish were divvied up at the fishing grounds: when they were done fishing for the day, the captain would take fish from the day's catch and put them in small, more-or-less equal piles, as many as there were fishermen. Afterwards they would move one fisherman away from the group, with his back to the piles of fish so he couldn't see them. One member of the group would point to one of the piles of fish and ask aloud: "Whose are these?" The fisherman with his back to the fish would call the

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[10] A Turkish measurement unit equaling 1.284 kilograms.
[11] The Peshkaderia was burned along with most of the city in 1917.
[12] [Quite likely misspelled in Hebrew. See endnotes re: this & the word kafaf. – Trans.]
[13] Miri, Turkish for tax; miriji – the tax collector who calculated the tax. Most of the comments on the Turkish words are from Mr. Albert Amario.

name of one man, and so forth and so on until he had called everyone's name. Then each would get his alloted pile as explained above and all would turn to the task of cooking or frying the fish and eating them. If the day's catch was not successful they ate bread and salted fish. The fishermen ate in small groups — friends or family — but the oil, the salt, the vegetables, and the pepper were "together," that is, shared.

8. Selling the Fish

As mentioned, the fish were brought to the Peshkaderia, the big fish market, which was an immense, vaulted hall that ran the width of the block of waterfront houses. It had two gates: the entry gate facing the *molo – the shoreline*, and the exit gate facing the *segundo molo* (*second shoreline*), which was the road running parallel to the beach. The length of the hall was about 50 meters.

The molo gate served mainly for bringing in the fish and the gate to the opposite street served mainly for the patrons, who used it both to enter and exit. Along the entire length of this hall ran the fish counters (*tablas*), in two facing rows, and next to each, its owner, the fishmonger. These very loudly announced their wares to the customers, who circled among the stalls examining the quality and freshness of the fish, choosing and bargaining. The clamor was especially great on the morning the fish were brought from the sea, sometimes still flapping. Salonika's port always teemed with fish, in great abundance, and with many different kinds and shapes of fins and silvery, shiny scales. There were many kinds of fish there, whose names, virtues, flavor, method of preparation, and season were well-known to seller and buyer alike due to long tradition and generations of experience.

The purchased fish were weighed and then strung together using green fibers of a plant called *varillas*, and this was how the customer brought the fish home. Fish strung together this way were called a *rista*.

9. Qualities and Professional Competition

In some fishing families, the trade was passed down from generation to generation. To those already mentioned, we add the Petalon family, who were very distinguished people.

The fishermen were mostly illiterate and uneducated; exceptional in their ignorance and crudity were the Moros, who usually had thick beards, but were also very devout and respectful of Torah scholars. The fringes of the fishermen's tallit were visible under their tunics as they worked, and amulets written by scribes were sometimes seen hanging from their necks. Of the Moros it is told that during storms they would call out to God to stop the storm and threaten Him, so to speak, that if He did not comply they would throw their ritual garments into the sea. It is moreover told that the fishermen did not know how to count the days of the Omer, and when perplexed would simply say, "Onwards...onwards...one more than yesterday."

Sometimes arguments over the fishing grounds would break out among the fishermen, and sometimes there were arguments with groups of Greek fishermen. Sometimes there would be a fistfight but usually the argument would end in a shouting match alone.

The fishermen were poor, and popular belief had it that they were destined to remain as such because of the curse cast upon them by the fish for removing them from their home in the sea.

Besides the groups of Greek fishermen, competition also came from groups of Italian fishermen who fished mostly on the deep sea and brought their catch to the city in their boats, known in popular idiom as *povorotas*.

10. Social Life

In Salonika there was a synagogue called Old Sicily, also called El Kahal de los Peshkadores, to which the fishermen's families generally belonged. The affinity of the city's fishermen to this synagogue also found expression in two unique things:

1. Any dispute, especially with regard to their portions in the "net," would be brought before the judges of this synagogue, from among the Rabbinic member families, such as the Beraha family. These same judges were well verses in the rights of the fishing families and their complex accounting schemes in matters of their "portions," and the fishermen accepted their verdict unconditionally.

2. Every year the fishermen held a large banquet in this synagogue, to which all its judges and scholars were invited, gave a Torah lesson, and blessed their enterprise.

11. National Origins of the Fishermen

There is no doubt that the fishing and maritime trades in Salonika were practiced by Jews for many generations and usually passed down from father to son. Certainly generations of small Jewish-owned boats prowled the city's bay and brought in a vast array of fin and scale for food, and Jewish sailors on their cargo boats (*maunas*) had free rein over its port, were importers, and even shipped out goods from the city's large hinterland: grain and hides, opium and silkworms, as well as all the other goods produced in Greater Macedonia.

But when did they first begin this colonization of the sea? And did the "colonists' bring their profession with them, and if so, from where? This question is shrouded in fog. Nonetheless, it appears that we are not exempt here from turning attention to several facts that could, perhaps, shed a bit of light on this question:

As we know, at the time of the great fire of Salonika in 1917, there were still synagogues in the city that were named for their members' places of origin: Il Kahal de Pulia, Il Kahal de Aragon, Il Kahal de Mallor (Mallorca), Il Kahal de Italia (Old and New), Il Kahal de Ashkenaz, and so forth. As the word *kahal* indicates, these were not merely synagogues but distinct communities, organized (around the synagogue) by place of origin, often preserving their own unique High Holiday prayer book, and always their own unique customs, their own community leaders and judges, as well as separate schools and burial societies. Only much later did all of Salonika's Jews unite into one community. As we also know, up until the aforementioned fire, which gutted all the city's synagogues, each Jew in Salonika belonged, at least in theory, to the synagogue of his place of origin. One of these synagogues, the (Old) Holy Community of Sicily, was also called *El Kahal de los Peshkadores* (The Fishermen's Synagogue),[14] to which most of the fishing families apparently belonged.

[14] Until 1917 this synagogue stood behind the Great Talmud Torah, near and area known as Meydan de Lubin, apparently once the center of the Jewish quarter.

But the main point is this: As said above, they settled, before the Torah scholars of this same synagogue, their disputes over "portions of the net" or sale of a widow's or orphan's portion to the purchaser of the deceased's man's place at work. These sages were well-versed in the financial intricacies of these portions. As said above, the fishermen also held their annual parties at the Old Holy Kahal of Sicily, to which they would invite the sages of this same synagogue to give Torah sermons during the festive meal. Such a deep connection would not be possible without belonging to this synagogue.

Does this aforementioned fact prove the fishermen originated from the island of Sicily? It can be assumed so, also on the following grounds:

Dr. Michael Molho, researcher of the history of Salonika's Jews, writes that the synagogue was named for the fishermen "because the fishermen used to gather there,"[15] and he adds below his comment that "the elders still remember when this synagogue still served as a gathering place for the fishermen." Rabbi Yitzhak Beraha, of blessed memory, who died in Tel Aviv in 1948 (at the age of 74), said, in answer to my question, that this synagogue was named for the fishermen because "the Moros would give the Torah scholars money from their earnings in order that they pray and read from the Torah for their success, at this same synagogue, to which belonged Rabbi Shaul Molho, a renowned rabbi and righteous man."

Clearly these words do not run counter to the supposition that the relationship of the fishermen to the Old Sicily Kahal and their strong ties to this same synagogue (that is, community) testify to their Sicilian origins.

Here it is worthwhile to cite R. Ovadya of Bartenura, from his journey to the Land of Israel in the years 1487-88, who writes of finding, in Palermo, Sicily, Jews "who were blacksmiths and coppersmiths and porters and all manner of field worker…and compulsory labor for the King weighed most heavily upon them, for they are obliged to go at the King's bidding, whenever there is new work there, such as pulling boats ashore, building dikes, and so on."[16]

As is known, the Jews of Sicily were banished at the end of 1492 by decree of exile issued by the Catholic kings because Sicily belonged

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[15] Michael S. Molho, *Contribución a la Historia de Salonico*; 5692 (1932); p. 22.

[16] *The Travel Letters of R. Ovadya of Bartenura.* [See endnotes. – Trans.]

to the Kings of Aragon. Many of the exiles made their way to Salonika, and in 1505 the first exiles were joined by a few Sicilian families who had remained for some time before that in Italy.[17] The Sicilians who came to Salonika were, for the most part, "simple artisans, blacksmiths, wagon makers, and fishermen."[18] Practitioners of these trades, who certainly were not wealthy, went to work in them immediately upon arriving in their new home, including, also, the fishermen among them, who found before them ample opportunity for work in the large bay of the city that was almost always teeming with fish.

The name Moros that was given to Salonika's fishermen, and by which they were known until this very day modern times, also proves that their primarily Sicilian origin.

Were we to delve deeper into the fishermen's surnames, their fishing methods, or their tools, we might unearth further corroboration for our supposition.[19] Meanwhile, one of the Moros surnames—Sarahussi or Saragussi, serves as contributing evidence to our supposition for the Sicilian origins of the fishermen, or at least the Moros among them, by virtue of the following:

The Saragussi family[20] was one of three who maintained the tradition of Saragossa Purim or Purim de los Siracusa, which they celebrated joyously for hundreds of years together with the Alhadis and Meissa families. The meaning of the name Saragussi is, seemingly, "resident of Saragossa" (in Spain) and the story of the Saragossa Megillah took place in the capital of Aragon, but some researchers believe this is not the case, and that the story told in the Saragossa Megillah took place in Syracusa, and that the meaning of the name Saragossi is someone from Syracusa (in Sicily), as writes Shlomo Rosanes in his book, *Life of the Jews in Togarmah* (Turkey—Trans.)

> "The Holy Kahal Cicillanus, as it was first called, then, later, Sicilia, after 70 years as a community, separated due to a dispute between them, approximately in the year 1561, and were called the Holy Old Kahal of Sicily and the New Holy Kahal of Sicily (R. Samuel de Medina, *Rashdam*: '*Yoreh De'ah*,' Salonika, 1594, No.

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[17] Ibid. [Refers not to Bartenura's letters but to a footnote missing in the original. – Trans.]
[18] Ibid. [As above. – Trans.]
[19] The word *djardaro*, for example, despite its Italian ring, is not Italian and might be Sicilian. [See endnotes.]
[20] Salonika had many Saragussis, in many professions, not only fishing.

> 131). And it is known of this island, in the waters of Italy, that it belonged to the Kingdom of Aragon during the expulsion of 1492 and was included in the edict, and in the opinion of some writers, the Saragossa Megillah, read until this say in Salonika and in some cities in Turkey, does not originate in the capital city of the Kingdom of Aragon, Syracosta (Zaragossa–Saragossa), but in the big city also called by the Jews Syracosta on the island of Sicily, and called by other peoples 'Syracusa'."[21]

Rosanes adds, "but I did not succeed in clarifying this properly." However, if we add this supposition to the other testimonies that were brought above, they reinforce one another. It is worthwhile to add that the name of the city is not mentioned at all in the Saragossa Megillah, which says only that the story took place "in the days of the King Saragossanus."

An offhand remark made to this writer by an old fisherman also corroborates in its spontaneity. This same fisherman, speaking about the beginning of the fishing season before Purim, called it, as mentioned above, "el tiempo de Sarahusti" that is, the season of Saragossa Purim (which is celebrated on the 18th of Shvat), and confirmed to me that this is how this fishing season was called by all the fishermen. This proves that Saragossa Purim, known to the rest of Salonika's residents by hearsay alone, was so ingrained in the experience of the fishermen that they used it to mark a period of the year that played an important part in their lives.

Research into the origin of the Alhadis (that is, Alhadef) and Meissa (that is, Matsa) families, who shared in the celebration of "Purim de los Sarahossis," will undoubtedly contribute to determining where the story in the Megillah took place and the origin of the Salonika fishermen.

12. The Salonika Fishermen in Israel

The first fisherman to immigrate to (pre-State) Israel was Shlomo Ashkenazi, who came in 1920, alone, settled in Tel Aviv, and later in Atlit, where he trained a group from *Hapoel Hatzsair*. He suffered terribly from malaria, his group dissolved, and he returned to Tel Aviv, where he was joined by two fishermen from Tiberias who spoke Arabic and with whom

[21] Shlomo Rosanes, *Divrey Yemei Yisrael Be-Togarmah: Part I* (Dvir, Tel Aviv), p. 135.

he had no common language. In the end, he returned to Salonika.

In 1924, an effort was made by the Jewish Agency, in conjunction with the Zionist Federation in Greece, to absorb fishermen of Salonika in the Land of Israel. A special committee to this end had been established earlier, by the Zionist Federation there, whose members were the martyr Yizhak Angel, as well as – may they be distinguished by long lives –Yizhak Alvo (secretary of the Federation at that time), and Shlomo Gargir (secretary of Keren Heyesod there). A few Grippari families were brought over and settled in Acre, because they believed the Acre Bay was good for fishing. After light opposition, the Arab fishermen accepted the situation. They also feared the blows dealt by our fishermen, and once, when a dispute broke out, the Jews beat and injured them, causing panic in the city. After this incident they became friends, to such an extent that the Arabs came to the aid of their families during the 1929 riots.

The Salonika fishermen in Acre suffered hunger, and when we visited them in 1927 – Mr. Yitzhak Alvo, his wife, Lydia Alvo, and this writer – we found them, their wives, and children, in a very poor physical and emotional state. In 1928, Mr. Shlomo Gargir was sent to Acre by the Zionist Federation in Greece. The fishermen claimed that if they would be permitted to fish in deep waters, they would succeed. So a motor boat and new nets were purchased with money collected in Greece by Keren Hayesod. The end result was that the fishermen stuck it out for 5 years, but the 1929 riots dealt the final blow that forced them to disperse to Haifa and Tel Aviv as fishmongers or port workers.

In answer to my request for details regarding the immigration of these fishermen, Mr. Yitzhak Alvo of Haifa wrote to me, in his letter of September 1958, among other things, the following:

Bringing the group of Salonika fishermen to Israel was the fruit of an initiative on the part of the Land of Israel Office in Salonika.

In the years 1923-24 letters were exchanged regularly between Salonika and the Department of Trade and Industry of the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem.

Mr. Tishbi, of blessed memory, who headed that department at the time, assisted us greatly with the fishermen's immigration.

In the archives of the Zionist Executive there should be a detailed report, signed by me, as head of the Land of Israel Office, on the Salonika fishermen, how they worked, their history, as well as all the other details on the makeup of the group.

In 1924 a group of 3 fishermen was sent to Eretz Yisrael and, together with me, visited the national institutions in Jerusalem and clarified the details of the plan together with the late Dr. Ruppin, who, it must be said, opposed our plan from the beginning for a practical reason: He claimed that the Salonikans'

method was to fish close to the shore, while the suitable method here is to fish far from the shore.

There was a long argument between Dr. Ruppin on one side and the late Tishbi and myself on the other, and in the end it was agreed to make the attempt and dedicate the required funds.

The delegation visited the entire coast from Caesarea to Acre. We made contact with the unsuccessful fishermen in both those places, heard their complaints, and also the reasons for their failure.

The group of fishermen made aliyah in 1924 and was composed of the Beraha, Strugo, Gattegno, Saias, and other families. The group consisted of 45 people and was settled in Acre. From the beginning there were disputes among the members and with the national institutions.

The disputes continued throughout the group's existence. Many efforts were made on the part of the national institutions, the Land of Israel Office in Salonika, and the Greek immigrants in Tel Aviv, but to no avail, and in 1927 the group dispersed. Some settled in Haifa and continued to work in the Haifa port and some found work in Tel Aviv.

One young member of the group, Mr. Shabtai Gattegno (now 53 years old), told this writer the following:

I came with a group of fishermen in 1924-25. The Jewish Agency brought us. In Salonika the Zionist Federation was responsible for the matter. Mr. Shlomo Gargir took care of us in Salonika and the late Mr. Tishbi here. The newcomers were: the captain, Mordechai Beraha (who came without his family and later returned to Salonika), Aharon Beraha, Daniel Beraha, Gavriel Gettegno, David Beraha, Elia Shoel, Aharon Strugo, and Shabtai Algava, all married, with their families, and 5 bachelors: Moshe Gettegno, Eliahu Shlomo, Pinchas Gettegno, Avraham Beraha, Avraham Naar, and myself. Most were fishermen and two, boat owners. We were preceded by Mordechai Beraha and Gavriel Gettegno, who came to negotiate with the Jewish Agency in 1922, and they chose Acre because it is situated on a closed bay. We were in Acre 5 years, from 1924-29, and we left for good at the time of the riots.

We arrived first at Jaffa Port, spent 2 nights in Jaffa, after which we were taken to the Immigrant Center in Bat Galim, Haifa. We stayed there in tents 15 days, after which we were taken to Acre. The women, children, and luggage went by train, and we, the men, in the boats. At first they thought to send the boats with Arab sailors from Haifa, because the Jewish Agency thought we wouldn't find the way, but since the Arabs demanded 100 lira to transfer the boats, we said we would bring them, and we did. When we got to Acre, we waited 1 ½ hours for the permit to come ashore, and suddenly we saw a gathering near the shore. We yelled to the

"reis el mina" (port supervisor; el mina, harbor in Arabic), who was a Christian Arab. Upon hearing our shouts, 2 Arab policemen appeared, and a British policeman stood on the dock, armed with a rifle. Mordechai Beraha and Gavriel Gattegno went with the policemen to the port supervisor's office and asked why they aren't letting us in, to which he replied that the Arabs objected. At the train station, as well, they didn't let the women enter the city. This was done quietly, without commotion. The police and the port supervisor argued with the Arab sailors (bahris). Gavriel Gattegno and Beraha phoned (the late) Tishbi in Haifa, and after an hour-and-a-half we received a permit to enter the city. We hired camels and got the women and children from the train station and without interference went to the houses prepared by Gattegno and Beraha. We spent 15 days learning the territory, after which we went out to fish. After about a month, when the Arabs saw that we were professionals, they argued with us one evening over fishing grounds that were fished by turns (previously we had gotten a turn by creating a commotion). This time they claimed that we didn't deserve a turn and had gotten our turn by force. That evening we caused a furor, used our fists, and got a turn. The local Jews closed their shops, and we were immediately surrounded by police and taken to jail: Pinhas Gattegno, Avraham Beracha, Aharon Beraha, Daniel Beraha, and I. We were soaked. We spent the night in Acre Prison and in the morning were taken to the Magistrate Court. The "reisim" of the Arab fishermen came of their own volition and we made peace and kissed. We paid a fine of 100 prutot each. The fine was paid for us by the Arab "reisim."

The Jewish Agency supported us with the sum of 3 Eretz Yisrael lira per person per month.

After 2 years, the Jewish Agency brought a group of fishermen from Russia, who were, in their words, experts, and they worked there and hung on for 5-6 months and we taught them the skills of the trade. There were 12 men in their group, some of whom were married and brought their families to Acre. After 6 months they left us the boats and nets (which were of no use to us) and left, and we hung on until 1929. During the riots, 2 or 3 of our men who were in Acre (the others had gone to seek their livelihood in Tel Aviv or Haifa because there was no work), along with their wives and children, were taken to Acre Prison by the police and by Arab fishermen friends, and found shelter there. Afterwards the Jewish Agency came and removed them from Acre.

While in Acre, we sold the fish to the Arab merchants. By the way: our group's "kafaf" from Salonika, Yehoshua Naar, came with us to Acre, but here we realized he wasn't needed and he went back.

With the conquest of Salonika by the Greeks in 1912, the city's Jewish fishermen began to lose their foothold and little by little came the end of the practice of this trade there, which the Jewish had clung to for many generations.

In my story "The Vow,"[22] I tried to give a vibrant description of the Salonika fishermen, and I hope that story and this essay will contribute to the knowledge of their lives, still awaiting more exhaustive research, especially with regard to how this trade took hold in past generations.

[22] "Haneder." This story, which appeared in *Orlogin*, the literary journal edited by Avraham Shlonsky, and in Uziel's novella collection *Sh'arey Saloniki* (Gates of Salonika), is not available in English. – Trans.

Endnotes

Page 4: *Grippari*.
γρίπευς; γρίπος

As per Liddell & Scott, (*A Greek-English Lexicon)* and Kahane & Tietze (*The Lingua Franca in the Levant: Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin*), the ancient Greek word *grippos* means to haul or take fish; *grippeus* is Greek for fisherman. Makris (*Ships in Economic History*) mentions *grippos*, "fishing boats," as does Mineo (*The Greek Correspondence of Bartolomeo Mineo*, Diana Gilliland, John Melville-Jones, eds., translators); the editors cite the same Greek source as the others and describe the *grippo* as "a small, one-masted, lateen-rigged boat, with oars and a sail, manageable…by 2 or 3 men, for fishing, trade, and the transport of a small number of soldiers; very like the …καΐκί… ." I also presume a connection to the Hebrew word for *beach seine: reshet grippa* (רשת גריפה).

Page5: *Trata*. Acc. To Kahane & Tietze, *trata* means net or small boat. *Trata* in the sense of *trade*, from the Anglo-Saxon *trada*, is apparently of a Different etymology altogether, related to *tread* or *footprint*.

Page 8: (1) *Kara*; (2) *Roncan*
(1) Possibly *kelle*, a traditional Turkish snack of sheep's head, commonly eaten with beer and *raki*. (2) Note also *roncha*, Spanish for weal.

Page 9: (1) *Kafaf*; (2) Maryaji
(1) Perhaps from *qaffa* or *kafa*, an Ottoman loanword from Arabic meaning *head*, as cited in Göksel & Kerslake (*Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*) and Wikipedia's *List of Replaced Loan Words in Turkish,* with the duplicate syllable indicating someone who practices a trade or profession. (2) Possibly *mâliye,* tax office, as per the eminent Ladino scholar, Dr. Isaac Jerusalmi, in *From Ottoman Turkish to Ladino*. (The Turkish noun suffix ji (ci) is used to form the name of a profession.) Even after accounting for every imaginable misspelling and searching countless Ottoman sources, I could find no evidence of such a word relating to porterage. The similarity to *miriji*, the tax collector, might indicate some other mistake or corruption in the original Hebrew text, or in the Turkish terms as provided to the author.

Page 14: (1) Bartenura; (2) *Djardaro*
The quotes on this page quite obviously are not from Bartenura's letters, written in 1487-88. There appears to be a missing footnote in the original. Perhaps the quotes are from Molho's *Contribución*, cited just previously, but as the only record I could find of this work was on microfiche in a basement warehouse of the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem, I chose not to pursue the matter further. (2) I assume, rather, a Ladino, Spanish, or Portuguese origin, related, for example, to *giro d'aro* or *dar un jiro*, in the4 sense of round trip.

Colophon

My translation of Baruch Uziel's essay, הדיגים היהודים בסלוניקי, was published as a letterpress printed chapbook at my press in Pardes Hanna, Israel. The chapbook was printed on Rives Lightweight from hand-set Centaur and Arrighi types on a 6.25 x 9 inch platen press of uncertain lineage. The covers papers are Arches, with Bhutan Tsasho endpapers and back pockets of Lokta Inlaid. Artwork by Lior Schiller was screen printed on Arches paper by Sharon Kessler from transparencies provided by the artist, under the guidance of the inimitable Shoshana Shpinner, of Oscar Haifa Art Printers (www.oscarartprinters.co.il). Due to its historical value, I chose to make the full English text available on my website. Anyone interested in purchasing the hand-set chapbook can contact me at sharkess@netvision.net.il.

Sharon Kessler, poet, translator, & editor, fell in love during a writer's residency at the Santa Fe Art Institute, when she stumbled upon a museum exhibit of old printing presses. She holds degrees from S.U.N.Y. Binghamton & from Stanford University, where she was a Mirrielees Scholar in Literature & Creative Writing. Her poems have appeared in journals, anthologies, and chapbooks. Born in Brooklyn & raised in Bohemia, Long Island, she has lived in Israel since 1981.

Lior Schiller (Clop), b. 1989, recently finished her illustration studies at *The Art Department* (TAD). She is very interested in the fantasy and sci-fi genres, but also in the fantasy of life. Examples of her work, full CV, & contact information can be found on her website, www.liorclop.com.