

Introduction to Keshet U-Magen

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Scion of a rabbinic family heavily involved in legal deliberations pertaining to the Jewishness of the *conversos*, Simeon Ben Zemah [1361-1444] composed an anti-Christian polemic that is striking in a number of ways. The passage in question is methodologically noteworthy in that invokes -- and cites -- passages from the New Testament alongside contemporaneous rabbinic sources. Duran concludes that the practice of baptism among the earliest (non-Jewish) followers of Jesus, was intended as a way of initiating pagans into the Jewish legal category (of biblical origin) of "resident alien". He claims, in other words, that the earliest missions to the Gentiles were designed (by rabbinic Jews) to bring non-monotheists into a legally-recognized "outer circle" of Judaism.

This extraordinary passage should be considered within the following historical contexts:

1. The efforts by humanists -- Jews as well as Christian -- to reconstruct the historical and doctrinal origins of Christianity by mining ancient sources without overt theological bias.
2. The effort of certain Jews who were learned in Christian sources -- and particularly of those involved in "reclaiming" conversos -- to evaluate Christianity both historically and theologically, in order to determine whether it warranted the label of "idolatry".

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Keshet U-Magen
Simeon ben Zemah Duran, 14th - 15th centuries

Translated by Talya Fishman, University of Pennsylvania, USA

But [Jesus's] intention was that [the gentiles] fulfill the Noahide commandments. And thus they wrote that Jesus commanded the gentiles to undergo baptism [in the name of] the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and that, by means of this baptism, they would be saved -- after acceptance of [the prohibitions against] idolatry and against sexual immorality, and [the doctrine of] Free Will. And in this they relied on our Rabbis, of blessed memory, who said [*BT, Yeb. 46b*] that if one underwent circumcision but didn't undergo immersion, it is as if he was not circumcised. Therefore, they established baptism as a principle in accepting converts. And it seems that his [i.e., Jesus'] intention was to accept [each] as a resident alien, whom we call "an uncircumcised convert"-- who takes upon himself the seven Noahide commandments.

That which demonstrates that they only did this to attract gentiles to their faith is what one of them sent in an epistle to another, regarding one who had written him saying: [Galatians 5:2] "I, so-and-so, say to you that if you undergo circumcision, the Messiah will be of no avail to you." Now, how would it hurt them if they were circumcised? Rather, he wrote this to them to reassure them, lest they feel fearful because they were uncircumcised.

He also wrote to them testifying to them that anyone who was circumcised is bound by the entire Torah -- and in this he taught the eternity of the Torah for Israel. For inasmuch as one who is circumcised is bound by the entire Torah, he must circumcise his son, in keeping with the Torah's commandment. And this will continue from son to the son's son, until the end of the world [i.e., forever].

And it is also written by him^[1] [Acts 28:17-18] that when one of the Apostles was brought to Rome, bound in chains, he called to the Jews who were there and said to them that he had not done anything against the Jews, and that he did not differ at all with their ancestral custom. He also said that the Jews of Jerusalem had not found in him anything deserving of the death-penalty. And had he differed with the Torah, he would have been deserving of the death-penalty.

And similarly, he wrote in one of his books that he believes in everything which is in the Torah.

And in another place he wrote that he had not sinned against the Torah of the Jews^{EMW 2004}

He further wrote, rebuking the Jews, in the *Epistle to the Romans* (2:17-26):

If you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the Torah, and boast of [your relationship to] God, and recognize His will, and discern that which is useful because you are an expert in the Torah. And if you are sure that you are a guide for the blind, and a light for those who walk in darkness; and that you can teach those who do not know, having, in the Torah, the form of wisdom and truth: Why should you then rebuke others, and not rebuke yourselves? You preach, "Do not steal", but you steal. "Do not commit adultery", but you commit adultery. "Distance yourself from idolatry", but you steal from the sacred. "Glory in the Torah," but by sinning against the Torah, you diminish the Divine Glory. And the Divine Name is desecrated among the gentiles on account of you, as it is written.^[2] Circumcision will, indeed, benefit you, if you observe the Torah. But if you sin against the Torah, your circumcision will be considered uncircumcision. And if the uncircumcised one observes the covenant of the Torah, his uncircumcision will be considered as circumcision."

Until here, Romans. He thus teaches that the Jewish people are obligated to observe the Torah -- and that if even the uncircumcised observe the Torah, it will be reckoned to them as if they were [bound by a] covenant.

But this is only true for someone who was forcibly converted [*anus*] and was unable to be circumcised, or whose brothers died due to circumcision; or for resident aliens. The implication of these words is that Jesus and his students never intended to abolish the Jews' observance of the Torah.

Endnotes

^[1] Shimon ben Zemah Duran seems to regard Paul as the author of Acts.

^[2] Isaiah 52:5: "And constantly, unceasingly, my Name is reviled".

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Keshet U-Magen Simeon ben Zemah Duran, 14th - 15th centuries

Prepared by Talya Fishman, University of Pennsylvania, USA

שמעון בן צמח דורן
קשת ומגן

אבל כוונתו היתה שיקיימו [ז] מצוות בני נח וכן כתבו הם כי י"שו צוה אותם שיטבלו הגוים [בשם] האב והבן והרוח ובטבילה זו יהיו נושעים אחר קבלת ע"ז ועריות ונחירה וסמכו בזה על ר"זל שאמרו מל ולא טבל כאלו לא מל ע"כ לקחו הטבילה עקר בקבלת הגרים ונראה שכוונתו היתה לקבל גר תושב הנקרא אצלנו גר ערל המקבל עליו ז' מצות ב"ן [בני נח] ומ שיראה שלא עשו כן אלא למשיך הגוים לאמונתם הוא מה ששלח להם א' מהם אגרת לא' מהאומר שכתב לו בה אני פלוני אומר לכם שאם תמולו לא יועיל לכם המשיח כלל ומם [מה] היה מזיק להם אם ימולו אלא כתב להם כן כדי לחזק לבכם ושלא תחלוש דעתם מפני הוותם ערלים: עוד כתב להם כי הוא מעיד כי כל מי שנימול הוא משועבד לכל התורה [כלה] והרי הודה בכאן במצוות התורה לישראל כי כיון שהנימול משועבד לכל התורה [כלה] ימול את בנו כמצות התורה וכן נמשך מבן לבן הבן ע"ס [עד סוף] העולם וכן כתוב אצלם כי כשהובא א' מהשלוחים לרומא אסור בנחושתיים קרא ליהודים שהיו שם וא"ל כי הוא לא עשה דבר נגד יהודים ואינו חולק כלל על מנהגי האבות גם אמר כי לא מצאו היהודים שבירושלים נגדו דבר חיוב מיתה ואם היה חלוק [חולק] על התורה כבר כבר היה חייב מיתה וכן זה אמר בא' מספריו כי הוא מאמין בכל מה שכתוב בתורה ובמקום אחר כתב כי לא חטא בתורת ישראל. עוד כתב זה באגרת לרומיים אמר מוכיח ליהודים תקרא ותנוח בתורה ותתכבד בה' ותכיר רצונו ותבחן המועיל בחיותך בקי בתורה ותבטח בעצמך היותך מנהיג העורים ותהיה אור להולכים בחשך ותהיה מלמד הבלתי יודעים ותהיה לך צורת החכמה והאמת בתורה למה תוכיח זולתך ולא תוכיח עצמך תהיה דורש לא תגנוב ואתה גנב לא תנאף ואתה מנאף ותרחיק ע"ז ותגנוב הקדשים תתכבד בתורה ובהיותך פושע בתורה תקל בכבוד השי"ת ושם השם בעדכם מחולל בגוים כמו שכתוב המילה אמנם תועיל אם תשמור התורה ואם תחטא בתורה ברייתך תחשב לך לערלה ואם הערל ישמור ברית התורה ערלתו תחשב לברית עכ"ד. והוא הודה כי בני ישראל חייבים לשמור התורה ואף הערלים אם ישמרו התורה תחשב להם לברית אלו הם דבריו. ואין זה אמת אלא במי שנאנס ולא נימול או שמתו אחיו מחמת מילה או בגרים תושבים מכלל אלו הדברים נראה כי לא כווננו יש"ו ותלמידיו לבט 0-19-516609-4 ל התורה מישראל.

Publisher: Published: Livorno, 1790?; reprint: Jerusalem, 1970

Endnotes

[1] Additions in bracket based on the critical edition of *Keshet u-magen* by Murciano Prosper (Ph.D. dissertation, NYU, 1975).

Introduction to Respuesta A Un Cavallero Frances

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Notes: Cited in Yosef Kaplan "Qelitatam shel gerim ba-kehilah ha-portugalit bi-Amsterdam ba-Meah ha-17: Parshat Lorenzo Escuerdo" in Proceedings of the Seventh World Jewish Congress (Jerusalem, 1981), vol. 4: 100

Orobio de Castro (himself a former *converso*) was heavily involved in the project of encouraging conversos to return to their ancestral faith in seventeenth century Amsterdam. The distinction made in this passage between "the seed of Abraham and Children of Israel" on the one hand, and Gentiles who recognize the God of Truth, on the other, illuminates two broad historical developments:

1. It reflects the emergence of a biological (dare I say, "racial?") definition of Jewishness among conversos and former conversos, a legacy of Iberian rhetoric about "*limpieza de sangre*."
2. It may be seen as evincing Jewish anxieties about accepting Old Christians as converts to Judaism at a time when religious identities were particularly labile. [See Introduction to *Kol Sakhal*.]

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**Respuesta A Un Cavallero Frances
Orobio de Castro, 17th century**

Translated by Talya Fishman, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Notes: Cited in Yosef Kaplan "Qelitatam shel gerim ba-kehilah ha-portugalit bi-Amsterdam ba-Meah ha-17: Parshat Lorenzo Escuerdo" in Proceedings of the Seventh World Jewish Congress (Jerusalem, 1981), vol. 4: 100

So too, the covenant between God and the seed of Abraham and the Children of Israel will last forever. And the gentiles who recognized the God of Truth and worshiped Him will be gerim in Israel, and beloved of God. But they will never become Israel, or the seed of Abraham. For Israel is not a spiritual entity, but rather, a nation -- for better or worse....

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וכך תעמוד לנצח הברית בין ה' לזרע אברהם ובני ישראל, והגויים שהכירו את אלוהי האמת ועבדוהו יהיו גרים בישראל, ויהיו אהובים לאלוהים אך לעולם לא יהיו לישראל ולא לזרע אברהם, כי ישראל אינו יש רוחני אלא אומה, אם רעה ואם טובה---

Archive: Ets Hayim Library Amsterdam, MS. 48D6, folio 307r.

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Introduction to She'elot u-Teshuvot Yakhin u-Vo'az

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Between 1391-1492, large numbers of Spanish Jews underwent baptism, some under threat of violence, and some of their own volition. As Jewish husbands and wives, parents and children, found themselves intimately-related to kinfolk who professed Christianity, a range of rabbinic legal problems arose pertaining to marriage, divorce, inheritance and other matters of personal status. Rabbi Zemah b. Shlomo Duran of 15th century Algiers was from a family of rabbis who addressed many of these legal queries.

In the excerpted passage of the Responsum, R. Zemah reprimands the interlocutor for the term he had used in referring to former *conversos*. This population, he emphasizes, are of Jewish *stock*, and thus must not be perceived as converts to Judaism.

As in the excerpted passage from Orobio de Castro (of seventeenth century Amsterdam), R. Zemah's remarks point to the emergence of a "biological" definition of Jewishness (among Iberian Jews and *conversos*) and stresses the need to distinguish, theologically, between New Christians who revert to their ancestral faith and Old Christians who convert to Judaism.

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**She'elot u-Teshuvot Yakhin u-Vo'az
Zemah ben Shlomo Duran, 15th century**

Translated by Talya Fishman, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Fez, to the learned Rabbi Nathan Busti and his colleagues, may the Rock preserve and keep them:

You asked, my brothers, regarding one who came and claimed that he was a kohen-- whether or not one can believe him, for calling him first to read from the Torah.

Answer: ...

And even though there are a small number of them who mix with the idolators and take their daughters as wives, they are only the tiny minority-- [Jer. 3:14] one from a town and two from a family. And one of them who does this is alienated from the rest and despised, and they subsequently refrain from mixing with his offspring/seed. For they consider this seed as idolatrous, as is the law, since his mother is an idolator...

I will now return and respond to your words, in which you wrote ruling invalidation of the priesthood for those of the *anusim* who come and claim that they are held to be *kohanim*. First you wrote, using these words:

Regarding the matter of these gerim who come from the Kingdom[s] of Catalan and Castile and Portugal to convert [*lehitgayyer*] and to enter under the wings of the Divine Presence. And each one of them says (that) "I am a *kohen*", etc.

And this is the gist of your language.

One who examines your words will find in them a great error. For God forbid that Jews in all their places of residence would be stupid [enough] to call up first to the Torah, for the *kohen's* portion, one who was an idolator and converted. For this is not done in Israel. And an idolator who converts can never claim and say that he is a *kohen*. For where would this priesthood of his come from? And how can you pose this question?

You must catch that these [conversos] are not called by the term *gerim* [i.e., "converts"] for they are [Isaiah 41:14] *the worm of Jacob*; they are considered [*ibid*] *maggots of Israel*, and

are not called "gerim" for this purpose, but rather, penitents...

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And we have learned that they [i.e., the talmudic sages] only use the term "*ger*" for one who was an idolator and entered under the wings of the Divine Presence, and took upon himself the entire Torah. And someone who accepted the seven Noahide commandments, and agreed not to practice idolatry, is called a "resident alien." And he is called this because we are permitted to allow him to live among us, as it says in tractate *Avodah Zarah* [64b] in chapter *ha-Sokher*. This being the case, you were mistaken in referring to the penitents of the *anusim* as "*gerim*"...

I also see these words of yours as incorrect, and there is nothing in these claims that would invalidate the offspring from the status of priesthood. For we have not found that one who is born of uncircumcision is unfit to be a *kohen*. This is (also) because Israelites, though uncircumcised, are called "circumcised". And even though the uncircumcised one violates the law regarding one who does not circumcise himself, still, his offspring is [ritually] valid [for marriage to a Jew and for priesthood]. And he is regarded as one who is circumcised, as they say in Chapter *HaNoder* in tractate *Nedarim* [31b; in *Mishna Nedarim* 3:11]: One who vows [not to benefit] from the uncircumcised is forbidden [to benefit] from the circumcised of the nations of the world, and is permitted [to benefit] from the uncircumcised of Israel. For an idolator, even if circumcised, is called "uncircumcised", and an Israelite, even if uncircumcised, is called "circumcised", as it is said, [Jer. 9:25], "*For all the gentiles are uncircumcised, and the Jews are uncircumcised of heart*".

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She'elot u-Teshuvot Yakhin u-Vo'az Zemah ben Shlomo Duran, 15th century

Prepared by Talya Fishman, University of Pennsylvania, USA

שו"ת יכין ובוועז חלק ב סימן ג

פאס אל המשכיל רבי נתן בוסתי וחבריו יש"צו.

שאלתם אחי בענין מי שבא ואמר כהן אם יש להאמינו לקרות בתורת /בתורה/ ראשון או לאו.

שאלתם אחי בענין מי שבא ואמר כהן אם יש להאמינו לקרות בתורת /בתורה/ ראשון או לאו.

תשובה ואעפ"י שיש קצת מהם שמתערבים בעכ"ם ולוקחים מבנותיהם לנשים אינם כי אם מעט מהמעט אחד מעיר ושנים ממשפחה והעושה זה מהם הוא אצלם מרוחק ומתועב ושוב אינם מתערבים בזרעו כי אותו זרע הוא נחשב אצלם כעכ"ם ואם כן כשר הוא הדין כיון שאמו עכ"ם

אחזור ואשיב על דבריכם במה שכתבתם לפסול מהכהונה אותם שבאין מהאנוסים ואומרים שהם מוחזקים בכהנים תחלה כתבתם זה לשונכם על ענין אלו הגרים שבאין ממלכו' קטלאן וקשטייליא ופורטוגאל להתגייר ולהכנס תחת כנפי השכינה ואו' כל א' מהם שאני כהן וכו' וזה תורף לשונכם.

המעייין הדבריכם /בדבריכם/ ימצא בהם שגגה גדולה שחס וחלילה להם לישראל בכל מקומות מושבותיהם להיות טפשים להעלות לקרות בס"ת ראשון בתורת כהן מי שהיה עכ"ם ונתגייר וכן לא יעשה בישראל וגם העכ"ם ונתגייר לעולם אינו יכול לטעון ולומר שהוא כהן ומהיכן באה לו הכהונה הזאת ואיך תקשו הקושיא הזאת....

וביד תתפסו דהא אינם נקראים בלשון גרים לפי שהם תולעת יעקב מתי ישראל הם נחשבים ואינם נקראים לענין זה גרים כי אם בעלי תשובה....

ואנו למדים שאינם משתמשי' בלשון גר אלא למי שהיה עכ"ם ונכנס תחת כנפי השכינה וקבל עליו את התורה כולה ומי שקבל עליו שבע מצות של בני נח ושלא לעבוד עכ"ם ונקרא גר תושב ונקרא כן לפי שמותר לנו להושיבו בינינו כדאיתא במסכת ע"ז בפרק השוכר. א"כ שגיתם בזה שקראתם לבעלי תשובה מאנוסים בלשון גרים....

גם דבריכם אלו אני רואה שאינם נכונים ואין בטענות אלו מה שיפסול הזרע מחזקת הכהונה כי לא מצינו מי שיוולד מן הערלה שיהיה פסול מלהיות כהן וגם כי ישראל אעפ"י שהם ערלים נקראים מהולים ואעפ"י שהוא עובר הערל על שאינו מל את עצמו מ"מ זרעו כשר והוא נחשב כמהול כדאמרי' בפרק הנודר במסכת נדרים הנודר מן הערלים אסור במהולי אומות העולם ומותר בערלי ישראל שהעכ"ם ופ"י מהול נקרא ערל וישראל אפי' ערל נקרא מהול שנאמר כי כל הגוים ערלים וכל בית ישראל ערלי לב....

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Introduction to Kol Sakhal in Behinat HaKabbalah

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Notes: Based on Talya Fishman "Voice of a Fool": an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 150.

Kol Sakhal, literally, "Voice of a Fool", is a critique of rabbinic culture written under cover of pseudonym by the colorful Venetian rabbi, Leone Modena [1571-1648]. Well-versed in Christian sources, Rabbi Modena interacted with learned Christians from all over Europe as teacher, preacher and interlocutor. Noblemen and clerics who went "slumming" in the Venetian ghetto raved about Modena's sermons, and Rabbi Modena referred to Paolo Sarpi, legal and theological consultant to the Venetian Senate -- who was denounced by the Church for his excessive contact with Jews-- as "my friar."

The passage in question, part of a revisionist code of Jewish law, envisions a world in which many people, inspired by their attraction to the Hebrew Bible, draw near to Judaism. Leone Modena's own environment was rife with religious seekers who fit that description: Apart from conversos who were negotiating their own relationships with normative rabbinic communities in Venice, Amsterdam and Hamburg, there were large numbers of Chretiens sans eglise in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, i.e., Old Christians of malleable confessional identity (among them, Michael Servetus, Jean Bodin, Guillaume Postel, Laelius and Faustus Socinus). Those who adopted anti-trinitarian perspectives were labeled judaizing heretics.

Kol Sakhal's iconclastic suggestion that conversion to Judaism be made easier for individuals already drawn to the Hebrew Bible raises the question of whether there may have been an underground Jewish proselytizing movement in this period, as claimed, in the 1640's, by the Portuguese Jesuit, Antonio Vieira.

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Voice of a Fool
Kol Sakhal in Behinat HaKabbalah
Anonymous (attributed to Leone Modena), 1623

Translated by Talya Fishman, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Notes: Based on Talya Fishman "Voice of a Fool": an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 150.

Converts. It was necessary to circumcise and ritually immerse every convert, according to their [rabbinic] arrangement.^[1] But they did not understand and paid no attention to matters upon which the foundation of the nation, its greatness and success depend.^[2] As they did with every order and arrangement they made, all is destruction and corruption. By this I mean that they ought to have explained regarding one who comes to convert that, after warning him^[3] and [after] the investigation - by which it is made clear to us that his coming is for the sake of heaven and not for some external purpose^[4] -- he should be informed of the virtue of circumcision and its reward.^[5] If he wishes to circumcise himself, well and good, and if not, let him immerse himself and become a Jew.^[6] And this will be sufficient for him to participate in testimony and marriage, inheritance and bequest--and everything else like the rest of the Jewish people. Not to make his property ownerless and the laws of Sodom that they commanded in this regard^[7] -- go and check them. However, any sons born to him after his conversion are to be circumcised at eight days.

They would already have some support [for this lenient position] in the Torah, for a resident alien was not required to circumcise himself and it was not an impediment for him, except with regard to the eating of the paschal sacrifice, and nothing else.^[8] And this is not mentioned regarding Jethro or anyone who converted^[9] that he circumcised himself.

This would have made it easier for the nations, enabling them to enter under the wings of the Divine Presence^[10] or^[11] to assume the yoke of our Torah,^[12] if it were most easy and pleasant, but always according to what was commanded by Moses, man of the Lord.^[13] [And perhaps] an entire nation and kingdom would already have become Jews, or more than one, and our redemption would draw near, as I have hinted to you in the Second Essay, chapter 6; study it

and return and study it. I know that you will acknowledge that the sages of the Talmud^{EMW 2004} are truly the pillars of Exile who support and keep us in the *Galut* [Exile] as long as there are still days on earth--if the God of heaven and earth does not send forth his hand and take us from it.

Endnotes

[1] BT, Yeb. 46b, Tur YD 268.

[2] *Kol Sakhal* wishes to present Judaism as universally appealing, and therefore accuses the rabbis of discouraging conversion by their insistence upon circumcision as a prerequisite. Cf. the claim in a medieval Hebrew treatise that Paul's limitation of circumcision as a requirement for admission into the community of early Christians contributed heavily to Christianity's success (Profyat Duran, *Kelimat ha-Goyyim*, p. 28). And see Modena's assertion in two sermons that the convert's entry into Judaism must be made easier, cited in Rosenzweig, pp. 537-38.

[3] The potential convert is to be warned about the drawbacks of throwing his lot in with that of the Jews, people who submit to the yoke of the commandments, for which they are ridiculed and persecuted by their neighbors (BT, Yeb. 47a).

[4] As stipulated in BT Yeb. 47b; Tur YD 268.

[5] See MT, Hil. Milah 3:8.

[6] Cf. the position of R. Joshua, who asserted that the prospective convert need only undergo immersion in order to become a Jew. This position was rejected by the rabbis, however, in favor of R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus's requirement of circumcision and immersion (BT, Yeb. 46a). However, cf. Yom Tov Lipmann Muelhausen's statement in *Sefer Nizahon* that "one who believes correctly is a Jew even if he is not circumcised, although he is guilty of one transgression" (in Bem-Sasson, "Disputation and Polemics," EJ 6:94).

[7] This may be a reference to the rabbinic ruling that a convert's descendants do not inherit his wealth, if they were conceived prior to his conversion to Judaism (BT, Kid. 19b; BB 149a. See Maimonides's rationale for this rabbinic ordinance, MT. Hil. Nahalot 6:10). Some medieval scholars evinced uneasiness about the Talmud's story of a Jew who tried to keep the property of a deceased convert. See, e.g. Ha-Meiri, *Beit Ha-Behira* on BB 149a.

[8] Exod. 12:45, 12:48. In identifying the *ger toshav* (resident alien) with an uncircumcised convert to Judaism, *Kol Sakhal* may be following the lead of Ibn Ezra, who understood the term *toshav* as a reference to an Israelite, inasmuch as the Torah had *earlier* excluded the uncircumcised from partaking of the paschal meal (Ibn Ezra on Exod. 12:45). Moreover, Karaites understood that the term *ger* appearing in Exod. 9:19 included the category of *ger toshav* (Weiss, *Melilah* 1, p. 41 citing *Ohel Yosef*). Cf. Philo's understanding of *ger* in Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:364-74. Alternate rabbinic understanding of the term *ger toshav* are reflected in BT, AZ 64b and in Gerim 3, in Higger, p. 33.

[9] This passage reflects *Kol Sakhal*'s indebtedness to the rabbinic perspective, for the perception of Jethro as a convert is not biblical but midrashic (*Sifrei*, Num. no.80; *Mekhilta*,

Yitro I, p. 582; *Mekhilta de-Rabi Shimon ber Yohai*, p. 87; Seder Eliyahu Rabbah^{EMW 304}; *Tanhuma Yitro* 6, Jerusalem Targum, Exod. 18:6).

^[10] This term is used by the rabbis to describe conversion to monotheism in a pre-Sinaitic context, as in the case of Abraham's proselytizing activities. (See, e.g., Rashi on Gen. 12:5).

^[11] Cf. the distinction made in First Essay, n.204 and in Second Essay n.298.

^[12] I.e. conversion to Judaism proper.

^[13] This epithet appears in Josh. 14:6.

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Kol Sakhal in Behinat HaKabbalah
Voice of a Fool
Anonymous (attributed to Leone Modena), 1623

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Notes: Based on Talya Fishman "Voice of a Fool": an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 150.

בחינת הקבלה כולל ספר קול סכל וספר שאגת אריה. מהדיר, יצחק שמואל ריג"ו (תרי"ב)

גרים. הוצרך למול ולטבול כל גר כפי סדרם, ולא הבינו ולא שמו לב על דברי' שיסוד האומה תלוי בהם וגדולתה והצלחתה. כאשר עשו בכל סדר ותקון שעשו, הכל הריסה ושחתה, רצוני בזה שהיה להם לבאר שכל הבא להגייר אחר ההתראה בו החקירה שיתברר לנו ביאתו לש"ש לא לתכלית חצוני, יודיעוהו מעלת המילה ושכרה אם ירצה למול עצמו הרי טוב ואם לא יטבול ויהיה יהודי ויספיק לו זה להיות בעדות ועריות ירושה והורשה וכל דבר כשאר עם ישראל, ולא לעשות נכסיו הפקר ודיני סדום אשר צו בזה, לך ועיין במ, אמנם בני' אשר יולדו לו אחרי גיורו ימולו לשמונה ימי', כי כבר היה להם על (מה) שיסמוכו בתורה שהרי גר תושב לא הוצרך למול את עצמו ולא היה לו זה עיכוב אלא באכילת הפסח לא זולת, וביתרו ושום גר שנתגייר לא נזכר בתורה שמל את עצמו, והיה זה מיקל על העמי' לשיוכלו לבא תחת כנפי השכינה או לקבל עליהם עול תורתנו אם והיה קל ונעי' ביותר, אכן לעולם על פי הדבר אשר צוה משה איש האלהי ובאולי כבר התיחדו גוי וממלכה כולה או יותר מאחת וקרבה גאולתנו כמו שרמזתי לך מאמר ב' פ' ו' עיין וחזור ועיין עליו, ידעתי תודה כי חכמי התלמוד באמת עמודי גולה התומכי' ומעמידי' אותנו בגלות עוד כל ימי הארץ, אם לא ישלח ידו ויקחנו ממנו אלהי השמי' והארץ.

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