

OU Alit Program
7/27/22
A Day Inside the Venetian Ghetto II
Source Sheet

I. Marriage:

A. Ten Commandments for the Married Woman: From a Yiddish work called *Lev Tov* by Isaac Eliakim of Posen (Poland). Published around 1620.

“This is the story of a queen who gave her daughter in marriage to a young king and then gave her the following instructions, in as much as she was about to be married. Since she was sending the daughter away for her marriage she said to her: “My dear child, I am giving you away and am turning you over to a stranger and I don’t know what sort of a person he is, so I am going to instruct you and give you ten rules. If you keep my instruction everything will be well with you, but if you don’t heed my advice, things won’t go right with you. Therefore take these ten rules to heart...and if you do this your husband will love you as he does the heart in his body. The first, my dear daughter, is to beware of his anger, lest you enrage him. When he is cross, don’t you be jolly; and when he is jolly, don’t you be cross; and when he is angry, smile at him and answer him with kind, soft words and speak pleasantly to him. Thus you will still his anger.

The second, my dear daughter, concerns his eating and drinking. Search and consider and reflect about his food, about that which he like to eat , and let these be your words: “My lord, wouldn’t you rather have something else to eat? Urge him.

Try to have his meals ready at the proper time, for hunger does nobody any good...

The third, my dear daughter. When he sleeps, guard his sleep that he not be awakened, for if he doesn’t get a good night’s rest he may become very angry

The Fourth, my dear daughter. Try to be thrifty and careful with your husband’s money and make an effort not to bring any loss to him. Don’t give anything away without your husband’s knowledge, unless it be a small thing which he wouldn’t care about...

The seventh, my dear daughter. Don’t be contrary with him. Do everything he tells you. If he tells you anything, let his words find favor with you. Don’t say to him: “you haven’t said the right thing, or “My advice is better than your advice.”

The eight, my dear daughter, Don’t expect of him anything that he considers difficult. He may take a dislike to you because you expect something of him which he believes is too hard

The Ninth, my dear daughter. Heed the requests which he may make of you, awaiting in turn that he will love you if you do so, and will be your slave and will serve you with joy

The tenth, my dear daughter. Be very careful to guard against jealousy. Don't make him jealous in any way. Don't say anything that might hurt him, and let him have his own way in everything. Make an effort in all things to do what pleases him and don't do what he doesn't like. If you treat him like a king then he, in turn, will treat you like a queen.

II. Childhood Education

A. A Father's Description of the Different Phases of his Son's Progress.

From Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 130:

"At three Joseph encountered his Creator [in other words, came into contact with the world of religion]. He began studying the first day of the month of Iyar 5320 [1560]. At four and a half he read the *Haftarah* in the synagogue, on the occasion of the wedding of Messer Baruc of Arles...At five and a half he learned to write. At six he started wearing the phylacteries [*tefillin*]. At eight and a half...he was studying the *Alfassi* [a famous medieval Talmudic compendium]. At twelve and a half he began reading the Torah in the synagogue...and the same year he learned ritual slaughtering...during the feast of *Simhat Torah* in the year 5322 [1571] he recited the morning liturgical service in the synagogue."

B. From a Letter Written by a Tutor in the Wealthy Rieti Home in Sienna to the Mother of one of his Pupils:

From Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, pg 134:

"In the evening we study until the fourth hour [i.e., until the end of the first third of the twelve hours of the night, according to the system current at the time, in which the twenty-four hour day started and ended at sunset]. Then we go in to supper...While we are at table, three times a week one of the pupils speaks on a topic of Talmudic law, while his fellow students fire questions at him...This goes on for an hour and a half, sometimes two hours. After that, we go to bed and sleep until the tenth hour [about four in the morning]. We get up and, since it is not yet daylight, we devote ourselves for three hours to the study of the text of the Talmud. When it gets light, we go to the synagogue for morning prayers, after which we study another Talmudic text. Then we go and have breakfast. Then we proceed to the study of the glosses on the Talmud (*Tosafot*), until we have perfectly absorbed the text. At the nineteenth hour [an hour after noon], we eat lunch, and after that we do not study again until evening. This is because I have left the afternoon open for the teaching of grammar [i.e. Latin], which is taught by a Christian instructor.

C. The Yeshiva: As described by Rav Eliyahu Capsali (1483-1555) in his *Venetian Chronicle*. In Robert Bonfil, *Jews in Renaissance Italy*, 136.

The Following morning, after morning prayers, the Master (Rosh Yeshiva Rav Yehuda MIntz) went to a small room in the courtyard of the great Synagogue with the students lodging with him. This is what is known as the *Yeshiva*. There were desks and benches, and everyone sat down, the rabbis and the other (private) tutors with their pupils. At this point, the Master would ask a series of questions, and everyone answered according to his ability. Then they began a discussion, asking each other questions. This is what they call an academic disputation (*pilpul haYeshiva*). Everybody discussed with his neighbor, grown-ups with grown-ups and youngsters with youngsters. This discussion was done without consulting the text since everyone knew it perfectly...