

«A GOOD WIFE IS A GREAT BLESSING». FEMALE PORTRAITS THROUGH THE LUGO DI ROMAGNA JEWISH COMMUNITY'S REGISTER OF THE DEAD (1658-1825).

The *Book of the Dead* of the Jewish community of Lugo di Romagna for the years 1658-1825 offers an unexpected case study which, despite a play of light and shadows that do not allow the emergence of a well-rounded representation, shows a significant picture of women and their condition within the Jewish ghetto.

Indeed, the manuscript has the merit of focusing on the role of women in the scenario of Jewish settlements. It provides a range of new and important information within a framework, that is Jewish women in history, generally marked by a lack of documentation. Moreover, the documentary material derives mostly from Christian sources that present only brief references.

Taking for granted the peculiarity of the position of women in Jewish tradition, I tried to trace the history of female condition within the ghetto of Lugo starting from some topics in particular: marriage and marital relation, family, community and professional life. On another occasion, even if only in a small way, I have dealt with the matter concerning the peculiarity of the female experience related to forced sermons in Lugo as well as relations with Christian society.¹

Investigating the role of women means not just giving voice to an entire category historically forced to silence, but also discovering new details that can enrich its features with un-

expected facets. Although belonging to Judaism is transmitted through matrilineal line and the female figure has assumed a central role within the family as a mother and spouse, woman has always had to deal with a religious environment in which women tend to play a secondary role and poor social visibility.²

Even in the *Qohelet*, which could be viewed as a cynical lamentation on the vanity of all material things written with a strong moral tension, there are few harsh expressions against woman: «*And I saw a thing more bitter than death, even the woman whose heart is full of tricks and nets*».³ This is what the preacher affirms, beginning to divine a new misogynist and repulsive attitude that will affect the following centuries – from the late 5th century BCE and in the following ones, up to the 1st century CE – the ancient Near East, also touching Judaism.⁴

However, the situation that emerges from the archival sources object of the present survey appears more complex and varied: in fact, they give us a description of the activities that women carried out daily, related to household and family economy, but also they outline well-educated women, even cultured, involved in trade, teaching, craftsmanship and versed in the various meat types for ritual slaughter allowed for the public consumption. Of course, the levels of autonomy of the Ashkenazi Jewish communities'

¹ See E. LOLLI, «Per trarli dalle tenebre dell'ignoranza». *Nuovi documenti sulle prediche coatte agli ebrei di Lugo nel Settecento*, «Materia Giudaica» 19,1-2 (2014), pp. 103-116.

² For an overview of the history of the Jewish woman in Italy see A. FOA, *La donna nella storia degli ebrei in Italia*, in C.E. HONNESS - V.R. JONES (curr.), *Le donne delle minoranze. Le ebreo e le protestanti in Italia*, Edizioni Claudiana, Torino 1999, pp. 11-30.

³ *Qo* 7,26.

⁴ On this topic refer also to M. PERANI, *Ebraismo e sessualità nel medioevo: la Lettera sulla santità*, in P. CAPELLI (cur.), *Eros e Bibbia*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2003, pp. 133-156; ID., *La donna nell'ebraismo e nella riflessione mistico-esoterica della qabbalah*, in L. GRAZIANI SECCHIERI (cur.), *Vicino al focolare e oltre. Spazi pubblici e privati, fisici e virtuali della donna ebrea in Italia (secc. XV-XX)*, *Vicino al focolare e oltre: spazi pubblici e privati, fisici e virtuali della donna ebrea in Italia (secc. XV-XX): atti del Convegno internazionale di studi organizzato dal*

women⁵ are not reached, who, as Attilio Milano had observed,⁶ enjoyed wide jurisdiction in the economic, patrimonial and juridical fields. Nevertheless, the sources clearly show the economic abilities that distinguished them: in fact, they formed relationships and entertained business with men and women, Jews and Christian, without distinction.

Above all, in these documents, in addition to the domestic values to which woman had to focus, emerge particularly significant figures that are detached from the stereotypes of the time.

Even if the male characters prevail, from the reading of the document content emerge also rich portraits of women, whose model is found mainly in the book of *Proverbs*:

[Mrs. Dolcina Beer] avoided all vices, *who may make discovery of a woman of virtue?*⁷ *For her price is much higher than jewels,*⁸ *the heart of her husband has faith in her*⁹ / that is our honourable master, Mr. Rabbi Šabbetai Beer, Rabbi of the community [...].¹⁰

And it is also stated:

Who may make discovery of a woman of vir-

*tue?*¹¹ / *She gets wool and linen,*¹² / *she gets up while it is still night*¹³ / *She puts her hands to the cloth-working rod*¹⁴ / *Her hands are stretched out to the poor*¹⁵ / *Her husband is a man of note in the public place*¹⁶ / *Strength and self-respect are her clothing*¹⁷ / *Her mouth is open to give out wisdom*¹⁸ / *She gives attention to the ways of her family*¹⁹ / *Unnumbered women have done well*²⁰ / *But a woman who has the fear of the Lord is to be praised*²¹ / *Give her credit for what her hands have made*²² / *Let her be praised by her works in the public place.*²³ / *Of this honourable lady of whom they say: One woman among all these I have not seen,*²⁴ that it was so full of good works, *she is more value than jewels*²⁵ [...].²⁶

Marriage, which was the main scenario of Jewish life, within a culture generally hostile to celibacy, allowed to legitimize and socialize the domestic role of women, in charge of housework and family matters.²⁷ The documents list the qualities and virtues that should have been part of the bride's cultural baggage, respecting the duties and an adequate conduct:

*She gives attention to the ways of her family.*²⁸ / *She was an elderly and eminent, wife of the honourable Mr. Yosef Finzi, his Rock guards him and gives him life, she does not take her food wi-*

Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah, in collaborazione con Archivio di Stato di Ferrara: 18-19 novembre 2014, Giuntina, Firenze 2015, pp. 281-304.

⁵ On the condition of Jewish women in Central-Northern Italy, see A. VERONESE, *Donne ebraiche italiane e ashkenazite in Italia centro-settentrionale: doti, testamenti, ruolo economico*, in GRAZIANI SECCHIERI (cur.), *Vicino al focolare*, op. cit., pp. 153-163. On the status of women in Judaism in Italy I also refer to: C. GALASSO - M. LUZZATI, *Donne nella storia degli ebrei d'Italia: atti del XIX convegno internazionale Italia Judaica: Lucca, 6-9 giugno 2005*, Giuntina, Firenze 2007.

⁶ A. MILANO, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, Einaudi, Torino, p. 131. On the economic autonomy of the Jews in German communities see: J.R. BASKIN, *Jewish Women in the Middle Ages*, in ID. (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1998², pp. 150-168.

⁷ *Pr* 31,10.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Pr* 31,11.

¹⁰ Cf. ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-*

1825, f. 13v.

¹¹ *Pr* 31,10.

¹² *Ivi*, 31,13.

¹³ *Ivi*, 31,15.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, 31,19.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, 31,20.

¹⁶ *Ivi*, 31,23.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, 31,25.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, 31,26.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, 31,27.

²⁰ *Ivi*, 31,29.

²¹ *Ivi*, 31,30.

²² *Ivi*, 31,31.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Qo* 7,28.

²⁵ *Pr* 3,15.

²⁶ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 16r.*

²⁷ In this regard see R. WEINSTEIN, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style: A Historical Anthropological Perspective on Early Modern Italian Jews*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2004, *passim*.

²⁸ *Pr* 31,27.

thout working for it,²⁹ but she gets up / while it is still night, and gives meat to her family, and their food to her servant girls³⁰ [...],³¹

She was a / woman who has the fear of the Lord,³² and intelligent, and she understood the needs of his husband and his house with modesty, resourcefulness and honour.³³

One aspect that emerges several times in the acts of death concerns the rules of *niddah*, that is menstrual blood. In the phase of life that intervened from the appearance of the menarche until the arrival of the menopause, that is the maturity, Jewish women scrupulously observed a series of behaviours, actions and gestures regulated by the Bible,³⁴ the *Talmud*³⁵ as well as the *Mišnah*.³⁶

As described by Leon Modena, in the period of impurity woman was forced to isolation, at the end of which she had to purify herself in the *miqweh* or ritual bath:

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ivi*, 31,15.

³¹ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 18v.

³² *Pr* 31,30.

³³ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 48v.

³⁴ Cf. *Lev* 15,19-33: «And if a woman has a flow of blood from her body, she will have to be kept separate for seven days, and anyone touching her will be unclean till evening. And everything on which she has been resting, while she is kept separate, will be unclean, and everything on which she has been seated will be unclean. And anyone touching her bed will have to have his clothing washed and his body bathed in water and be unclean till evening. And anyone touching anything on which she has been seated will have to have his clothing washed and his body bathed in water and be unclean till evening. Anyone touching anything on the bed or on the thing on which she has been seated, will be unclean till evening. And if any man has sex relations with her so that her blood comes on him, he will be unclean for seven days and every bed on which he has been resting will be unclean. And if a woman has a flow of blood for a long time, not at the time when she generally has it, or if the flow goes on longer than the normal time, she will be unclean while the flow of blood goes on, as she is at other normal times. Every bed on which she

quando s'avvede la donna che gli sia venuto il suo mestruo è obbligata d'avvisarlo al marito, e lui subito se ne allontana, e non la tocca, né anco può porgerle una cosa da mano a mano ne riceverla ne sederle appresso ne mangiar seco in un piatto ne beber nel suo bicchiero. E costì sta fin che è finito di fluire che suol essere al più delle donne cinque giorni, mase le durasse più aspettare fin che si fermi e si muta camicia, e di lenzuola il letto, e poi stando sette altri giorni netta, si taglia le onghie e pulisce, e si lava in un mastello, e si pettina il capo. Poi va ad un bagno fatto apposta, il quale convien, che sia d'acqua ò sorgente, ò di pioggia non posta ivi per mano di uomo, e che vi sia acqua almeno di tre braccia d'altezza e un braccio in quadro e se nene fosse manco non valle ò vero dove non è fatto bagno apposta, va ad un fiume ò fonte, ò mare, ò pozzo e ivi bisogna che si attuffi tutta nuda, si che non vi resti una minima parte del corpo che non sia tocca d'acqua [...] un'altra donna le sta appresso a veder che sia bene coperta d'acqua e così rivestita, e andata a casa sua può star con il marito, fin che torna à venire il mestruo un'altra volta e così continuamente.³⁷

has been resting will be unclean, as at the times when she normally has a flow of blood, and everything on which she has been seated will be unclean, in the same way. And anyone touching these things will be unclean, and his clothing will have to be washed and his body bathed in water and he will be unclean till evening. But when her flow of blood is stopped, after seven days she will be clean. And on the eighth day let her get two doves or two young pigeons and take them to the priest to the door of the Tent of meeting, To be offered by the priest, one for a sin-offering and one for a burned offering; and the priest will take away her sin before the Lord on account of her unclean condition. In this way may the children of Israel be made free from all sorts of unclean conditions, so that death may not overtake them when they are unclean and when they make unclean my holy place which is among them. This is the law for the man who has a flow from his body, or whose seed goes from him so that he is unclean; And for her who has a flow of blood, and for any man or woman who has an unclean flow, and for him who has sex relations with a woman when she is unclean».

³⁵ The topic is discussed in several *Talmud* treatises, including those of *Berakot*, *Pesaḥim*, *Ketubbot* and *Yevamot*.

³⁶ See in particular the treaty of *Niddah*.

³⁷ LEONE DA MODENA, *Historia de' riti hebraici, vita et osservanze degli Hebrei di questi tempi [...]*, Appresso Giovanni Calleoni, Venezia 1638, pp. 94-95.

From what we learn from the manuscript, within the ghetto groups of women helped each other giving rise to a sort of female connection and shared solidarity during the phases of transition and in the sensitive points of the monthly cycle. The Jewess, helped by her companions, repeated ritual gestures every month to purify what was considered the female “mystery of blood”:

Daughters of Israel weep over this widow,³⁸ crown among women, wise in all things, especially the “visions of the blood”,³⁹ and the particular evils of all women [...];⁴⁰

[...] *a woman who asks to be cleansed for her husband*⁴¹ because of the spot of women, / and with integrity she observed the rules of the woman in menstruation [...];⁴²

[...] Although she was poor, he was capable of great gestures of generosity; she took care of the women / during their period of impurity. She was Mrs. Bellina Terracino [...].⁴³

Educated, cultured and deeply religious, sometimes of high social extraction, they taught the sacred texts and the values of the *Torah*:⁴⁴ this is evident from reading the death records of two very important women within the community. They were Gentila Rebecca Yaḥyah Sinigallia, died on 15 Ševat 5434 (= 22nd January 1674) and especially Benvenuta, daughter of the elderly rabbi Šelomoh Dawid del Vecchio I (dead in Senigallia *ante* 1737) and wife of the chief rabbi and judge Yišḥaq Berekyah da Fano III (1676-1750), who passed away on 6 Adar II 5510 (= 14th March 1750):

[Mrs. Gentila Rebecca Yaḥyah Sinigallia] always *opened her mouth wisely and with quotes from the psalms: / on his tongue there was teaching of goodness*.⁴⁵ She inculcated the passage of the Bi-

ble that is fixed for reading every week, and all the supplications, the prayers, the liturgical poems, the morning prayers and the verses were currents in his mouth [...];⁴⁶

and in another passage we read:

Of this woman, the excellent, elderly, dear and crowned Mrs. Benvenuta, may her soul be tied to the bundle of life, of a line of old people [...]. She was full of / precepts and good works, and she was said: «*Who may make discovery of a woman of virtue?*»⁴⁷ [...] and to celebrate his praises the sheets of paper are not enough and his praises / would not end, since it was a good and wise woman, intelligent and full of virtues. In particular / she taught children and adults, she was fearful of God and the Bible that is known by all members of our community, and her merit / was recognized during her lifetime by the descendants of *Dayyan* in Israel.⁴⁸

The most impressive data concern the professional activities of women, who were active in various commercial and artisanal sectors, from the sale of wine and wood, to the manufacture of wicks for candles, from the dough of flour bread or *ḥallah*, to the preparation of wires for *tefillin*. In fact, as mentioned above, women's commitments were not limited to domestic work: they were responsible for production and purchases, they diligently administered business. Moreover, they were active in the community in different ways, practicing works of charity for the poor and sick people, but they also welcomed travellers, prepared fringes and *tallitot* and performed various tasks in the synagogue. The praised women were industrious workers in the textile, manufacturing and commercial fields, besides they were experts of the various types of slaughter meat for food consumption. Some examples are given below:

³⁸ Adapted from 2Sam 1,24.

³⁹ That is menstrual blood. See Rabbeinu Yonah on *Pirḡei Avot* 3,18; *Niddah* 33b *et al.*

⁴⁰ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 12r.

⁴¹ TB, *Berakot* 4a.

⁴² Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 13v.

⁴³ *Ivi*, f. 14v.

⁴⁴ See *Ivi*, f. 32r: «When her husband permitted it, she studied the psalms and the daily passages, according to her means, [...]».

⁴⁵ Adapted from *Pr* 31,26.

⁴⁶ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 16r.

⁴⁷ *Pr* 31,10.

⁴⁸ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of*

[...] *She gets wood and linen*⁴⁹ to prepare the fringes for our community and for the city of Ferrara / *working at the business of her hands*⁵⁰ to prepare all the *tallitot*, for rich and poor people. *She gets up while it is still night*⁵¹ to praise and sing and to send her husband and son to the synagogue to pray with the sentinels of the morning. *She puts her hands to the cloth-working rod, and her fingers take the wheel*,⁵² to weave fringes and all what was needed in our homes. / *Her hands are stretched out to the poor*⁵³ and to help all the needy, especially visitors. *Her husband is a man of note*⁵⁴ in his place near the elders and angels;⁵⁵

[...] *A woman who has the fear of the Lord like her / is to be praised*⁵⁶ therefore *give her credit for what her hands have made*.⁵⁷ The chassis gave her the right reputation, [...], *let her be praised by her works in the public place*⁵⁸ [...];⁵⁹

[...] He had to deal / with men and women, he was an expert in all kinds of meat, even not *kašer*, his strength was that of knowing how to live with elevated and lower spirits. She was the eminent old woman, / Mrs. Diana Pesaro [...];⁶⁰

[...] Mrs. Šarah Neħemah, widow of the honourable lord, Rabbi Šelomoh Yahyah, the memory of the righteous and the saint may be blessed, / departed for the eternal dwelling on the night of the holy Saturday, 19 Tevet 454 (= 16th January 1694), may rest with the right women in the garden of Eden. She was an eminent woman /, with her hands wove fringes for everyone and prepared the threads for the *tefillin* and the wicks for the lights of the synagogue [...];⁶¹

[...] she was a skilled trader: she sold wine and timber and everything necessary for her work. / He sent his sons to the synagogue to study the Bible;

she was always among the first to wake up. She was eminent and with a pure heart like that of a dove; far from folly, she ate only the allowed food. / She worked and stayed at home, she was Mrs. Chiara Treves [...];⁶²

We are therefore faced with women whose role transcended the boundaries of family life: for this reason even husbands and children enjoyed the fruits of their labour, praising their work:

*Unnumbered women*⁶³ they went virgins to husbands' brides, but *she is better than all of them*⁶⁴ [...]. / *Fair looks are a deceit, and a beautiful form is of no value*,⁶⁵ but, despite being beautiful, her beauty was in being a woman *with the fear of the Lord, and is to be praised*.⁶⁶ Her children became Rabbis and they *give her credit for what / her hands have made*.⁶⁷ She did the good for everyone, for the living and the dead, *let her be praised by her works in the public place*⁶⁸ [...];⁶⁹

A woman of virtue is a crown to her husband.⁷⁰ / She was an important and praised woman and *the heart of her husband has faith in her*,⁷¹ *her children get up and give her honour, and her husband gives her praise*.⁷² She was Mrs. / Šulamit, his soul may be bound in the bundle of life, beloved wife of the honourable lord Sullam Yahyah [...].⁷³

Work was not just the source of the well-being of families, but opened up to a wider sharing in the social sense, to provide concrete help for the poor and the needy:

the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 45v.

⁴⁹ *Pr* 31,13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ivi*, 31,15.

⁵² *Ivi*, 31,19.

⁵³ *Ivi*, 31,20.

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, 31,23.

⁵⁵ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 16r.*

⁵⁶ *Pr* 31,30.

⁵⁷ *Ivi*, 31,31.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 44v.*

⁶⁰ *Ivi*, f. 12r.

⁶¹ *Ivi*, f. 26v.

⁶² *Ivi*, f. 19v.

⁶³ *Pr* 31,29.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ivi*, 31,30.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ivi*, 31,31.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 16r.*

⁷⁰ *Pr* 12,4.

⁷¹ *Ivi*, 31,11.

⁷² *Ivi*, 31,28.

⁷³ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 53v.*

[...] *Her hands are stretched out / to the poor; yes, she is open-handed to those who are in need*⁷⁴ according to what was in her possibilities [...].⁷⁵

[...] She went up to the highest skies, / all the poor were with her because *her hands are stretched out to the poor; yes, she is open-handed to those who are in need*;⁷⁶ *her eyes give attention to the ways of her family, she does not take / her food without working for it*.⁷⁷ *Her children get up to approve all her works*⁷⁸ [...];⁷⁹

[...] *Her hands are stretched out to the poor; yes, she is open-handed to those who are in need*⁸⁰ and to all the poor, especially to visitors [...]. *She gives attention to the ways of her family*,⁸¹ she prepared food for others too [...];⁸²

[...] for the love of the faithful sick who came to her; he welcomed all people and forgave their sins.⁸³

Women, in fact, although not bound by law, which obliged men instead, supported the needy with the same energy that was used within the family unit: care of the house and solidarity appear combined in view of a full realization of the ideal of justice described in *Isaiah 58*:

Is not this the holy day for which I have given orders: [...] Is it not to give your bread to those in need, and to let the poor who have no resting-place come into your house? To put a robe on the unclothed one when you see him, and not to keep your eyes shut for fear of seeing his flesh? Then will light be shining on you like the morning, and your woun-

*ds will quickly be well: and your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will come after you.*⁸⁴

Ultimately, a new, rich and varied model of femininity emerges, which is at the same time a custodian of the values of the *Torah*, but also up with the present. Their professional accomplishment was not in contrast with their role in domestic life. In this way, the woman became a source of esteem not only for husbands and children, but also for the elderly and the wise, that is, the most respectable people in the community, who praised their skills by detaching themselves from the most conservative and fundamentalist traditions: *let her be praised by her works in the public place*;⁸⁵ *her mouth is open to give out wisdom, and the law of mercy is on her tongue*;⁸⁶ *fair looks are a deceit, and a beautiful form is of no value; but a woman who has the fear of the Lord is to be praised*;⁸⁷ «her merit has been recognized by the sons and sons of the sons, by the eminent and expert teachers of the *Torah* and the precepts»;⁸⁸ «[...] To celebrate her praises and her wisdom, paper is not enough, and her praises would not end, because she was perfect in observing the *Torah*, / in wisdom, in activity and in humility».⁸⁹

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⁷⁴ *Pr* 31,20.

⁷⁵ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 16r.

⁷⁶ Adapted from *Pr* 31,20.

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, 31,27.

⁷⁸ *Ivi*, 31,28.

⁷⁹ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 19v.

⁸⁰ *Pr* 31,20.

⁸¹ *Ivi*, 31,27.

⁸² Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-*

1825, f. 43r.

⁸³ *Ivi*, f. 15r.

⁸⁴ *Is* 58,6-8.

⁸⁵ *Pr* 31,31. The quote appears in most of the female death records.

⁸⁶ *Ivi*, 31,26. See Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 16r.

⁸⁷ *Pr* 31,30.

⁸⁸ Ms. New York, JTS, *Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825*, f. 44v.

⁸⁹ *Ivi*, f. 49r.

SUMMARY

The Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo di Romagna is a very important manuscript, unique of its kind. It contains all the death recordings of the community from 1658 to 1825, as well as the statutes and resolutions of the charitable association called *Hevrat gemilut ḥasadim* i.e. Good Works or Mercy Society. This precious and largely unpublished manuscript, which is now stored at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, presents an exceptional interest on different levels. For example, we can reconstruct various aspects of its members, also concerning women. Indeed, the undoubted merit of the Register is to provide a significant picture of the female universe within the ghetto of which, in a completely unexpected way, a rich and articulated profile emerges. The document provides an interesting description of the activities that women performed daily, which were often essential for household as well family economies, but there are also female figures playing an active role in trading, teaching, craftwork and ritual slaughter.

KEYWORDS: Jewish community of Lugo; Internal sources; *Book of the Dead*; Jewish Women.



Fig. 1 - New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Register of the dead of the Jewish community of Lugo for the years 1658-1825, f. 45v. At the bottom of the page you can read the death recording of Benvenuta, daughter of Šelomoh Dawid del Vecchio I and wife of Yišhaq Berekyah da Fano III.