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# ISAAC ABRAVANEL: LETTERS

EDITION, TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION

BY

CEDRIC COHEN SKALLI

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To my beloved grand-father Oscar Ewencyk ז"ל,  
who first embodied for me the difficult synthesis of  
Humanism and Judaism to which this book is devoted





## Foreword

Almost five hundred years after his death, Don Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508) remains a legendary figure of Sephardic history and, above all, a legendary figure of the Expulsion of 1492. His life story has been told again and again over the centuries, from Don Isaac's own autobiographical writings through the monographic studies of the past ninety years. Most of his literary work was preserved and has been continuously in print from the time of its writing to the present day. And yet Don Isaac Abravanel remains a mysterious figure for the reader and observer of today. Was he a remarkably successful Jewish financier and merchant or was he a great leader of Portuguese and Spanish Jewry and, after the Expulsion, of the Sephardic Diaspora? Was he one of the first Jewish humanists or was he a conservative thinker who marked the end of the history of Jewish medieval philosophy? Pre-modern and modern scholars have painted many "portraits" of him, and still we hesitate and cannot discern which is the true picture. Such hesitation is common, reflecting a variety of perspectives on a historical figure with such a rich personality. However, it seems that these many faces conceal a difficulty in understanding his role and the role of other Jewish laypeople in Renaissance history. The many faces of Abravanel are, in some way, a faithful picture reminding us of our own incertitude about Renaissance Judaism.

The four letters of Abravanel presented here for the first time in a critical and scholarly edition might in some measure dispel this incertitude. They form a remarkable—although limited—collection of Jewish epistolary writings, which can be compared to the humanistic epistolary genre revived by Petrarch and his followers. The epistolary genre became in the Renaissance the major mode of the expression and diffusion of humanism throughout Europe. The humanistic epistle in its different national forms has long been the subject of scholarly examination, and its characteristics can be used as a methodological framework for the study of Abravanel's four letters. The introductory study of the letters following this foreword will attempt, by such comparative methodology, to determine their place in the humanistic epistolary genre. For instance, it is possible to see in Don Isaac's Portuguese and Hebrew letters an important reflection of how the Jewish elite assim-

lated humanistic trends and inserted them into the traditional modes of expression that were at their disposal. More than Abravanel's literary works, his personal letters open a window on a complex cultural process of assimilation and dissimulation of humanism among the fifteenth-century Jewish elite. The clear humanistic flavour of the Portuguese letter seems to vanish upon the reading of the Hebrew epistles, as if Don Isaac were holding a dual discourse, showing his humanistic culture to his Christian patrons while concealing it from his Jewish addressees. Thus, the ambivalence of modern scholars as to the "true" Abravanel may be considered a distant echo of the complexity of Don Isaac's attitude to humanism and to Renaissance culture and history in general.

Don Isaac Abravanel, born in Lisbon in 1437, grew up in a wealthy Jewish Spanish family, which had found refuge in Portugal after the ruin of Sevillian Jewry in 1391. His education and subsequent career were those of a Jewish merchant and financier in the service of Portuguese nobility. His ascension up until the year 1481 in the court of the noble Bragança family and that of King Afonso V was spectacular, rendering him an important figure in late fifteenth-century Portuguese trade, finance, and politics. Although particularly successful, Don Isaac was in fact following the path of his father and of his Sevillian ancestors. What was more unique was his literary activity as a writer in both Hebrew and Portuguese. Although we have some indication of his family's advanced Jewish education and of their support of Jewish scholarship, Don Isaac was the first Abravanel to contribute to the family's traditional economic livelihood with his impressive literary works and teaching. Trade, finance, politics, teaching, and writing were surely very different commitments, and at times conflicting ones, but they all conflated to nurture a personality informed by the new historical and cultural conditions of the fifteenth-century Renaissance. Don Isaac was a man of his time. He took part in the major trends of the Iberian Renaissance: international trade with Flanders, Tuscany, and North Africa; cultural exchanges with Italy; Iberian humanistic discussions; Portuguese expansionistic policy; and, Spanish *reconquista*. Don Isaac's Portuguese and Hebrew correspondence has to be seen as a direct consequence of his historical involvement. Indeed, commerce, finance, and politics implied constant letter writing and reading. But beyond the practical uses of correspondence, the exchange of letters was for Abravanel —as for many of his contemporaries— a way to give a cultural shape and a general meaning to his many commitments.

During the fifteenth century, Portuguese and Spanish nobles significantly expanded the practice of epistolary writing, making it one of

the central expressions of their cultural ideal. Drawing more and more upon classical sources and upon Italian humanistic models, the Iberian elite transformed letter exchange into a laboratory of their new self-definition as nobles and as servants of the monarchy. In this way, literary representation and rhetorical ability became important and necessary components of leadership. The reading of the only Portuguese letter of Don Isaac to reach us makes it clear that Abravanel assimilated the new humanistic epistolary trend. His letter is very similar in its sources and its rhetoric to those written by fifteenth-century Iberian humanists. As far as I know, this letter is the first humanistic vernacular epistle written by a Jew. While modern scholars have diminished its historical and cultural importance, the story of its conservation and transmission tells much about its appreciation by late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Portuguese literati. This dismissive attitude of scholars is, of course, related to their ambivalent appreciation of Don Isaac's life and work. The present edition is an attempt to give the fullest scope to this rare, if not unique, literary document. Breaking with the unfortunate scholarly division between Sephardic studies and Spanish and Portuguese literary studies, this edition intends to restore this epistle to its original historical background—that is, humanistic epistolary writing among the Iberian elite. Such an endeavour, which relies on the contextualizing of this letter in a range of literary, historical, and economic documents, will hopefully elucidate Abravanel's knowledge of Iberian humanistic literature, his friendship with leading Portuguese humanists, and his participation in the economic, diplomatic, and cultural relationships between Portugal and Italy. Thus this fragment of Abravanel's vernacular correspondence will stand as an exemplary piece through which we may view the intricate world of a Jewish humanist as well as the conditions that gave rise to such a new figure.

It is important here to remind the reader that the second major example of a vernacular humanistic text written by a Jew is that of the *Dialoghi d'Amore*, which was written by the elder son of Don Isaac, Yehuda, in the first years of the sixteenth century. This work is surely one of the most significant of these texts. It crowns the remarkable evolution of the Abravanel family throughout the fifteenth century and confirms that Don Isaac's epistle is not an interesting peculiarity but a piece of a whole cultural transformation. Indeed, a similar evolution can be found in Don Isaac's biography. After his successful career in the court of the Duke of Bragança, Don Isaac had to flee Portugal in 1483 because of Bragança's plot against the new king, João II, Afonso V's son. He found refuge in Castile and was soon commencing another successful career, this one in the house of the Mendoza. The Mendozas, like the

Braganças, were not only the most influential noble family of the kingdom, but also the leading patrons of humanism and Renaissance culture in Castile. Don Isaac's financial services for Cardinal Don Pedro Gonzalez, son of the great humanist El Marques de Santillana and, he himself an accomplished humanist, were surely mixed with intellectual exchanges although we have no record of it.

After the Expulsion of 1492, Don Isaac and his family found shelter in Naples where King Ferrante, also a great patron of humanists, used his services. We have some sense of a strong relationship between the two men. Was such a relationship only based on economic interests? More likely, given Don Isaac's humanistic background, Ferrante saw him as more than merely a financier. Indeed, we know that Abravanel left Naples with Ferrante's son, Ferrandino, for Sicily on the eve of the French invasion in 1495. Such knowledge points to a cultural proximity between Abravanel and the Neapolitan kings and nobles. Don Isaac finally settled in Venice in 1503, where he lived until his death. His subsequent participation in the negotiations of the Doges with the Portuguese Kingdom concerning the new sea route to India is further evidence of Don Isaac's integration in the Italian Renaissance elite. Venice was at that time barred to long-term Jewish residents, and yet Abravanel was accepted and even employed as a diplomatic agent. Here again, such a success cannot be explained without considering cultural and humanistic factors.

Clearly, Abravanel moved from the periphery to the very heart of Renaissance culture and humanism with the same constant success. It seems that, parallel to his economic and political endeavours, he constantly learned and assimilated the humanistic culture of his surroundings. Thus, Don Isaac's Portuguese humanistic letter enables us to view his economic and political curriculum from a cultural perspective, revealing the abilities and skills essential for being a successful courtier in fifteenth-century Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian courts. The only vernacular epistle that has reached us from Abravanel stands, from this cultural point of view, for the many other letters that Don Isaac wrote throughout his career, in which he had to display his literary skills as well as his financial and political talent.

The question of the impact of the Abravanel family's humanistic vernacular tendencies on Renaissance Judaism can be partially elucidated by the study of the three Hebrew private letters written by Don Isaac that have reached us. Scholars quickly noticed the dissimilarities between the Portuguese letter and the Hebrew ones. The major sign of humanism in the Portuguese epistle, its many references to classical literature, is entirely absent from the Hebrew epistles. This difference—

along with the fact that Abravanel's Hebrew works, although they do refer many times to classical literature, rather belong to the genre of Jewish medieval commentary—apparently has led scholars to neglect the anomaly, that is, the humanistic Portuguese letter, and to focus on Abravanel's Hebrew letters and commentaries.

The present edition is an attempt to correct this lacuna in Abravanel studies. Moreover, it intends to reveal that the Portuguese and Hebrew private correspondence of Don Isaac is not divided into two hermetic discourses: the humanistic one for court correspondence and the medieval Jewish one for letter exchange between Jews. The Hebrew letters share, indeed, much of the rhetoric and the ideological background of the Portuguese humanistic epistle. The comparative study of the Hebrew letters reveals that Don Isaac's Hebrew correspondence was an early attempt to renew the Hebrew medieval epistolary genre and to produce a Jewish equivalent to the humanistic epistle. It is obvious that Abravanel considered the Hebrew medieval letter (for example, the letters of Maimonides) as a model to be preserved and as a way to express his high social status and his fidelity to Judaism. The same is true of his relationship to Jewish medieval commentary. Along with this conservative attitude, Don Isaac inserted in his Hebrew epistles, as well as in his Hebrew commentaries, clear elements of fifteenth-century Iberian humanism (stoicism, a new conception of nobility, and rhetorical consolation). In this way, Abravanel hoped to make his letters a combination of Judaism and new cultural trends, which was meant to express a new model of Jewish leadership or nobility. If we consider the remarkable development of Hebrew epistolary writing in late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, including the composition of many rhetorical manuals and anthologies, we may see a prime example of it in Don Isaac's renewal of the Hebrew medieval epistle. Still, it would be hyperbolic to claim that this renewal is comparable in its fortune to the recovery and rebirth of the classical epistle, which happened in Renaissance Christian epistolary writing.

Abravanel's Hebrew letters are a remarkable example of cultural adaptation, which means also of limitation, occultation, and rejection. Don Isaac did not adapt as such the humanistic epistle into Hebrew. Such a direct adaptation was for him unthinkable; it would have made him feel like a traitor. The Jewish medieval epistle was for him a sign of distinction and a sign of Jewishness, although he was aware of its being relatively old fashioned vis-à-vis the new cultural norms of the court. His choice, and that of some of his Jewish contemporaries, was to fill the Jewish epistle with new content and to refine its literary form. The result is not a Hebrew humanistic epistle in the sense of a Portuguese

or Spanish humanistic epistle, but rather the elaboration of a cultural equivalent that cultivated fidelity as well as a new self-image of Jewish leadership informed by humanistic trends. One has to recall that Don Isaac felt freer to follow the humanistic model when he wrote in Portuguese (or in Spanish, although we don't have any evidence of that). He knew how to develop two types of discourse for two different audiences: the Christian nobility and the Jewish elite. This was surely one of the keys to his success as a courtier and as a Jewish leader. Could he have been successful in the courts of the Mendoza, Ferrante, and Venice without mastering the humanistic discourse? One can doubt it.

The same can be said about his Jewish political career. Indeed, much of his success in the Portuguese and Spanish Jewry and after the Expulsion in the Sephardic Diaspora and in the Italian Jewry was based on his teaching and writing which displayed to the Jewish public his mastery of the Jewish art of the commentary. His teaching and writing also augmented his economic superiority with his right to be a religious leader. Developing this dual discourse, Abravanel probably perceived himself as a comprehensive intellectual in Jewish, classical, and Christian matters. (Although, in fact, his vast knowledge was only partially used and implemented in his Hebrew work as well as in what we can reconstruct of his vernacular letters.) The duality of Jewish humanists like Don Isaac was obviously a great richness, but it indicated as well their difficulty in expressing themselves coherently and comprehensively in one of the two agoras—Jewish or Christian—in which they were involved as literati and writers. Indeed, the limitation of the adaptation of the Hebrew epistle to humanistic trends, as it appears in Abravanel's private correspondence, as well as the imitation of the Christian humanistic letter, are the two sides of the same phenomenon, that is, the rise of the Jewish intellectual learned in both ancient and medieval Jewish tradition and in humanism. This new figure of the Jewish humanist, Don Isaac Abravanel being surely one of its early incarnations, seems to struggle with a difficulty to reconcile Judaism and humanism and to find a new adequate expression for them in Hebrew as well as in vernacular.

The relationship of Jewish Italian literature to Renaissance culture and humanism has been the subject of many studies. Cassuto, Roth, Bonfil, Idel, Ruderman, Weinberg, and other scholars have debated the extent of humanistic influence on Renaissance Jewish literature and culture. The literary production of fifteenth-century Iberian Jews has not been the focus of such scholarly attention, especially in terms of its relationship to fifteenth-century Iberian humanism. The exception of Gutwirth's studies must be noted here. This edition, which reveals

Abravanel's dual discourse in Portuguese and in Hebrew as well as the dissimulation of Iberian humanism in his Hebrew epistles, will hopefully open fifteenth-century Iberian Jewish literature to such humanistic approach, on the assumption that Don Isaac's humanistic background was shared by other members of the Jewish Iberian elite. Abravanel's dual correspondence constitutes a fascinating case study that contributes significantly to the debate on the complex relationship of Jews to humanism, shedding new light on the importance of multilingualism. Indeed, the vernacular (Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, or Italian) was the vehicle of a quick assimilation of humanistic trends for the Jewish elite involved in the service of the Christian nobility. Members of the Jewish elite, like Don Isaac, had to adopt the ways and modes of court communication, and thus they experienced in vernacular a certain kind of freedom of style, expression, and thought. In Hebrew, they adopted a mixed attitude of fidelity to the medieval Jewish genres and of adaptation to Renaissance trends. Hence, the bilingual model of Abravanel's private correspondence enables a range of different attitudes toward humanism from assimilation to rejection, adapted to the different commitments of the Jewish elite.

Fifteenth-century Iberian literature in Castilian, Catalan, and Portuguese has been the subject of many important studies, especially in the last thirty years. Ramalho, Di Camillo, Gomes Moreno, Catedra, Ponton, Yndurain, Lawrance, and other scholars have contributed greatly to change the perception of this literature. They have opened our eyes to the relationship between the peninsula and the Italian Renaissance as well as to the characteristics of the "vernacular humanism," to use Lawrence's formula, that developed and spread throughout Castile, Aragon, and Portugal. The role of the Jews in the Iberian humanistic movement has been mostly overlooked. This edition of Abravanel's Portuguese letter, which elucidates its humanistic references and offers new documentation of his friendship with a leading Portuguese humanist, João Teixeira, and his active involvement in commercial, cultural, and political exchange between Portugal and Italy, will, I hope, draw the attention of readers and scholars to the Jewish contribution to Iberian humanism as well as to its Jewish reception and adaptation. The time has come for a new encounter between Iberian Renaissance studies and Jewish Sephardic studies. I humbly hope that the letters presented here, the new documents on Abravanel, and the historical and philological information gathered in the introductory study will serve as a fruitful meeting ground for these two disciplines.

As I have noted, the ambiguous attitudes of modern scholars concerning the figure of Abravanel and his role in early modern Jewish



history echo Don Isaac's own ambiguity regarding Renaissance culture and humanism. This inherited incertitude is but an aspect of the sensitive question of the relationship of Judaism to the humanistic movement and its descendants (seventeenth-century rationalism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism, and Postmodernism). The answer to this question, to which the present edition hopes to contribute is, on the one hand, historical in the sense of a presentation and study of sources from the past and, on the other hand, creative in the sense of the elaboration of a discourse which produces a new link between Judaism and humanism (and its descendants). I hope to have been faithful to both parts of the answer in this edition of Abravanel's private letters. Don Isaac is indeed a historical figure of Renaissance Judaism, but also an important "literary" figure of modern and post-modern Judaism.

To conclude, I would like to thank my wife and my parents for their support and patience during the years of my work on this edition. I am also immensely grateful to my Ph.D. mentor, Professor Menachem Lorberbaum, for his infallible trust in me. I want to thank as well Professor Eleazar Gutwirth, Professor Moshe Idel, Professor Yom-Tov Assis, Professor Yosef Hacker, Dr. Javier Castaño, Professor Michele Luzzati, Professor Maurice Kriegel, Dr. Rita Costa Gomes, Dr. Dov Stuczynski, and Professor Bernard Cooperman for their great help with my research prior to this edition as well as during my writing. I would like to thank deeply the institutions which supported me during my doctoral studies and afterward: the School of Philosophy of Tel Aviv University and its successive heads Professor Shlomo Biderman and Professor Menachem Fisch, the Shalom Hartman Institute of Jerusalem, the Jorge Amado Foundation of UCLA, the National Library of Portugal and its former head, Professor Diogo Pires Aurelio, as well as the head of the fellowship program, Dr. Miguel Castel Branco, EGIDE, the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and its head, Professor David Ruderman, and the Shalem Center of Jerusalem. Finally, I would like to thank *Studia Judaica* and its editors, Professor Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich and Professor Günter Stemberger, for accepting this edition in this prestigious collection.

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## Introduction

The four letters of Don Isaac Abravanel<sup>1</sup> (1437-1508) that the present edition gathers and presents as a partial reconstitution of his private correspondence<sup>2</sup> did not reach us by hazard. Abravanel's Portuguese and Hebrew letters are conserved in no fewer than seven sixteenth-century codices. This relatively high number of codices including Abravanel's letters is a testimony of the literary and historical interest that his contemporaries as well as following generations found in them. Let us try to reconstruct their perception of the letters from the content of the manuscripts in which they copied and read them.

### 1. The Portuguese and Hebrew Manuscript Transmission of the Letters

Abravanel's original letters were written in Portugal, two of them in the first years of the 1470s and the other two in the beginning of the 1480s. The Portuguese letter of 1470-1471 – the other three are in Hebrew – is preserved in two very interesting codices, the Alcobacense codex 475/297 of the Biblioteca Nacional of Lisbon<sup>3</sup> and the codex C III 2-20 of the Biblioteca Publica of Evora.

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- 1 For an overview of Don Isaac Abravanel's life and work, see: Benzion Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel, Statesman and Philosopher* (Philadelphia, 1982), Eric Lawee, *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance toward Tradition* (Albany, 2001).
  - 2 We are not including in the present collection of letters Abravanel's letter-tract to Shaul Hachohen on Maimonides (Abravanel, *Sheelot lehehakham Saul Hakohen* [Venice, 1574], 12-41). This letter was written in Venice in the year 1507, whereas the letters we are publishing were all written in Portugal at least twenty-five years earlier. Although there are some passages in it that can be considered as belonging to the genre of familiar letters, most of it is a philosophical tract. For these reasons of time, place and genre, we did not consider this letter as belonging to the present edition.
  - 3 On the codex, see: Gabriel Pereira, *Os Codices 443 e 475* (Coimbra, 1910), Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, "Tratado da Pratica de um Lavrador com Arsano Rei da Persia Feito por Codro Rufo," *Academia das Sciencias de Lisboa, Boletim da classe de letras* (Lisboa, 1920), 1033-1060.

## A. The Portuguese Codices

The Alcobacense codex is an anonymous codex from the second half of the sixteenth century. It contains a remarkable collection of letters, official speeches (Oração),<sup>4</sup> political treatises,<sup>5</sup> poems<sup>6</sup> and translations from classical literature.<sup>7</sup> Almost all the texts copied in it were composed within the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth. Of great interest are the letters of kings and popes. The list is impressive: Dom Duarte, Afonso V, João II, Dom Manuel, João III, François I, Maximilian I, Louis II Jagellon, King of Hungary, Fernando and Isabel, King and Queen of Aragon and Castile, Carlos V, Leon X, and Clement VII. Their letters relate some of the major events<sup>8</sup> of the period and also served as models for the writing of new political and diplomatic letters. In fact, the whole manuscript was composed as a rhetorical manual. It was also conceived as a compendium of the humanism of the Avis Court and of early sixteenth-century Portugal. It contains treatises, letters, and poems of some of the major spokesmen (Garcia de Resende, Lourenço de Caceres, Diogo Pacheco, Garcia de Meneses, Francisco de Melo, Afonso de Albuquerque). Symptomatic of the rhetorical humanistic character of this codex is the presence, almost at the end of the manuscript, of a translation of sentences of classical authors (Demetrius, Seneca, Aristotle, Plato, Boethius, Marcus Aurelius, Cicero, Plutarch, Plinius and Suetonius) for the use of letter writing or speech writing. The inclusion of Abravanel's letter in the Alcobacense codex is a clear testimony of its rhetorical value in the eyes of the author of this impressive literary compilation. Indeed, at the end of the codex, this anonymous author insists on the high rhetorical value of his compendium, revealing the rhetorical criteria for his selection:

Escrito soamente com grande cuidado  
 Por ver e guozar de cousas tam boas  
 Memorias palavras falar mui ornado  
 Em prosas e verso mui bem assentado

4 See the speeches of Francisco de Melo, Garcia de Meneses, Gonsalo Vaz, Diogo Pacheco, and Lopo Fernandes, f. 21-36.

5 See for example, Lourenço de Caceres's political treatise, f. 1-20, and see also the anonymous treatise of the pseudonym Codro Rufo, f. 69-77.

6 See the series of *Trouvas* at the end of the manuscript, especially the ones of Gomes Manrique, Garcia de Resende, and Francisco de Melo, f. 193-208.

7 See f. 208r-217v.

8 See for example, Maximilian I's letter which bears the following title: "Carta do imperador Maximiliano a elrei D. Manuel sobre a batalha entre elrei de França e elrei D. Fernando de Castella", f. 77v-78r.

Processo de taes e tam nobres pessoas.<sup>9</sup>

Written only with great care  
To see and enjoy such good things  
Memorable words, a very ornamented expression  
In prose and verse, very well composed  
And made by so many and such noble people

The Alcobacense codex combines rhetoric and politics and presents both important events of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the rhetorical way their actors dealt with each historical situation. The manuscript is both a lesson in rhetoric and in politics, more precisely, a lesson in the art of writing necessary for the art of governing. Without entering yet into the details of Abravanel's Portuguese letter, we can say that it was perceived as a fine example of Court literature and of political advising.

The codex C III 2-20 of the Biblioteca Publica of Evora is an anonymous manuscript from the end of the sixteenth century. It includes no less than twenty-three texts copied from the Alcobacense codex,<sup>10</sup> among them Abravanel's Portuguese letter. The group of texts that both manuscripts have in common is composed of speeches of Diogo Pacheco, Garcia de Meneses, Gonçalo Vaz, and Lopo Fernandes, as well as the letters of kings and popes to which we have already referred. Abravanel's letter was copied from one manuscript to the other along with a well-defined group of texts whose common denominator was, as we have stressed, rhetoric and politics. Thus, we are learning from the Evora codex that more than a hundred years after his writing, Abravanel's Portuguese letter was still considered a model for Court rhetoric. One can reasonably suggest that it had been for more than a century an important piece in the literary education of the Portuguese elite.<sup>11</sup>

If one considers the other texts of the Evora codex – which are not in the Alcobacense manuscript – one can find two series of letters and

9 See f. 224r.

10 It may very well be that it was copied from another manuscript earlier than the Alcobacense codex. The only certitude is that both manuscripts have 23 texts in common and that the Alcobacense one is earlier than the one of Evora. The latest text in the Alcobacense codex is dated from 1541, the latest of the Evora codex from 1590. The orthographic discrepancies between the two codices may be linked to the evolution of the Portuguese orthography and not to the existence of another manuscript.

11 Antonio Caetano de Sousa refers to Abravanel's Portuguese letter and mentions a seventeenth-century *Nobiliario* of Don Luiz Lobo on the Noronha family that alludes to Abravanel's letter. Antonio Caetano de Sousa, *História Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, vol. 9 (Coimbra, 1951), 111, Don Luiz Lobo da Silveira, *Titulo da Família dos Noronha*, MS Biblioteca Nacional of Lisbon Cod 1054.

treatises linked to two figures which were very close to Abravanel during his career at the Portuguese Court: Don Fernando II Duke of Bragança, whose financier was Isaac Abravanel himself, and Lopo de Almeida, who is referred to in Abravanel's first Hebrew letter (1472) as one of the two ambassadors who were bringing to Yehiel da Pisa his letter and a series of presents. The Evora manuscript contains the famous letters of Lopo de Almeida (1452)<sup>12</sup> about his journey in Italy as part of the Portuguese royal delegation for the wedding of Eleonora, King Afonso V's sister, to the Emperor Frederick III. These letters are generally considered a landmark in Portuguese humanistic letter writing and in the process of the integration of Italian humanistic culture into Portuguese literature. Concerning this integration of Italian humanism, the obedience speeches of Meneses (1481)<sup>13</sup> and Pacheco (1514)<sup>14</sup> to the Pope, which are in both manuscripts we are dealing with, constitute the direct continuation of Almeida's letters. These speeches were ceremonial occasions to present to the Papal Court the level reached by Portuguese humanistic rhetoric, as well as occasions for the Portuguese diplomats to learn more about Italian humanism.<sup>15</sup> Lopo de Almeida's journey in Italy in 1452 may very well have been the point of departure of the friendship between the Abravanel family and the da Pisa, because Almeida and his companions passed by Pisa on their journey. Actually, the first letter of Abravanel to Yehiel da Pisa that reached us is dated from 1472 and its reading makes clear that the relationship between the two families was already well established. Moreover, this letter was sent to Pisa thanks to a new diplomatic mission of Lopo de Almeida, this time not for a wedding, but for King Afonso V's obedience to the newly elected Pope Sixtus IV. There is some probability that Abravanel's second letter was also sent to Pisa through the diplomatic mission of Garcia de Meneses in Rome in 1481. If we consider

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12 See in the manuscripts, f. 24v-31v. Lopo de Almeida, *Cartas de Itália*, ed. M. Rodrigues Lapa (Lisboa, 1935), 1-35.

13 Garcia de Menese, *Oração de Obediência: ao Summo Pontife Sisto IV*, ed. M. de Albuquerque (Lisboa, 1988), Barbosa Machado, *Biblioteca Lusitana*, vol. 2 (Lisboa, 1752), 323-25.

14 Diogo Pacheco, *Oração de Obediência: ao Summo Pontife Leon X*, ed. M. de Albuquerque (Lisboa, 1988), Barbosa Machado, *Biblioteca*, vol. 3, 683-84.

15 *Orações de Obediência dos Reis do Portugal aos Sumos Pontífices*, vol. 1-6, ed. M. Albuquerque (Lisboa, 1988), Virginia Rau, "Portugal e o Mediterrâneo no século XV," *Centro de Estudos de Marinha* (Lisboa, 1973): 3-31, "Italianismo na cultura jurídica portuguesa do século XV," *Revista Portuguesa de Historia* XII (1969): 185-206, "Alguns Estudantes e Eruditos Portugueses em Italia no século XV," *Do Tempo E Da Historia* V (1972): 29-99, "Relações Diplomáticas de Portugal Durante o Reinado de D. Afonso V," *Estudos de Historia Medieval* (Lisboa, 1985), 66-113.

the correspondence of Don Fernando II Duke of Bragança<sup>16</sup> and especially a small treatise about the Duke's death,<sup>17</sup> which are copied at the beginning of the Evora codex, we are reminded of the trial of Don Fernando's plot against João II and of his execution, which forced Abravanel to flee to Castile, marking the end of his Portuguese career.<sup>18</sup>

Nothing is accidental in the presence of Abravanel's Portuguese letter in these two remarkable manuscripts of humanistic inspiration. Abravanel belonged to Afonso V's Court and more precisely to Don Fernando II's Court. He mastered its culture, but was also a merchant engaged in trade with Tuscany,<sup>19</sup> as evidenced by a document we are publishing in the appendix, which indicates the value of a command of manuscripts from Tuscany. Don Isaac Abravanel was in Portugal an important figure in international trade, politics, and scholarship. The integration of a letter of his within two manuscripts that bear a clear interest for national and international politics, as well as for humanistic rhetoric, reflects at a literary level Abravanel's social position within the Afonso V's Court. The Alcobacense and Evora codices did not only conserve one of Abravanel's many letters, they conserved the cultural and political environment in which he was acting. In brief, the two codices kept, in a diffused way, the memory of Abravanel's role in the emergence of Portuguese humanism as well as in late fifteenth-century Portuguese politics.

### B. The Hebrew Codices

The three Hebrew letters were copied and preserved in five different manuscripts: British Library Heb MS 1081 (Add. 27129), Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) H 83 A, New York Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) MS 3921, Oxford Bodleian Library Heb MS 1989, and Montefiore Library MS 488. The first manuscript is from the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth, the second and the third from the sixteenth century, the fourth is dated from 1565, and the fifth from

16 See f. 3r-9r.

17 See f. 9r-13v. See also its printed edition: Antonio Caetano de Sousa, *Provas da Historia Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, vol. III (Coimbre, 1949), 419-38.

18 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 26-32, Lawee, *Isaac Abarbanel*, 14-16, Elias Lipiner, *Two Portuguese Exiles in Castile* (Jerusalem, 1997), 46-158.

19 On the commercial activities of the Abravanel in Portugal and its broader context, see Maria José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, *Os Judeus em Portugal no século XV* (Lisboa, 1982), 159-396.



the years 1585-1590. The five manuscripts are, like the two Portuguese codices, rhetorical compendia, but in Hebrew.

The largest, and maybe the most interesting of these five manuscripts, is the one of the British Library.<sup>20</sup> It is the only one that contains two letters of Abravanel, written respectively in 1481 and 1482 to Yehiel da Pisa. It is considered to be of Italian origin according to the type of script used in it. The presence of a series of texts linked to the figure of Yehiel da Pisa may confirm this Italian origin, and even indicate that it was composed in the circle of the da Pisa family. The manuscript is composed for a third of rabbinical epistles: responsa of the Italian Rabbi Josef Colon (Maharik),<sup>21</sup> three famous epistles of Maimonides (the epistles to Yonathan Hacohen of Lunel, to the sages of Montpellier, and to Yemen)<sup>22</sup>, and a no less famous epistle of Rabbi Shlomo ben Abraham Adret to the sages of Provence concerning the study of philosophy.<sup>23</sup> It contains also a testament of Yehuda ben Asher, a moral will of Yakov ben Asher (Baal HaTurim),<sup>24</sup> and various funeral elegies and speeches on the death of Yehiel da Pisa.<sup>25</sup> The two letters of Abravanel<sup>26</sup> copied in this manuscript clearly belong to this second group of texts: they both are letters of consolation dealing with the death of Yehiel's wife and with the conversion to Catholicism of his daughter, Clemenza. The codex includes also early medieval narratives like Eldad Hadani's travel account<sup>27</sup> and Ben Sirah's *Aleph Beth*,<sup>28</sup> and the rhetorical poem of Moses ben Isaac da Rieti, *Mikdash Meat*, from the early fifteenth century.<sup>29</sup> If the diplomatic dimension which characterized the two Portu-

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- 20 See Margoliouth's remarkable description of the content of the manuscript: George Margoliouth, *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1915), 471-86.
  - 21 See f. 68r-87v. See Joseph Kolon, *Shut MaHarik Hashalem* (Jerusalem, 1988).
  - 22 See f. 110r-117r, 139r-148r, for the printed edition of the letters, see Maimonides, *Igerot Harambam*, ed. I. Shilat (Jerusalem, 1990), 97-168, 474-80, 491-510.
  - 23 See f. 119r-121r, for the printed edition of the letter, see Shlomo ben Abraham Adret, *Sefer Sheelot vetshuvot Harashba* (Jerusalem, 2000), 225-30.
  - 24 See f. 164r-177v, for the edited text, see Israel Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia, 1976), 163-205.
  - 25 See f. 193r-214v. See its edition and presentation by David Kaufman, « La famille de Yehiel de Pise », *Revue des Etudes Juives* 26 (1893): 83-110, 220-239, 29 (1894): 142-147, 32 (1896): 130-134, 34 (1897): 309-311.
  - 26 See f. 187r-191r.
  - 27 See f. 260r-264r, for a printed edition of the text, see Eldad Hadani, *Eldad Hadani Sipurav vehilkothav*, ed. Abraham Epstein (Pressburg, 1891), 1-80.
  - 28 See f. 264v-281v, for a printed edition of the text; see Eli Yasif, *Sipurei Ben Sira beyemei beinayim* (Jerusalem, 1985), 261-283.
  - 29 See f. 187r-179r, 215r-250v, for a printed edition, see Mose da Rieti, *Il Dante ebreo ossia Il Piccolo Santuario*, ed. J. Goldenthal (Vienna, 1851).

guese codices seems completely absent from this Hebrew codex, it is relatively easy to notice that this manuscript, like the two Portuguese ones, is a rhetorical compendium or manual that encompasses different aspects of the Hebrew rhetoric: rabbinic responsum, pastoral letter, funeral speech, narrative, and poem. The reason for the incorporation of two letters of Abravanel in this compendium seems to be the same as for the incorporation of his Portuguese letter in the two above mentioned codices, namely, the high rhetorical quality of the two Hebrew letters and the fame of their author.

The Bodleian Library codex of 1565 from the Italian city of Angiari presents some important similarities with the one of the British library.<sup>30</sup> Actually, both are Italian and include *Mikdash Meat* of Rieti<sup>31</sup> (the Bodleian codex contains also two other poems of his, *Igeret Yaar Levanon*<sup>32</sup> and *Kinah al ptirat ishto*<sup>33</sup>), and Ben Sira's *Aleph Beth*.<sup>34</sup> The manuscript includes also a brief discussion on Hebrew grammar<sup>35</sup> and a fragment of Shlomo Poggibonzi's commentary on Genesis.<sup>36</sup> Like Rieti, Poggibonzi was considered as a master in fifteenth-century Hebrew rhetoric (especially in letter writing).<sup>37</sup> The second half of the codes is an *agron*,<sup>38</sup> a compendium of copies of letters and of some poems for the use of teaching Hebrew rhetoric for letter writing. Abravanel's letter of 1482<sup>39</sup> is part of this compilation, which contains other letters and poems from important personalities of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Abraham Hayun,<sup>40</sup> Isaac da Pisa,<sup>41</sup> Ishmael da Rieti,<sup>42</sup>

30 See Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1886), 680-81, Malachi Beit-Arie, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1994), 361.

31 See f. 1-54v.

32 See f. 55v-59r.

33 See f. 59v-60v.

34 See f. 61r-63v.

35 See f. 64r-66r.

36 See f. 67r-68r.

37 Shlomo Simonsohn, "Migronav shel Shlomo miPontsibontsi," *Kobez al yad new series* 6 (1966): 379-417.

38 See f. 69r-172v.

39 See f. 136r.

40 See f. 144r-146v, Yosef Hacker, "kvutsat igrot al gerush hayehudim misefarad umisitziliah veal goral hamegorashim", *Prakim betoldot hahevrach hayehudit beyemei habeinaiim uvaet hahadashah*, ed. E. Etkes and J. Salmon (Jerusalem, 1980), 64-97.

41 See f. 146v-147v, for a printed edition of the text; see Hacker, "kvutsat igrot".

42 See f. 71v.

Johanan da Treves,<sup>43</sup> Joseph Judah of Arles,<sup>44</sup> Yair ben Shabtai da Corregio,<sup>45</sup> and Johanan Jehudah Alatrini.<sup>46</sup> The latter two were important Jewish poets and rhetoricians of the sixteenth century. An elegy on the death of Yehudah Minz immediately follows the letter of Abravanel.<sup>47</sup> Thus, both parts of the Bodleian manuscripts bear clear signs of rhetorical preoccupations, and in fact constitute a manual for Hebrew poetry and letter writing.

The manuscript of the Montefiore Library is very similar to the one of the Bodleian Library.<sup>48</sup> It is also Italian and contains Rieti's *Igeret Yaar Levanon*<sup>49</sup> and parts of *Mikdash Meat*<sup>50</sup> and also a large *agron* with the same letter of Abravanel,<sup>51</sup> the same elegy of Abraham Minz on his father Yehuda,<sup>52</sup> the same letters of Abraham Hayun,<sup>53</sup> Isaac da Pisa,<sup>54</sup> Ishmael da Rieti,<sup>55</sup> Yair da Corregio,<sup>56</sup> and identical poems of Johanan Alatrini.<sup>57</sup> Of great interest also is the presence in the *agron* of a series of letters of Don Benveniste Ben Lavie (Don Vidal dela Cavaleria), who was a central political and literary figure in the Saragossa literary circle.<sup>58</sup>

The manuscript of the JTS library, which also originated in Italy, is a large *agron* that includes the same letter of Abravanel<sup>59</sup> as the Bodleian and Montefiore codices along with the same letters of Abra-

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- 43 See f. 163r, Simon Schwarzfuchs, «Yohanan Trèves et le dernier refuge de l'école talmudique française après l'expulsion de 1394», ed. Gilbert Dahan, Gérard Nahon, Elie Nicolas, *Rashi et la culture juive en France du Nord au moyen âge* (Paris, 1997), 83-94.
  - 44 See f. 153r-154v.
  - 45 See f. 166r-168r, for a printed edition of the text, see Yair ben Shabtai Mikorio, *Herev Pipiot*, ed. Y. Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1958), 107-10.
  - 46 See f. 169r-171r, Dvora Bregman, *Zror Zehuvim* (Jerusalem, 1997), 111-112.
  - 47 See f. 136v-138r.
  - 48 See Sotheby's, *Important Hebrew Manuscripts from the Montefiore Endowment* (New York October 27 & 28, 2004), 429; Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew Mss. of the Montefiore Library* (London, 1904), 151 (n. 488).
  - 49 See f. 62v-64r.
  - 50 See f. 1v-2r, 13r-14r, 64r-67v.
  - 51 See f. 49v-50r.
  - 52 See f. 50r.
  - 53 See f. 53r-v.
  - 54 See f. 53v-54r.
  - 55 See f. 56v.
  - 56 See f. 60v-61r.
  - 57 See f. 61v-62r.
  - 58 See f. 21v-23r. Ytzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1978), 59-64, Matti Huss, *Don Vidal Benveniste's Melitsat ve-dinah Studies and Critical Edition* (Hebrew, Jerusalem, 2003), 6-9.
  - 59 See f. 72v-73r.

ham Hayun and Isaac da Pisa.<sup>60</sup> It contains the same elegy of Abraham Minz on his father Yehuda Minz as in the Bodleian and Montefiore manuscripts – it also follows Abravanel's letter –<sup>61</sup> and another elegy on David ibn Yahia's death.<sup>62</sup> The presence of Abravanel's letter among letters of leading Jewish personalities of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as well as its integration in a compendium of exemplary letters is testimony to both Abravanel's historical importance and his rhetorical skill.

The codex of the Alliance Israelite Universelle is a compendium of letters copied and added at different periods, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries.<sup>63</sup> Its first part, which is composed of letters copied probably in the western part of the Ottoman Empire, dates from the second half of the sixteenth century. It comprises Abravanel's letter of 1472<sup>64</sup> – surely the most accomplished of the three that reached us – along with a short poem of his, a letter of Yehuda Zarco to Yosef ibn Yahia,<sup>65</sup> and two letters of Haim Eldikh.<sup>66</sup> The high rhetorical quality of these five letters is evident on reading, and it is clearly underlined by the presence of Zarco's letter: Yehuda Zarco was famous in the sixteenth century for his rhetorical and poetical talent.<sup>67</sup>

The five Hebrew codices – to a lesser extent the AIU codex – contain large collections of letters, either anonymous or from famous Jewish figures, poems, testaments, biblical commentaries, grammatical treatises, funeral orations, and medieval narratives. These compendia were composed, at least partly, to serve as models of Hebrew rhetorical perfection for the literary activity of the Jewish Italian elite, but also to educate its historical consciousness by reading the words of political or religious leaders. If we compare the Hebrew compendia with the two Portuguese compendia, we may see easily that both the Hebrew and Portuguese codices had the same rhetorical and pedagogic function. In our opinion, this similarity of function indicates also a similarity of genre: the Hebrew compendia were a kind of Jewish equivalent to the Christian humanistic compendia of the sixteenth century. In conclu-

60 See f. 88r-92v.

61 See f. 74r-75v.

62 See f. 70v-72r.

63 Moise Schwab, « Les manuscrits et incunables hébreux de la Bibliothèque de l'Alliance israélite, » *Revue des Etudes Juives* 49 (1904): 75-76.

64 See f. 1-10.

65 See f. 19-20, Meir Benayahu, « Rofe hahatser rabi Moshe Benbenist vehashir al haglayato lerodos mirabi Yehudah Zarko, » *Sefunot* 12 (1971-1978), 125-35.

66 See f. 25-26.

67 Yehuda Zarco, *Lehem Yehuda* (Constantinople, 1560), *Sefer Yefe Nof* (Venice, 1580).

sion, we can see a certain parallelism between the ways of transmission of the Portuguese letter and of the Hebrew letters of Abravanel. Both were catalogued as remarkable examples of fifteenth-century epistolography and were integrated in rhetorical compendia, which bear clear signs of rhetorical and humanistic preoccupations. Moreover, both the Portuguese and Hebrew codices associate Abravanel with leading historical and literary figures, either Christian or Jewish, transmitting in this way the memory of the leading role Don Isaac played both in Portugal and in the Jewish Diaspora. The purpose of this introduction and edition is to show that this parallelism between the Portuguese and Hebrew manuscripts reflects an authentic literary parallelism between the Portuguese and the Hebrew letters.

## 2. Historical Interest and Literary Content of Abravanel's letters

Abravanel wrote, or more accurately completed, relatively few works in Portugal, although he lived there until the age of forty-six.<sup>68</sup> This makes the four letters that reached us all the more interesting. They fill a gap between the writing of Abravanel's first opus, *Ateret Zekenim*,<sup>69</sup> in the mid-1460s and the composition of the second opus, the commentary on the *Former Prophets* in the years 1483-1484.<sup>70</sup> These twenty years, which constitute his first period of financial and communal leadership, decisively shaped his personality.<sup>71</sup> The letters reveal to us some parts of his public and private life and tell us about the people with whom he exchanged letters; they also shed new light on his style of leadership. Beyond their historical interest, which has long been noted, they have a no less important literary interest, as we have already shown. On the one hand, the Hebrew letters are fine examples of rhetorical prose or *melitsah*, which was traditionally used in letters and proems; on the other hand, the Portuguese letter is a remarkable example of fifteenth-

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68 For a description of the works written by Abravanel in Portugal, see Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 13-26; Lawee, *Isaac Abravanel*, 27-36.

69 *Ateret Zekenim*, (Jerusalem, 1968). On the content of this book, see Lawee, *Isaac Abravanel*, 59-82.

70 *Perush al Neviim rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1955). The gap between *Ateret Zekenim* and the commentary on the *Former Prophets* was partially filled by the recent discovery and publication of Abravanel's unfinished commentary on Deuteronomy, Shaul Regev, "Nusah rishon shel perush Abravanel lesefer devarim," *Kovez al Yad* 15 (Jerusalem, 2001): 287-380.

71 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 13-26; Lawee, *Isaac Abravanel*, 27-36.

century Iberian epistolary writing. The fact that Abravanel wrote one letter to a Christian noble and the three others to a leading Jewish figure will enable us to compare the two rhetorics he used and to study the influence of the humanistic rhetoric of the Portuguese letter on the Hebrew epistles. Moreover, this first critical edition of Abravanel's familiar letters will fill a lacuna in Abravanel studies, which more or less neglected his correspondence. In spite of the importance of letter writing in Renaissance culture, scholars – with the notable exception of Eleazar Gutwirth<sup>72</sup> – have not compared his letters with the humanistic correspondence that flourished at this time.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, they lost an opportunity to determine Abravanel's position within Iberian humanism.

The first letter (1470-1471)<sup>74</sup> is a Portuguese epistle addressed to Dom Afonso Count of Faro, third son of Dom Fernando I Duke of Bragança and Dona Joanna de Castro. The three others (1472, 1481, and 1482)<sup>75</sup> are Hebrew epistles to Yehiel da Pisa, head of the famous banking family da Pisa.<sup>76</sup> These four letters allow us to identify a central aspect of Abravanel's epistolary writing: his assimilation of the consolatory epistolary genre that flourished during the fifteenth century in the Iberian Peninsula and the Jewish and Hebrew adaptation he made of it.

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72 Eleazar Gutwirth, "Don Ishaq Abravanel and Vernacular Humanism in Fifteenth Century Iberia," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* LX (1998): 641-71.

73 For a comprehensive study of Spanish fifteenth-century epistolary literature, see: Gonzalo Pontón *Correspondencias, Los orígenes del arte epistolar en España* (Madrid 2002), for a study of Italian epistolary literature, see Ronald. G. Wit Coluccio Salutati and his *Public Letters* (Genève, 1976), Cecil. H. Clough, "The Cult of Antiquity: Letters and Letter Collections," ed. C. H. Clough, *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance* (New York, 1976), 33-67, U. Dotti, "Introduction," Pétrarque, *Lettres familières*, tom. 1, (Paris, 2002), XIII-LXXXV. On Portuguese fifteenth-century epistolary writing, see Rita Costa Gomes, "Letters and Letter-Writing in Fifteenth-Century Portugal," ed. R. Schulte and X. von Tippelskirch, *Reading, Interpreting and Historicizing: Letters as Historical Sources* (Firenze, 2004), 11-38.

74 For the dating, see the convincing arguments of Joaquim de Carvalho, "Uma Epistola de Isaac Abarbanel," *Obra Completa de Joaquim de Carvalho*, vol. 3 (Lisboa, 1982), 119.

75 For the dating of the Hebrew letter, see the different conclusions of Netanyahu and Hacker: Josef Hacker, "kvutsat igrot," 74-75 n. 60, Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 29.

76 Umberto Cassuto, "Sulla Famiglia Da Pisa," *Rivista Israelitica* 5 (1908): 227-38, 6 (1909): 21-30, 102-13, 160-70, 223-36, 7 (1910): 8-16, 73-86, 146-50, David Kaufman, "La famille de Yehiel de Pise," Michele Luzzati, *La casa dell'ebreo* (Pisa, 1985), "Banchi e insediamenti nell'Italia centro settentrionale fra tardo Medioevo e inizi dell'Età moderna," ed. Corrado Vivanti *Gli ebrei in Italia*, vol. 1 (1996), 175-235, "Caratteri dell'insediamento ebraico," ed. M. Luzzati *Gli ebrei di Pisa (secoli IX-XX)* (Pisa, 1998), 1-41.

A comparison of the Portuguese letter with the Hebrew ones reveals a kind of dual rhetoric (Portuguese and Hebrew) in Abravanel's epistolary writing, which seems to be a parallel development of the same humanistic consolatory genre both in the Portuguese context of the correspondence with nobles (Court correspondence) and in the Jewish context of the epistolary exchanges with other members of the Jewish elite.

### A. A Portuguese *consolatio*

The Portuguese letter is a consolatory letter, which Abravanel sent to Dom Afonso Count of Faro upon the death of his father-in-law (1470-1471), Dom Sancho de Noronha Count of Odemira, whom he loved as a real father. The birth date of Dom Afonso is unknown, but it must have been in the first part of the fifteenth century. In 1463, he joined his father, Dom Fernando, in the unsuccessful military expedition to Tangier. He participated also in the conquest of Arzila in 1471 (this episode constitutes one of the central subjects of Abravanel's first letter to Yehiel da Pisa). In 1475, he escorted King Afonso V to Castile for his engagement to Queen Dona Joana. In the same year, he commanded a wing of Afonso V's army in the battle of Touro against Castile. He also joined the King in his journey to France, and he is said to have had a primary role in preventing his abdication of the throne and in bringing him back to Portugal. King Afonso V was very grateful to him for his services and for his bravery and gave him important titles, offices, and privileges. In June 1465 he married Dona Maria de Noronha, daughter and heiress of the Count de Odemira Dom Sancho de Noronha. For this marriage he received a large dowry from his father and mother-in-law.<sup>77</sup> Dom Afonso's career at the Court ended with the reign of João II, and especially with the repression of the plot of Dom Fernando II Duke of Bragança. Like Abravanel, he had to flee to Castile in 1483 when the Duke was arrested and sentenced to death for his conspiracy against the King. Dom Afonso died in exile in Seville in 1483.<sup>78</sup> Dom Sancho de Noronha, Dom Afonso's father-in-law, whose exact dates of birth and death are unknown, participated in most of the Portuguese military expeditions in Morocco in the years 1425-1465. Dom Sancho is considered to be, with the Bragança, one of the Portuguese nobles who most

<sup>77</sup> See Afonso V's letter of the 15th of June 1465 confirming this dowry, A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, vol. 5, 88-92.

<sup>78</sup> A. C. Sousa, *Historia Genealogica*, vol. 5, 103-15, *Provas*, vol. 5 (Coimbra, 1952), 84-102; Martins Zuquete, ed., *Nobreza de Portugal e Brasil*, vol. 2 (Lisboa, 1960-1989), 577-78.

profited from Afonso V's policy and especially from his antagonism to the Regent the Infant Dom Pedro.<sup>79</sup> The connection of Don Isaac to these two figures is not a coincidence: it reveals that Abravanel served a well-defined group of nobles who particularly benefited from Afonso V's reign.

The letter to Dom Afonso is clearly written according to the humanistic genre of the *consolatio*. Petrarch, particularly in his *Familiares*, *Seniles*, and in his *De Remediis*, brought this classical rhetorical genre to its rebirth.<sup>80</sup> It then became a privileged mode of expression for the new conception of the humanist philosopher as a consoler of worldly vicissitudes. The famous classical sources for the humanistic consolation are Cicero's and Seneca's consolatory writings.<sup>81</sup> As Pedro Catedra and Gonzalo Ponton have shown in their respective studies, the consolatory genre developed itself remarkably in the Iberian epistolary writing of the fifteenth century.<sup>82</sup> This development of the consolatory literature in the Iberian Peninsula is linked to the fifteenth-century translations of Seneca, Cicero, and other classical authors in Catalan, Castilian, and Portuguese.<sup>83</sup> Abravanel's Portuguese letter, which refers both to the Petrarchian genre of the *consolatio* and to Iberian translations of classical

79 Zuquete, *Nobreza*, vol 3, 66-67.

80 For a general view on the revival of the consolation in Renaissance Italy, see George W. McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism* (Princeton, 1991).

81 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, ed. J. E. King (London, 1971), *De Senectute*, ed. W. A. Falconer (London, 1979), Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, ed. R. M. Gummere (London, 1979), *De Consolatione ad Maricam*, *De Consolatione ad Polybium*, *De Consolatione ad Helviam*, in *Moral Essays*, ed. J. W. Basore (London, 1979), 2-97, 356-489.

82 Pedro Catedra, "Una epistola 'consolatoria' atribuida al Tostado," *Atalya III* (1992): 165-76, "Prospeccion sobre el género consolatorio en el siglo XV," ed. A. D. Deyermond and J. Lawrance *Letters and Society in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Oxford, 1993), 1-16, "Creacion y lectura: sobre el genero consolatorio en el siglo XV," ed. M. Vaquero and A. D. Deyermond *Studies on Medieval Spanish Literature in Honor of Charles F. Fraker* (Madison, 1995), 35-61, "Modos de consolar por carta," *Actas del VI Congreso Internacional de la Asociacion Hispanica de Literatura Medieval* (Alcala de Henares, 1997), 469-87, Gonzalo Ponton, *Correspondencias*, 81-126.

83 Sebastião Tavares de Pinho, "O infante D. Pedro e a „escola“ de tradutores da corte de Avis," *Biblos LXIX* (1993): 129-53, Aires A. Nascimento, "As livrerias dos príncipes de Avis," *Biblos LXIX* (1993): 265-87, Joaquim de Carvalho, *Estudos sobre a cultura portuguesa do século XV* (Coimbra, 1949), 55-70, Alonso de Cartagena, *Libros de Tulio: De senectute De los Oficios*, ed. M. Morras (Alcala de Henares, 1996), Karl Alfred Blüher, *Seneca in Spanien. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Seneca-Reception in Spanien vom 13. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (München, 1981), 83-175, Peter Russell, *Traducciones y tradutores en la Peninsula Iberica (1400-1550)* (Barcelona, 1985), Fernando Gomez Redondo, *Historia de la Prosa Medieval Castellana*, vol. 3 (Madrid 2002), 2420-2454, 2598-2630, Helen Nader, *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance 1350-1550* (New Jersey, 1979), 58-100.



literature, is, in that respect, an important testimony of the kind of humanism existing in late fifteenth-century Portugal.

The letter is divided into three parts. In the first part, Abravanel reacts to the letter of Dom Afonso and justifies his sorrow. In the second part, Abravanel writes a consolatory speech based on both classical and biblical sources in order to heal the soul of the Count of Faro from his grief and to transform his reaction to the death of his father-in-law from an emotional to a rational one. In the third and final part, Abravanel encourages the Count to return to public life and offers him some advice. The rhetorical construction of the letter makes it clearly an attempt to change the Count's attitude, coaxing him gradually away from the isolation of his personal grief to a resumption of his public responsibilities. In short, the aim of Abravanel's consolatory letter is to cure the sorrow of the Count so that he could return, as soon as possible, to fulfil his public and political role at the Court of Afonso V. Let us now present these three steps of the consolatory letter, which will constitute a model of reference for our study of Abravanel's Hebrew letters.

### Captatio benevolentiae

The letter begins with a definition of the first step of the consolatory cure:

"As with the beginning of all illnesses, the remedies of medicine often fail, and nature refrains from obeying them, so that when the pain of the death of relatives is fresh, one ought to abstain from offering words of consolation. The strength of the pain and the excessive mourning prevent their being heard. In Job, chapter two, one reads that when his friends came to console him and found him so distressed, they refrained from speaking to him, not even one word, for seven days and seven nights, while his pain was so strong. They waited until he began to voice his pain."

Abravanel's assimilation of the humanistic conception of consolation is obvious here. The metaphor of consolation as a medicine and of the consoler as a doctor is a clear echo of the Petrarchian rhetorical conception of consolation as a medicine of words (*medicamenta verborum*), which heals the soul of the mourner and of the consoler as a doctor of the soul (*medicus animorum*). One famous expression of Petrarch's consolatory conception is the following passage from the introduction of the *De Remediis*:

"Neither am I ignorant that, as in the bodies of man, so also in their minds that are affected with sundry passions, the medicines of words (*medicamenta verborum*) will seem to many to be without effect. But it does not escape me that as the diseases of the mind (*animorum morbi*) are invisible, so

are their remedies invisible also. For those who are assailed by false opinions must be liberated by true maxims, so that those who fell by hearing may rise up by hearing."<sup>84</sup>

The first step of the consolatory therapy, which Abravanel develops in the beginning of his letter, is the *captatio benevolentiae* of the patient by words of sympathy. This first step of consolation intends to establish an emotional relationship between the consoler and the mourner. It is also the function of the first step of epistolary communication, the *exordium*, according to the *ars dictaminis*. The rhetorical conception of consolation and the art of letter writing are here completely interwoven.

The example of Job and his friends to which the quoted part of the letter alludes may be an echo of Enrique de Villena's *Tratado de Consolación* (1422-1424), clearly influenced by Petrarch's humanistic consolation.<sup>85</sup> Villena writes in the beginning of his treatise:

"The [consolatory] way they [the friends of Job] used, after having arrived at Job's place, is divided into three parts, according to the biblical text. First, when they saw him disfigured, they tore their robes, threw dust in the air onto their heads, and they sat down with him. Second, they remained in silence for seven days allowing him to express his complaints and resentments. Third, each one gave words and advice of friendly consolation."<sup>86</sup>

Both Abravanel's letter and Villena's treatise show how the book of Job was integrated, with other classical authors, into the consolatory rhetoric. Abravanel's and Villena's consolatory use of Job have probably among their origins the Castilian translation by Pero Lopez de Ayala (1332-1407) of the book of Job along with the commentary of Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, which was translated under the title *Flores de los*

84 Translation by Georges W. McClure, *Sorrows and Consolation*, 54. For the Latin original text, see Francesco Petrarca, *Opera omnia*, vol. 1 (Basel 1554), 6. See also Petrarch's letter to Philip bishop of Cavaillon (*Rerum Familiarium* II 1, 1): "For just as the cure of a bodily affliction is more difficult the more serious it is, so it is with the mind. For both, a healthy condition requires no cure or a very light one. And just as with the former there is little or no need for a doctor, with the latter there is little or no need for a consoler..." (Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarium libri I-VIII*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo [Albany, 1975], 57) and also *Rerum Familiarium* 1 9, 11-12: "I cannot tell you of what are to me in solitude certain familiar and famous words not only grasped in the mind but actually spoken orally, words with which I am accustomed to rouse my sleepy thoughts. Furthermore, how much delight I get from repeating the written words either of others or sometimes even my own! How much I feel myself freed from very serious and bitter burdens by such readings! Meantime I feel my own writings assisted me even more since they are more suited to my ailments, just as the sensitive hand of a doctor who is himself ill is placed more readily where he feels the pain to be..." (Petrarca, *Rerum familiari*, 49).

85 In the beginning of his treatise, Villena mentions Petrarch's *De Vita Solitaria*, Enrique de Villena, *Obras Completas*, vol. 1, ed. Pedro Catedra (Madrid 1994), 225.

86 Enrique de Villena, *Obras*, 228-29.

*Morales*.<sup>87</sup> The translation of this biblical book along with the translation of Gregory's commentary was adapted in verses and inserted in Ayala's *Libro rimado de Palacio* under the title *Los libros morales*.<sup>88</sup> Both the *Libro Rimado* and the *Flores*, along with other translations by Ayala, had great influence on the development of fifteenth-century Iberian humanism.

After this opening, Abravanel evokes the question of the heritage of the Count of Odemira:

"Many believe, as do I, that your magnificent Lordship has more space in his noble and human heart for pain and sorrow for the death of the illustrious Count, your father, than for the new glory resulting from your succession and the honor of the inheritance you have received from him. I believe your attitude to be the correct one and I would not reprove your great mourning and bitter sorrow, but rather find reasons to support this mourning."

While raising slightly the question of the material and political heritage of Dom Sancho, Abravanel first supports the present negligence of the inheritance by his heir, Dom Afonso, and shows much sympathy with his grief over the death of his father-in-law. Moreover, Don Isaac even sharpens and increases Dom Afonso's sorrow by presenting him a long series of reasons for it. In this way, he hopes to catch the attention of his reader (*captatio benevolentiae*) and create an affective relationship with him. Later on, he will rely on it when exercising on Dom Afonso his rhetorical therapy in order to change his negligent attitude towards the inheritance. Abravanel's justification of the sorrow of his addressee is in fact a praise of the virtues of the late Count as a knight and as a father-in-law. This idealistic image of the knight belongs to the renewed definition of the knight, *cavaleiro*, in the fifteenth-century literature of the Avis dynasty as well as in contemporary Castilian literature.<sup>89</sup>

"Remember the authority, the wisdom, and the judiciousness of his knighthood. How many years he endured the heat of the summers, the cold and the tempests of the winters! How he endured the different battles with enemies, not heeding his own pains, equably forgetting all his fears in

87 Fernando Gomez Redondo, *Historia*, 2131-2157.

88 Pero Lopez de Ayala, *Libro Rimado de Palacio*, ed. K. Adams (Madrid 1993), 298-480.

89 For the Avis literature, see Dom Pedro's book *Livro da Virtuosa Benfeitoria* and Dom Duarte's book *O Leal Conselheiro*. For the Castilian literature, see the exchange of letters between el Marques de Santillana and Alonso de Cartagena, *Los doce trabajos de Hercules* of Villena and Pulgar. Infante Dom Pedro e Frei João Verba, *Livro da Virtuosa Benfeitoria*, ed. A. de Almeida Calado (Coimbra, 1994), Dom Duarte, *Leal Conselheiro*, ed. J. Morais Barbosa (Lisboa, 1982), Enrique de Villena, *Obras*, 3-111, Marques de Santillana, *Obras completas*, ed. A. Gomez Moreno and M. P. A. M. Kerkhof (Madrid, 2002), 476-95, Pulgar, *Letras.- Glosa a las Coplas de Mingo Rebulgo* (Madrid, 1958), 59-69.

service to God and the King, thereby increasing the distinction of his name."

Abravanel finishes the first part of the letter with a reference to Aristotle, and especially to his organic conception of the State. The image of the State as an organic whole or as an animated body serves Abravanel to describe the relationship of the subjects to the death of a noble and also to justify Dom Afonso's sorrow.

"The philosopher has said that the republic is like a living organism. As the entire body feels and suffers the pain generated by one of its organs – and the nobler the body part, the greater the pain and danger resulting from its damage – so with the death of the nobles, who are the most important organs of the nation, and everyone must perforce experience pain, sorrow and loss at their passing. Sir, if the people who are neither his relatives nor his vassals feel great pain at his death, how can you be emancipated from this pain? Regarding that and many other aspects of nature and reason, you should experience this pain more deeply than anyone."

Abravanel's organic metaphor of the State is used to stress the social and political position of late Dom Sancho and Dom Afonso within Portuguese society. While affirming the natural need of Dom Afonso to feel a deep sorrow, Don Isaac reminds him that he is not a simple subject of the Portuguese Crown, but an active member of the aristocracy that is governing the Kingdom. For that reason, he cannot abandon himself to his natural tendency, but has to overcome it in order to play his political and social role. As Petrarch writes in the consolatory letter *Rerum Familiarium* II 1, 4, "...it is human at the death of one's dear to shed tears as evidence of one's devotion; it is manly to place a limit upon them and to control them after they have flowed for some time."<sup>90</sup>

### Healing by a Humanistic Speech

After having caught the attention of Dom Afonso and having created an affective or empathic relationship with him, Abravanel now moves on to the second step of his consolatory therapy: a humanistic speech whose goal is to cure Dom Afonso of his emotional relationship to death and to replace it with a rational one. This speech echoes much of Petrarch's letter *Rerum familiarium* II 1:

"Sir, although humanity feels great pain upon the death of such relatives, it cannot find any just cause for lamentation, because by nature, according to philosophy and following the sin of Adam according to faith, we all have an obligation to death. The debt itself is so imperative that we should not

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90 Petrarcha, *Rerum Familiarium*, 58.

exacerbate this debt as we honor it. Because, as Seneca writes in *The Remedies Against Fortune*, we enter life with the condition that we also leave it. We receive this soul and this life as treasurers who must account for it. And concerning the date when payment is due, there is no fixed time. It occurs when the King, whose officers we are, desires it. In his letters, Seneca maintains that we must wait for death like a table prepared for a host who, if he does not come for lunch, will arrive in time for dinner, and so on from day to day."

Abravanel's consolatory speech first stresses the universal agreement of philosophy and religion about the necessity of death for mankind. This agreement between Stoic philosophy, whose criterion is Nature,<sup>91</sup> and biblical tradition, which relies on Faith, is a humanistic *topos*<sup>92</sup> which is used here as a rhetorical argument to convince Dom Afonso to overcome his sorrow and accept the death of his father-in-law. Abravanel's references to Seneca testify to his acquaintance with the Catalan or Castilian translations of the *Ad Lucilium*. (As we know, the Castilian translation was commanded by Fernan Perez de Guzman and with Cartagena's Castilian translation of the *De Remediis Fortuitorum* around 1430.)<sup>93</sup>

In the quoted passage, one seems to hear the two different echoes, one of Petrarch's *Rerum Familiarium* II 1, 6-7:

"The complaint [querela] therefore is not about the death of one man, but about the mortality of nature which introduced us into this life subject to the rule that we must exit at the command of the one who calls us back. [...] there is no fixed time in this life. We are debtors without limits. [...] we cannot complain about swiftness as if we were asked before term to give back what we owe as soon as we accept it."<sup>94</sup>

Besides the proximity of formulation, which is obvious, the Portuguese word "querella" in Abravanel's letter seems a direct reference to the Latin word "querela" of Petrarch's *Rerum Familiarium* II 1, 6. The other echo, although more distant, is of Villena's treatise of consolation: "For sure, death is not to be feared, because one cannot escape it and vain is

91 The word "naturalmête" (by nature) in Abravanel's speech is a clear echo of Seneca's Stoic philosophy, which constantly refers to Nature as its criterion. One example among many others: "Our motto, as you know, is 'Live according to Nature'" (Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, vol. 1, 23).

92 See for example Fernando Pulgar's letter VI: "La reina Isis en la tierra de los indos que conquistó fallço una isla llamada Barac, do matavan los viejos començando a dolecer, porque no bibiesen con pena. No apruevo esta costumbre, proque ni la fe ni la natura la consienten..." (Fernando del Pulgar, 20).

93 Blüher, *Seneca*, 94-117.

94 Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarium*, 58.

its fear as Seneca says in his book, *The Remedies Against Fortune*: '[...] it is madness to fear what cannot be escaped.'"<sup>95</sup>

Abravanel continues his combination of Stoic philosophy and the Bible further in the letter:

"In fact, as logicians say, nothing is more certain than death, and nothing is more uncertain than the hour when it will take place. Hence, it is mentioned in the first tragedy that God was never so inclined toward someone that He promised him one day of life, whereas chapter 38 of Isaiah, which Seneca could not know, relates that God promised to King Hezekiah, when he was at the point of death, fifteen more years of life. He is the only person about whom one can read that he was certain of the number of years remaining before his death. No one else ever received that privilege."

Abravanel's reference to Seneca's tragedy, *Hercules Furens*, indicates, very likely, that he knew Antoni Vilaragut's Catalan translation of Seneca's tragedies (made in the last fifteen years of the fourteenth century) or another fifteenth-century Castilian translation of them.<sup>96</sup> Most interesting is Abravanel's combination and adaptation of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* – he might have had the following verses in mind: "With heart too brave Alcides, thou doest haste to visit the grieving ghost; at the appointed time the Parcae come. No one may linger when they command, no one may postpone the allotted day"<sup>97</sup> – with Isaiah 38. Actually, the tragic conception of death to which the allusion to Seneca's tragedy refers is the complete opposite of the story of Hezekiah's prayer to God, which miraculously brought him fifteen more years of life. But Abravanel combines them so that Seneca's verses represent the general rule and Hezekiah's story the exception that proves the rule. This remarkable rhetorical combination contributes to Abravanel's argument of a universal understanding of death. It serves also to demonstrate to the Count of Faro his humanistic knowledge and to justify in Dom Afonso's eyes his position of adviser, or more precisely of "doctor in charge of his soul."

In *Rerum Seniles* I 5, 37, Petrarch mentions also the uniqueness of Hezekiah's knowledge of the date of his death:

"Rather you should marvel that what I doubt ever happened throughout the centuries to anyone else but King Hezekiah has happened to you, so that through your prophet's pronouncement you are assured that several years of life still remain for you now. For they cannot be so few that there are not at least two! Thus, whereas no mortal can be certain of a single day or even an entire hour, you have a guarantee of years, unless perhaps we

95 Villena, *Obras*, 242-43.

96 Blüher, *Seneca*, 94-117.

97 Seneca, *Tragedies*, vol. 1, ed. F.J. Miller (London, 1969), 16-19, verses 186-90.

are to believe the man when he declares that death is near, but not when he predicts the length of your life."<sup>98</sup>

Enrique de Villena, too, uses the story of Hezekiah's prayer in his treatise of consolation, but with a different intention:

"What was the benefit for Hezekias that God made his life 15 years longer [...]? In this delay, he heard from the mouth of Isaiah, son of Prophet, that all the treasures of his Royal house as well as all the goods that his ancestors accumulated will be lost [...]"<sup>99</sup>

Later in his letter, Abravanel stresses the antiquity and predominance of death in human life, taking this time a biblical example (Genesis 2:17 and 3:21) to reconcile Dom Afonso with the omnipresence of death:

"God's first words and commandment to Adam held within them the threat of the punishment of death. He threatened him with it immediately. When He found Adam naked, He commanded at once that he be given clothes made of the skin of dead animals, and He immediately dressed him with dead bodies. And so, we wear clothes and shoes made of dead bodies; we eat dead animals. All our actions relate to death."

Further on in the letter, speaking of the proximity of each period of life to death, Abravanel writes on old age and refers to *De Senectute* of Cicero: "...the tortured and ugly old age, the pains, the pangs, and the martyrdom, and we see so many things related of death. The white banners of death come, as Tulio says in his book *On Old Age* ..." Very probably, Abravanel read Vasco de Lucena's Portuguese translation<sup>100</sup> of the *De Senectute* or Cartagena's Castilian translation.<sup>101</sup> The first part of Abravanel's consolatory therapy, which ends with this Ciceronian

98 Francis Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age Rerum senilium libri I-XVIII*, vol. 1, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin, and Reta A. Bernardo (Baltimore, 1992), 21.

99 Villena, *Obras*, 237.

100 On Vasco de Lucena, see: Barbosa Machado, D. *Biblioteca Lusitana*, vol. III (Lisboa, 1752), 772-73, Inocêncio Francisco da Silva, *Diccionario Bibliographico Portuguez*, vol. VII, (Lisboa, 1862), 406-09, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, *Bibliographia Geral Portuguesa*, vol. 2 (Lisboa, 1942), 612-25, Francis Millet Rogers, *The Obedience of a King of Portugal* (Minneapolis, 1958), Alvaro Júlio da Costa Pimpão, *Historia da Literatura Portuguesa Idade Média*, (Atlântida, 1959), 305-07, Vasco Fernandes Lucena, *Oração de Obediência*, ed. M. de Albuquerque (Lisboa, 1988), Joseph M. Piel, "Prefácio," Infante D. Pedro *Livro dos Offícios de Marco Tullio Ciceram* (Coimbra, 1948), xli-lxxvi, Nuno J. Espinosa Gomes da Silva, *Humanismo e Direito em Portugal no século XVI* (Lisboa, 1964), 113-17, Antonio Domingues de Sousa Costa, *Portugueses no Colegio S. Clemente e Universidade de Bolonha durante o seculo XV* (Bologna, 1990), 70, 626, 644, 656-59, 756-57, 1190.

101 Cartagena, *Libros de Tulio*. Pulgar mentions the *De Senectute* in his letter I: "Señor doctor Francisco Nuñez, físico: yo Fernando de Pulgar, escivano, paresco ante vos y digo: que padeciendo grandio dolor de la ijada y otros males que asoman con la vejez, quise leer a Tulio de senectute, por aver dél para ellos algún remedio..." (Pulgar, *Letras*, 3).

allusion, presents death as a necessary evil one must stoically accept. It intends to dissociate death from its emotional representation and to reintegrate it into the natural world order.

The second part of Don Isaac's speech emphasizes the positive aspects of death, following perhaps the rhetorical move of Petrarch's *Rerum familiarium* II 1, 9-19, which is the continuation of passage we already quoted (*Rerum Familiarium* II 1, 6-7). The first positive aspect of death is the relief of the dead from the vicissitudes of this world:<sup>102</sup>

"Moreover, among the dead who are on their way to a place which is better than the one they once inhabited, and for their merits, expecting to receive more glory in front of God than they could have acquired in this world of sufferings through pleasure and good fortune,<sup>103</sup> one must include the Sir, the Count."

Secondly, the usefulness of death for the living lies in its coercive restraint of our immoral tendencies:

"Beyond death as the just and natural outcome for the body, and a useful one for the soul, the memory of death is a remedy for the many unconsolated [...] Death is also a deterrent against all the vices for the one who keeps it constantly in his memory. Remember death, says Ecclesiastes, and you shall not sin. Socrates taught us to despise the material possessions of this world."

The association of Ecclesiastes and Socrates, which reveals Abravanel's literary sensitivity to the stoic flavor of this biblical book, is meant to convey to Dom Afonso that death has an essential role in the moral consciousness of man. Don Isaac concludes his enumeration of the positive effects of death, obviously, with its political effect:

"Aristotle highlighted another principle in the first [book] of the *Ethics*.<sup>104</sup> All consider death to be a very appropriate means of removing envy, greed, and all other vices. Its effect is so strong that the best and most honoured king or nobles of the world must die as the lowest of mortals. In the first day of life, which is birth, and at its end which is death, all are equally born. There is no power, no property, no merit. It is written that there was a custom in Persia, when upon crowning a new king, the honours and ceremonies included bringing a bricklayer who came bearing different kinds of stones. The King was asked in front of the assembled crowd from which stone he wished his sepulchre to be fashioned. So that even in his

102 Cf. Villena, *Obras*, 235, 285.

103 On this *topos* cf. Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum*, 58-61 (*Rerum Familiarum* II 1, 9-19). See also Villena, *Obras*, 235, 285.

104 Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099 a 30-1101 b 10, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham (London, 1982), 42-57.



moment of triumph he should not forget death. In remembering death he temperately disdains all that we borrow for such a short period of time."

The reference to Aristotle's *Ethics*<sup>105</sup> and the Persian anecdote are both related to the literary genre of the educational treatises for princes, and both indicate its important diffusion among the fifteenth-century Portuguese elite.<sup>106</sup> Death is a part of the political education of princes. It represents the natural limitation of their power of which a good prince must be aware, as well as the transience of gifts of Fortune. Through the historical example of the Persian king that closes the *narratio* of the letter in accordance with the classical epistolary rhetoric,<sup>107</sup> Abravanel achieves the reversal of the consolation. The death of the Count of Odemira is no longer a necessary evil. It has become an important lesson in the political education of his heir, the Count of Faro. This is the final point of Abravanel's consolatory speech, which has attempted to move Dom Afonso from sorrow over death to a stoic acceptance of it and from there to acknowledgment of its moral and political positive significance.

### The Return to Public Life

Having cured the soul of the Count of his excessive grief, Abravanel delivers the practical advice that is the concrete purpose of his letter, the *petitio* according to the *ars dictaminis*.

"One does not even need these examples,<sup>108</sup> when one witnesses through one's own eyes today the death of my father, yesterday that of my brother, another day the death of my son or my friend, and tomorrow I will die myself. You see, nothing remains from the Count of Mira, nor from others who have died, but their celebrated actions in this world and the merit of their virtuous accomplishments before God. [...] Sir, it is part of the duties of great and noble men to work to improve until death their position [...] For that reason, with justice and without any hesitation, you could and should demand the offices which Sir, your father possessed."

105 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099 a 30-1101 b 10, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham (London, 1982), 42-57.

106 Nair de Nazaré Castro Soares, "A Virtuosa Benfeitoria Primeiro Tratado de Educação de Príncipes em Português", *Biblos* LXIX (1993): 289-314.

107 Seneca refers to this rhetorical rule in *De Consolatione ad Marciam* II, 1: "I am aware that all those who wish to give anyone admonition commonly begin with precepts, and end with examples. But it is desirable at times to alter this practice" (Seneca, *Moral Essay*, vol. 2, 8-9).

108 Cf. Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum* II 1, 30: "It is superfluous to add a number of examples..." (Petrarca, *Rerum familiarum*, 63).

Abravanel advises the Count to espouse the Renaissance ideal of the *vita activa*. As a leader, Dom Afonso has to learn that only the fame gained by virtuous acts resists the erosion of time. For that reason, the humanistic leader, conscious of the necessity of death and of its imminence, should constantly test his good fortune to increase his power and fame. This model of the *vita activa* supposes in fact the positive perspective on death to which Abravanel's former consolation tried to convert the Count.<sup>109</sup>

One can find an echo of that ideal of the *vita activa* in Dom Pedro's *Livro da virtuosa benfeitoria*, which very likely was known to Abravanel:

"Our life can not maintain itself in the same state, because it is constantly changing. But if even we always have to fear its shortness, we should work to improve it with profitable goods which comprehend, roughly taken, the necessary, honourable and praiseworthy benefits."<sup>110</sup>

Don Isaac's practical advice is to recover the office of "Governador de provincias e comarcas" which Dom Afonso's father-in-law has lost. This advice constitutes the last part of the rhetorical construction of the letter. It calls the mourner to return to public life and assume the political continuity of the family, and more practically to assume and increase the inheritance of Dom Sancho. Abravanel's *petitio* reveals how much his humanistic consolation is concerned with the social and political issue of the continuity of the Bragança leadership. This function of the consolatory letter is of course linked to Don Isaac's own preoccupation to strengthen his position of adviser and financier within the Bragança family.<sup>111</sup> There is some evidence that Dom Afonso followed Abravanel's advice and succeeded in recovering Dom Sancho's office of "Governador de provincias e comarcas."<sup>112</sup> It seems to us reasonable to assume that Don Isaac received an important reward for that good advice.

Abravanel ends his consolatory letter with a subtle reversal of the roles of the consoler and the consoled.

"Attain calm and rest by virtue of a period of ten years in which labor will not leave you. This will enable you to console these noblemen who now have so much sorrow, and whose ultimate remedy is your happiness and

109 See also Pulgar's letter XIII: "Verdade es, señor, que el temor de la muerte turba a todo omme; pero el cavallero que está obligado a rescibir la muerte loable y huir de vida torpe, deve seguir la doctrina del mote que traés en vuestra devisa, que dice: *Un bel morir toda la vida honra*, al cual me rifiero" (Pulgar, *Letras*, 61).

110 Infante D. Pedro and Frei João Verba, *Livro Da Virtuosa Benfeytoria*, 45.

111 On Don Isaac's close relationship with the Bragança family, see: Lipiner, *Two Portuguese Exiles*, 46-138.

112 Joaquim de Carvalho, "Uma epistola de Isaac Abravanel," 238, Catano de Sousa, *Provas*, vol. 9, 195-200.

your success. You will give rise to gentlemen that God shall make so great and discrete as your father, and God shall give glory to your ancestor."

Dom Afonso's return to political activity, which is the finality of Abravanel's consolatory letter, is presented as the unique consolation Dom Afonso could deliver to his people worried about his present state of mind, among whom is obviously Don Isaac himself. Thus, the consoler (Abravanel) is consoled by the patient (Dom Afonso) he has just cured through his consolation. This reversal reflects in some way the exchange of services between the adviser (Abravanel) and his patron (Dom Afonso): the adviser brings back his patron on the track of political life and is paid in return with dividends of his success at the Court. The evocation of the future descendants of the Count at the very end of the letter tries to convey that Dom Afonso's return will reassert the aristocratic ethos of the Bragança family and will serve as an example for future generations as well as a sign of merit for their ancestors. In short, the letter ends with the resolution of the "succession crisis" which could have threatened the Bragança family because of Dom Afonso's "excessive" mourning. Dom Afonso will assume Dom Sancho's succession, working courageously to increase his possessions and to improve his position at the Court. This way, he will reassure the continuity with the past and give an example for the future. The past, the present, and the future of the Bragança family are now clear and reassured.

The study of Abravanel's Portuguese letters confirms what we have learned from the study of the Alcobaça and Evora codices. The letter is a fine example of fifteenth-century Iberian literature and of political advising. It was conserved for that reason along with other literary pieces written by leading cultural and political figures of the early and later Portuguese-Spanish Renaissance.<sup>113</sup> The letter itself, as we have hoped to reveal, contains implicit and explicit references to a wide range of Iberian translations and humanistic works and, in that sense, one may say that it reflects the humanistic literary production of fifteenth-century Spain and Portugal. Moreover, it testifies to the Iberian reception of the Petrarchian consolatory letter and to Abravanel's personal assimilation of it. It seems quite clear that the authors of the Alcobaça and Evora codices identified the Iberian humanistic character of Abravanel's letter and associated it in their compendium with related

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113 We are aware of our extended conception of the Portuguese and Spanish Renaissance, but it has now become a rather accepted view that some important parts of fifteenth-century Iberian literature belong to an early Iberian humanism. The Alcobaça and Evora codices contain both texts belonging to the early and later Iberian humanism, strengthening the continuity of these two periods from a literary and political point of view.

authors and figures of that time. Exemplary of that is the collocation of Abravanel's letter in the Evora codex, just five pages after an exchange of letters between Abravanel's patron, Dom Fernando II Duke of Bragança, and Dom Garcia Bishop of Evora,<sup>114</sup> and four pages before Meneses' humanistic oration to the Pope Sixtus IV (1481).<sup>115</sup>

### B. The Hebrew Letters to Yehiel da Pisa

The three letters of Abravanel to Yehiel da Pisa<sup>116</sup> are but a small part of the correspondence between the two friends and the two families. The documents we have indicate a multifaceted relationship between the Abravanel's and the da Pisas that lasted about one hundred years from the second half of the fifteenth century to the half of the sixteenth century.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, one has to consider the correspondence between Don Isaac and Yehiel as a part of the international trading activities of the Abravanel's in Italy, Flanders, and North Africa,<sup>118</sup> as well as a part of the relationship of the da Pisas with the Jewish elite of Lisbon and other

114 See BPE C III 2-20, f. 63v-64v.

115 See BPE C III 2-20, f. 75r-82v.

116 On the da Pisa family, see: Cassuto, "Sulla Famiglia Da Pisa", Kaufman, "La famille de Yehiel de Pise," ed. Gilbert S. Rosenthal, *Banking and finance among Jews in Renaissance Italy: a critical edition of The Eternal life (Haye olam) by Yehiel Nissim da Pisa* (New York, 1962), Luzzati, *La casa dell'ebreo*, "Banchi e insediamenti...", "Caratteri dell'insediamento ebraico," "La circolazione di uomini, donne e capitali ebraici nell'Italia del Quattrocento; un esempio toscano-cremonese, ed. G. B. Magnoli *Gli ebrei a Cremona*, (Firenze, 2002), 33-52, "Ruolo e funzione dei banchi ebraici dell'Italia centro-settentrionale nei secoli XV e XVI," *Banchi pubblici, banchi privati e monti di pietà nell'Europa preindustriale: amministrazione, tecniche operative e ruoli economici: atti del convegno, Genova, 1-6 ottobre 1990*, vol. 2 (Genova, 1991), 733-50, Alessandro Guetta, "Vita religiosa ed erudizione ebraica a Pisa; Yechiel Nissim da Pisa e la crisi dell'aristotelismo," *Gli ebrei di Pisa*, 45-67, Ariel Toaff, "Banchieri cristiani e prestatori ebrei?", *Gli ebrei di Pisa*, 268-87, Giacomo Todeschini, "Usura ebraica e identità economica cristiana: la discussione medievale," *Storia d'Italia XI* (1996): 291-318, Leon Poliakov, *Les banchieri juifs et le saint-siège du XII au XVII siècle* (Paris, 1965), 44-47, 163-79, Yosef Haker, "Kvutsat igerot," 64-97.

117 The first letter of Isaac Abravanel to Yehiel da Pisa is dated from 1472, and the last document we have concerning the relationship of the two families is from 1547. This latest document shows the collaboration of Benvenida Abravanel with Abraham da Pisa in a network of loan banks in Tuscany. Salomon Hirsh Margulies, "La famiglia Abravanel," *Rivista Israelitica* 3 (1906): 97-154.

118 Ferro Tavares, *Os Judeus*, 273-349.

centers of the Jewish Diaspora.<sup>119</sup> The trading and correspondence of these two Jewish families were enabled by the growing commercial exchanges between Italy (Genoa, Florence, and Venice) and Portugal from the second half of the fourteenth century on, as well as by the increasing number of Portuguese students or clerics in Italy during the fifteenth century.<sup>120</sup>

The social and cultural proximity between Yehiel da Pisa and Don Isaac Abravanel is obvious. Without entering into the details of the fascinating history of the da Pisas, one can describe Yehiel (born in the beginning of the fifteenth century and dead in 1490) as a remarkable figure of the bankers' family da Pisa, which settled in Tuscany in late fourteenth century. The network of loan banks as well as the cultural and communal leadership of this family is well known. Like Don Isaac, Yehiel was a financier and a scholar. He established the first da Pisa loan banks in Florence and made them very successful, if not the most successful of the city.<sup>121</sup> His patronage of Jewish scholarship is best known from his support of Yohanan Alemanno and from his hiring of Moshe ben Yosef Hasefardi for the education of his younger son, Samuel. The protection that Lorenzo da Medici gave him against Bernardino da Feltre's intention to expel the Jewish bankers from Florence seems to indicate that Yehiel was a courtier at the court of *il Magnifico*.<sup>122</sup> Financier, courtier, scholar, patron, and communal leader: the parallelism with Don Isaac Abravanel is perfect, taking into account the difference between Iberian and Italian Jewry.

Our knowledge about Yehiel's correspondence is rather scanty, but on the basis of what we know of the correspondence of his son, Isaac da Pisa, and of his son-in-law, David da Tivoli, we can easily imagine it. Indeed, the recent study of a collection of letters of the two (and other

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119 Yosef Hacker pointed in the above cited article to the relationship of the da Pisas with Abraham Hayun and with other leading figures of Portugal, Spain, and the Ottoman Empire. See also Abraham Gross, *Rabbi Yosef ben Abraham Hayun manhig kehillat Lisbon veyetsirato* (Ramat Gan, 1993), 12-21, 112-20.

120 Virginia Rau, "Uma familia de mercadores italianos em Portugal no século XV: os Lomellini," *Revista da Faculdade de Letras XXII* (1956): 5-32, "Italianismo", "Alguns estudantes", "Portugal e o Mediterrâneo no século XV", Domingues de Sousa Costa, *Portugueses no Colégio S. Clemente, Monumenta Portuliae Vaticana*, vol. 4 (Porto, 1970), Gomes da Silva, *Humanismo e Direito*, 111-89, "João das Regras e outros juristas Portugueses da Universidade de Bolonha," *Revista da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Lisboa XII* (1960): 5-35, Federico Melis, "Sul finanziamento degli allievi portoghesi del Real Colegio de España di Bologna nel XV secolo," *Studia Albotoniana XIII* (1973): 419-34.

121 Cassuto, "La famiglia da Pisa", 23-24.

122 Umberto Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze nell'Età del Rinascimento* (Firenze, 1918), 56-60.

figures of the da Pisa family and circle) by Michele Luzzati and myself has shed new light on the major characteristics of their correspondence.<sup>123</sup> First, the writing and reading of several letters in Hebrew, Italian, and to a lesser extent Latin, was entirely integrated into their daily occupations to the extent that almost every action was accompanied by a letter. Second, these epistolary exchanges along with their "carriers" were part of a larger system of exchanges of goods, money, services, relatives, and servants within the da Pisa circle and between this circle and the Christian environment (authorities and associates). Third, the linguistic division of these epistolary exchanges between Hebrew on the one side and Italian and Latin on the other reflects the existence of two types of communication: a close or secret communication in Hebrew accessible mainly to the da Pisa circle, and a standard communication with Christians which shows the assimilation of the norms of the Italian epistolary exchange by the da Pisa. Fourth, this linguistic division enhanced the assimilation of the norms of the Christian epistolary writing, mainly based on classical norms, and especially the division between vernacular and Latin. Indeed, we find that Isaac da Pisa and David da Tivoli wrote mostly letters in "vernacular" or "vulgar" Hebrew, which are close to a translation of Italian prose and often even transliterate Italian into Hebrew. But for special occasions or for special parts of their letters, they used a rhetorical Hebrew or *melitsah*, which corresponded in their eyes to the neoclassic Latin epistle of the Renaissance.

These main characteristics being now roughly elucidated, let us review briefly Isaac's and David's literary correspondence, or what remains of it. Yosef Hacker published and commented masterfully on an exchange of five letters between Isaac and Abraham ben Nissim Hayun, all written in the *melitsah* style.<sup>124</sup> It is important to recall here that we have already referred to these letters as being copied along with one of Abravanel's letter in Oxford's Bodleian Library Heb MS 1989, Montefiore Library MS 488 and New York Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) MS 3921.<sup>125</sup> Abraham wrote the first letter, from the years 1490-1492, to Isaac as a letter of condolence on Yehiel's death in 1490. It was written by Abraham upon his arrival in Sicily from Portugal in order to revive the relationship of protection and friendship that existed between Yehiel and him when Abraham was still living in Lisbon. The other two epistles of Abraham were written from Naples in 1492 and describe the

123 This study, soon to be published, is the critical edition of a collection of 19 letters from the Archivio di Stato di Lucca, Offizio sopra la Giurisdizione, 57.

124 Hacker, "kvutsat igrot".

125 See the description of the manuscripts, 13-15.

expulsion of the Sicilian Jews with probably the intention to enlist the support and help of the da Pisa. The last two letters are from Isaac. The first answers Abraham and assures him of his friendship while praising Abraham's rhetorical ability. The second describes the terrible conditions the Palermitan Jews encountered on their arrival in Pisa.

The second literary exchange of letters involving Isaac is his correspondence with Isaac ben Samuel Mar Hayim haSefardi, a Spanish kabbalist who arrived in Italy from whom Isaac requested a letter-tract on the relationship between the *Ein Sof* and the ten *sefirot*.<sup>126</sup> Our intention is not to repeat the conclusions of Idel's and Nadav's commentaries of this kabblistic correspondence. It is only important to mention that Mar Hayim's two letters written in Naples in 1491 emphasize the difference between the Spanish kabbalistic tradition, which is based on the Zohar and the Italian tradition that developed out of Recanati's writings. He tries to return his addressee to this Spanish tradition while translating parts of the Zohar in Hebrew and sending him manuscripts of Spanish kabbalistic texts. Isaac's answer testifies to his deep knowledge of Alemanno's writings and kabbalistic conceptions. Indeed, Yohanan Alemanno was the protégé of Yehiel and surely taught his views to his sons, Isaac and Samuel. But Isaac's letter-tract to Mar-Hayim must be read as an original synthesis of Alemanno's thoughts with philosophical, magic, and hermetic sources according to the taste of Alemanno and of other Jewish Italian intellectuals.

A 1493 notary register of the goods left by David da Tivoli after his flight from Lucca mentions 206 volumes of "Hebrew books" (*libri ebraici*). This statement gives an idea of his extended library and knowledge. David Messer Leon, in the introduction of his tract *Magen David*, praises his intellectual virtues.<sup>127</sup> In a funeral elegy for his father-in-law, Yehiel da Pisa, David da Tivoli composes an ideal portrait of the departed which presents the central cultural and moral values of the Jewish Italian elite: mastery of the Hebrew rhetoric, philosophical and religious education, fidelity to Judaism, sense of responsibility towards his people, philanthropy, cultural sponsorship, and modesty. From the information we have on David, it seems clear that he was a worthy rep-

<sup>126</sup> Yael Nadav, "Igeret hamekubal rabi itzhaq mar hayim al torat hatsahtsahut", *Tarbiz* 26 (1957), 440-458, Moshe Idel, "Igerto shel rabi itzhaq mipisa (?) beshalosh nushaot", *kobez al yad* 10 (1982), 161-214, Albert William Greenup, "A Kabbalistic Epistle By Isacco B. Shmuel B. Hayyim Sephardi," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 21 (1931), 365-375.

<sup>127</sup> Solomon Schechter, "Notes Sur Messer David Leon", *Revue des Etudes Juives* 24 (1892), 120-121. On David Messer Leon, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, *Between Worlds, The Life and Thought of Rabbi David Ben Judah Messer Leon* (Albany, 1991).

representative of this ideal and tried to transmit it to his son, Yoav. This elegiac poem was copied just after Abravanel's second and third Hebrew letters to Yehiel da Pisa in the manuscript British Library Heb MS 1081 (Add. 27129).<sup>128</sup> As the following study of the letter will show, the adjacent location of these pieces in the manuscript was probably not accidental but rather results from their common interest in the virtues of the Jewish leader.

The first eighteen pages of the manuscript Pluteo 88.12 of the Biblioteca Laurenziana are one of the oldest Italian *agronim* (*agron* is a collection of copies of letters for the use of teaching and learning Hebrew epistolary rhetoric). It was composed by either David himself or his son, Yoav. As Cassuto has shown, it is a collection of letters of David or his close circle from the 1480s and 1490s.<sup>129</sup> David Messer Leon writes the first letter in the *melitsah* style to David da Tivoli.<sup>130</sup> David Messer Leon apologizes for not accepting da Tivoli's offer to be the private teacher (*melamed*) of his son, Yoav. Instead he proposes the services of an acquaintance of his, Rav Azriel, at that time in Florence. In the following letter of the *agron*, David Messer Leon invites Yoav to come and learn at his father's *yeshiva* in Naples (Yehuda Messer Leon).<sup>131</sup> The same letter contains a description of all the works written by Yehuda Messer Leon. David da Tivoli, who studied under Yehuda's direction in Bologna,<sup>132</sup> asked for this listing in order, probably, to command a copy of the works he did not have in his library.<sup>133</sup> Indeed the subject of copying or exchanging manuscripts is recurrent in the *agron*; for example, two letters ask insistently for a copy of Bertinoro's letter, which describes his travel to Jerusalem.<sup>134</sup> Recurrent is also the subject of finding and hiring a private teacher for the literary, philosophical, and religious educations of the sons of da Tivoli or da Pisa families.<sup>135</sup> These two central topics of the *agron* attest to the cultural level reached by these families and to the role played by epistolary writing in the culture of the Italian Jewish elite.

If we extrapolate from Isaac da Pisa's and David da Tivoli's correspondence to Yehiel's correspondence, we can easily imagine that Ye-

128 See the description of the manuscripts, 6-7.

129 Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze*, 328-331.

130 See Plut. 88.12, 1r.

131 See Plut. 88.12, 1v-2r.

132 Cassuto, "La Famiglia Di David Da Tivoli", *Corriere Israelitico* 45 (1906-1907), 302.

133 Isacco Rabinowitz, "Introduction", Yehuda Messer Leon, *The Book of The Honeycomb's Flow* (Ithaca, 1984), xlvii-l.

134 See Plut. 88.12, 7r, 10v, 13r, 15r.

135 See Plut. 88.12, 11r, 12r.



hiel, too, was on the one side, writing and reading many Hebrew and Italian letters and, on the other, cultivating with other elitist Jews the cult of the Hebrew epistolary rhetoric or *melitsah*. Hence, the correspondence between Don Isaac and Yehiel is an elitist correspondence between two Jewish leaders cultivating Hebrew rhetoric as part of their own understanding of their status and of what Jewish leadership should be. Yehiel is clearly being referred to as the elder and for that reason the superior. The three letters we are presenting in this edition reveal the social, economic, and cultural interests that informed the relationship of these two Renaissance Jewish leaders.

#### i. The Letter of 1472

The first letter, written in March 1472, around the holidays of Passover (*Pesah*) of the Jewish year 5232, is divided into six parts: the reaction of Abravanel to Yehiel's description of the threat of closing his loan banks in Florence; Don Isaac's liberation of the Jews of Arzila;<sup>136</sup> the diplomatic mission of two Portuguese nobles at the Court of the new Pope Sixtus IV in favor of the Jewish communities of Portugal; the sending of manuscripts; the present of Abravanel's wife to Yehiel's wife; and, Don Isaac's blessing of Yehiel's elder son, Isaac.

#### A Consolation on Yehiel's Troubles in Florence

According to Cassuto, the years 1469-1472 were troubled by much commotion around the question of the renewal of the *capituli* of 1459 that fixed the terms of Jewish loan banking in the city of Florence. Although we possess very little evidence of it, it seems that Yehiel and other Jewish loan bankers were the targets of the accusations of a former Jew converted to Catholicism and were threatened by the Florentine mob to be looted and expelled.<sup>137</sup> The activity of the Jewish loan banks was apparently suspended during the years 1469-1471. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1471 it was again allowed, but with a diminution of half of its interest rate.<sup>138</sup> This is most probably the historical background of the

136 Arzila is a Moroccan city on the Atlantic shore, thirty kilometers south of Tangier. On Afonso V's conquest of Arzila and Tangier in 1471, see Antonio Henrique de Oliveira Marques, *Portugal Na Crise Dos Séculos XIV E XV* (Lisboa, 1986), 353, 451, 456-61, 559-62.

137 Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze*, 49-53.

138 Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze*, 141-146.

letter that Yehiel sent to Don Isaac around Passover 5231 (April 1471), as Abravanel refers to it and dates it at the beginning of his epistle with "at this season, the other year." In response to Yehiel's depiction of his worries, Don Isaac begins his letter with a consolation of his friend:

"The letter you wrote telling me of your situation has arrived one year ago. My ears have heard and understood<sup>139</sup> your fury in the midst of a people of impure lips [...] I was alarmed when I understood your concern,<sup>140</sup> I heard and I trembled<sup>141</sup> [...] I was distressed to hear<sup>142</sup> your misfortune, [...]."

Don Isaac begins his consolation with words of sympathy, as he did one or two years before in the letter to Dom Afonso. He shows his identification with Yehiel's worries by composing fragments of biblical verses (Jb 13:1, Hab 3:16, Is 21:3). Exemplary of Abravanel's empathy with Yehiel's misfortunes is the use of Hab 3:16: "I heard and my bowels quaked, my lips quivered at the sound; rot entered into my bone, I trembled where I stood." Passing to the second step of the consolation (the rationalization of the sorrow), Don Isaac explains to his friend that he was the victim of the common destiny of Jews who live as a minority within Christian states:

"[...] worry cried out in my heart<sup>143</sup> to see that Jews should be prepared, wherever the soles of their feet shall tread,<sup>144</sup> to come to the cleft of troubles<sup>145</sup> and to the holes of torments,<sup>146</sup> that every Jew-baiter would make himself a Lord over them<sup>147</sup> and over their offspring. For the wicked does attack the righteous."

Abravanel depicts the situation of Jews in exile with two plays on words with the verses Exodus 33:22 and Isaiah 7:19. Instead of "cleft of the rock [*tsur*]" (Ex 33:22) and "the holes of the rocks [*selayim*]" (Is 7:19), Don Isaac writes "the cleft of troubles [*tsarot*]" and "the holes of torments [*metsiqot*]". This way, he suggests the instability and constant exposure to injustice that characterizes the exile of the Jews. At the same time, he is showing that Yehiel's personal misfortune is but one of the many consequences of the historical condition of Jewish exile. This rationalization is a rhetorical tool to diminish the sorrow of Yehiel by cutting it from natural feelings and integrating it in the normal order of

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139 Jb 13:1.

140 Is 21:3.

141 Hab 3:16.

142 Is 21:3.

143 Ps 38:9.

144 Dt 11:24.

145 Ex 33:22.

146 Is 7:19.

147 Nm 16:13.

Jewish life in exile. Here, too, the parallelism with the Portuguese consolatory speech is obvious.

After the consolatory rationalization, Abravanel encourages his friend to pursue his mission as a Jewish leader:

"You have seen those who follow the teaching of the LORD<sup>148</sup> and tremble at His word<sup>149</sup> passing through the valley of Baca.<sup>150</sup> [...] These people are our friends,<sup>151</sup> the LORD shall be seen over them,<sup>152</sup> these people are our friends,<sup>153</sup> the LORD watches over them. They shall enter into His sanctuary, be near Him,<sup>154</sup> and be blessed. You too are one of them, you who fear the LORD and are fervently devoted to His commandments.<sup>155</sup> You are blameless in your ways<sup>156</sup>. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death<sup>157</sup> and see misery and distress from an ungodly nation, for all your labor under the sun<sup>158</sup> for the LORD and His anointed,<sup>159</sup> your reward shall be very great.<sup>160</sup> [...] For the wrong they committed against you and which you endured, you shall obtain gladness and joy. Justice shall precede you<sup>161</sup> [...] and those who sow mischief shall reap their just deserts."<sup>162</sup>

Facing the historical condition of exile and its grievous consequences for Yehiel, Don Isaac affirms a certain political and religious ideal of Jewish leadership. He demands from Yehiel, and from the Jewish leader in general, that he accept the weakness and contingency implied by exile, and he promises him a great political and religious reward for his capacity to face its misfortunes. The "valley of Baca" (Ps 84:7) through which the Jewish leader has to pass becomes a privilege and a merit in front of God, but also within the Jewish society, as suggests Abravanel's use of Ez 44:16: "they shall enter into My sanctuary, and they shall come near to My table, to minister unto Me, and they shall keep My charge." The exemplary attitude of the Jewish leader is not only rewarded by a religious promise, but by the strengthening of his

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148 Ps 119:1.

149 Is 66:5.

150 Ps 84:7.

151 Gn 34:21.

152 Zec 9:14.

153 Gn 34:21.

154 Ez 44:16.

155 Ps 112:1.

156 Ez 28:15.

157 Ps 23:4.

158 Eccl 1:3

159 Ps 2:2.

160 Gn 15:1.

161 Ps 84:14.

162 Jb 4:8.

leadership within his community. One can see easily that the ethos Abravanel is proposing to the Jewish leader is not different from the neo-Stoic one he proposed to the Count of Faro in the Portuguese letter. However, beyond the general obligation to accept the necessity and contingency that structures reality, the Jewish leadership exposed here diverges from the humanistic leadership proposed in the Portuguese letter, because its primary preoccupation is the continuity of the Jewish society. This seems to be a possible explanation for the absence of any explicit reference to classical Stoic sources, although, as we saw, this Hebrew consolation relies on a conception of consolation and of leadership similar to the humanistic one present in the Portuguese letter. Abravanel is aware of the central role of Yehiel in Tuscan Jewry and in the Jewish Diaspora and, for that reason, he encourages him to embody the ideal of the Jewish leader and to continue to lead the Jewish banking activities as well as his community in spite of his recent misfortunes. Indeed, Don Isaac finishes his consolation with the praise of the virtues of his friend and with the depiction of the rewards he will receive for them. In brief, Abravanel tries to cure Yehiel's sorrow with the same rhetorical procedures of the Portuguese letter: the emotional sympathy, the rationalization of Yehiel's difficult situation, and the encouragement to continue his economical and social role. Beyond the veil of the biblical rhetoric, whose function is to strengthen the Jewish commitment of the reader, is concealed the same literary genre of the consolation.

This first part of the letter reveals what one could call the weak side of Jewish leadership that is exposed to the attacks of the Christian majority. This vulnerability is a challenge for the Jewish leader. As Abravanel insists, the Jewish leader must be able to conserve his position within the Christian society under unstable conditions so that he can work for his own good and for that of his community. Rhetorical Hebrew consolations like the passage that opens the present letter were exchanged in order to urge Jewish leaders to accomplish their political and social role, but also to create a literary representation of it that could be taught and transmitted.

### The Liberation of the Jews of Arzila

The second part of the letter is also meant in some way to console Yehiel. It intends to show an example of the active Jewish leadership in opposition to the passive leadership of the first part.

"I too, will not refrain from speaking out.<sup>163</sup> I have taken upon myself to tell my Lord<sup>164</sup> of our toil and our distress<sup>165</sup> at the hands of the sons of men, we leaders of this community, who encounter many difficulties, suffering hardships, targets of their arrows. Incline your ear and listen,<sup>166</sup> listen to the needy,<sup>167</sup> to the hardships which have befallen the LORD's people, rebuke and disdain<sup>168</sup> did the LORD bring to the community of Arzila from the Kingdom of the Ishmaelite. [...] heed me and hear,<sup>169</sup> behold my affliction and suffering,<sup>170</sup> [...] I had no repose, no quiet and no rest<sup>171</sup> for six months."

The history that Abravanel is writing to Yehiel is intended to divert Yehiel's attention from his own misfortunes to those of the Jews of Arzila. Indeed, Abravanel opens his narrative with a fragment of Job 7:11: "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." This way, he suggests that he answers the letter of Yehiel explaining his worries with a letter telling his recent worries about the terrible destiny of the Arzilan Jews. The curing intention of Abravanel's narrative is to catch Yehiel's attention (*captatio benevolentiae*) and to bring him to identify with the sufferings that the Arzilan Jews underwent. This rhetorical intention is particularly visible in Abravanel's repetitive use of fragments of verses that call for the attention of the reader (Prov 22:17; Ps 69:34; Nm 23:18; Ps 25:18).

After this *captatio benevolentiae*, Abravanel depicts Afonso V's expedition to Morocco:

"Our Lord the king [of Portugal], may God prolong his days in his kingdom, he who stands and shakes the earth,<sup>172</sup> the leader of many people, lifted up a sign to the nations,<sup>173</sup> [...] and crossed over to Africa to possess dwelling places that are not his.<sup>174</sup> He encamped there against the city of Arzila, the city of kings great among the nations,<sup>175</sup> he shot there arrows and laid siege against it.<sup>176</sup> Not one man withstood them.<sup>177</sup> The people

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163 Jb 7:11.

164 Gn 18:27.

165 Eccl 3:18.

166 Prov 22:17.

167 Ps 69:34.

168 Is 37:3.

169 Nm 23:18.

170 Ps 25:18.

171 Jb 3:26.

172 Hab 3:6.

173 Is 5:26.

174 Hab 1:6.

175 Lam 1:1.

176 Is 37:33.

went up into the city, every man straight in front of him, and they took the city and plundered all of it, [...] The king and those who have access to the royal presence<sup>178</sup> did not lay hands on the spoil."<sup>179</sup>

Abravanel refers, although indirectly, to Afonso V's expansionist policy. Afonso V, like his predecessors, carried on a policy of expansion along the Atlantic coast of Africa whose goals were commercial (trade of slaves, gold, a new way to India), religious (the expansion of the Christian religion), and scientific (the discovery of new territories and new sea routes). Abravanel alludes to it by using the verses Hab 3:6 and Ez 5:26: "He stands, and shakes the earth, He beholds, and makes the nations to tremble [...]", "And He will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth [...]". Abravanel seems clearly to support Afonso V's expansionist policy, in spite of its harsh consequences for the Jewish community of Arzila. Ferro Tavares has shown the great commercial involvement of the Abravanel's in the trade with the new conquered territories.<sup>180</sup> This certainly explains the positive attitude of Don Isaac towards the Portuguese expansion.

Abravanel distinguishes in this passage the military victory over the city of Arzila from the plunder of the city. The former is attributed to the King and the nobility, the latter to the mob of the soldiers. The division between the Court and the mob reveals Abravanel's own position within the Portuguese society as well as his social perspective. Indeed, Abravanel's social position as a Jewish merchant and banker relies on the mutual economic and political interests that tie the Abravanel's to some Portuguese noble families (especially the Braganças) and to the King. Thanks to the benefits he took from this relationship to the Court, Don Isaac could be one of the leaders of his community and protect it from the envy and the hatred of the people. One can see easily that Abravanel's narrative of the plunder of Arzila by the mob corresponds intentionally to the political and social map in which he is working as a Court Jew. Abravanel does not accuse his objective allies (the nobility and the King) of the plunder – although they allowed it – but his objective enemy within the Portuguese society, the people who saw in the Jews economical competitors and tried through-

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177 Jos 21:42.

178 Est 1:14.

179 Jos 8:27.

180 Ferro Tavares, *Os judeus*, 279-90.

out the fifteenth century to diminish and even to ruin their relative power.<sup>181</sup>

Further in the letter, Don Isaac distinguishes between the fate of the Muslim inhabitants of Arzila and that of the Jews:

"As the community of these unfortunate Jews lived in Arzila, scattered and dispersed<sup>182</sup> within the city, one on the one side and the other on the other side;<sup>183</sup> although a great number were slain with the sword among the children of Kedar [Muslims] that went into captivity before the enemy,<sup>184</sup> the LORD being merciful,<sup>185</sup> He singled out the faithful.<sup>186</sup> From His dwelling place<sup>187</sup> He hovered over His young<sup>188</sup> and none of the children of Israel died."<sup>189</sup>

In opposition to the Muslim inhabitants of Arzila—most of whom were killed—the Arzilan Jews survived the Portuguese conquest and plunder. Abravanel attributes this good fortune to Divine providence, but more interesting is the evidence that he is giving for it: the scattering of the Arzilan Jews, which prevented them from being annihilated as a community. Here, Abravanel expresses his positive conception of the Jewish scattering, not only in Arzila, but also in the whole world. The Diaspora is a divine blessing because it is a historical and political advantage that prevents any state from having the possibility to destroy the Jewish people as a people. As Abravanel already stressed it in his first opus, *Ateret Zekenim*, especially in its last chapter, Israel is not determined by the same astrological rules as the other nations, and the Diaspora is certainly in Don Isaac's eyes one of the features of Israel's direct relation to God and of its unique history.<sup>190</sup>

After pointing at the providential escape of Arzilan Jews from death, Abravanel depicts their being sold as slaves:

"We saw the precious sons of Zion,<sup>191</sup> the people of the God of Abraham,<sup>192</sup> once valued as gold,<sup>193</sup> now sold as bondmen and bondwomen,<sup>194</sup> in the

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181 Ferro Tavares, *Os judeus*, 281-84.

182 Est 3:8.

183 Ex 17:12.

184 Lam 1:5.

185 Gn 19:16.

186 Ps 4:4.

187 Ps 33:14.

188 Dt 32:11.

189 Ex 9:6.

190 *Ateret Zekenim*, 128-31.

191 Lam 4:2.

192 Ps 47:10.

193 Lam 4:2.

194 Est 7:4.

furnace of affliction,<sup>195</sup> shackled in iron [...] And the children whom God has graciously given,<sup>196</sup> [...] Their tongues learned the names of other gods, the foreign gods of the land.<sup>197</sup> Our eyes looked unremittingly, straining to see them.<sup>198</sup> We, the leaders of the community, decided to proclaim release for the captives and liberation for the imprisoned,<sup>199</sup> to offer a ransom for their soul<sup>200</sup> with our silver and gold,<sup>201</sup> however much or little."<sup>202</sup>

Witnessing the disappearance of the Arzilan community as a free religious community, the leaders of the Portuguese Jewry feel a strong obligation to bring it back to its freedom and to Judaism. The use of the verses Dt 28:32, Is 61:1, and Ex 30:12 expresses the responsibility of the Portuguese Jewish elite for the destiny of Arzilan community and the role of its financial capital in redressing the harm done to this community. Thanks to its relative economic power, the Portuguese elite could play a historical and political role, and so it could attribute to itself, as Don Isaac does in this piece and also further on, the image of the saviour. From the beginning of his narrative, Abravanel distinguishes the general providence of God on the Jewish Diaspora from the particular responsibility of the Jewish elite to redress some local harm due to a historical event.

Abravanel describes the organization of the Portuguese Jewish elite in order to save the Arzilan Jews:

"I, your servant, and other leaders who are more just and better than I, selected twelve chiefs from the community, corresponding to the number of tribes of Israel, to perform the tasks of righteousness,<sup>203</sup> and to release the prisoners from the dungeon.<sup>204</sup> I and someone else from among the leaders were sent from one city to another, men who continually traverse the land<sup>205</sup> to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt<sup>206</sup> and pay the ransom for their souls.<sup>207</sup> So those who remained told us: [...] Free every man and woman from the hand of the oppressor,<sup>208</sup> the poor and the needy from

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195 Is 48:10.

196 Gn 33:5.

197 Dt 31:16.

198 Dt 28:32.

199 Is 61:1.

200 Ex 30:12.

201 Ez 16:17.

202 Eccl 5:11.

203 Is 32:17.

204 Is 42:7.

205 Ez 39:14.

206 Ex 6:27.

207 Ps 49:9.

208 Jer 21:12.



those who ravage them. Not a hoof shall remain behind.<sup>209</sup> Take double money in your hand<sup>210</sup> and bring all your brethren out of all the nations as an offering unto the LORD,<sup>211</sup> that they shall be redeemed by money."<sup>212</sup>

Don Isaac's depiction of his own election as one of the two leaders in charge of the liberation of the Arzilan Jews reveals to Yehiel his own importance within the Portuguese Jewish leadership. Of great interest is the rhetoric used by Abravanel to depict the role the Portuguese elite could play thanks to its wealth. Describing the raising of the money necessary for the liberation, he finishes with this striking inversion of Is 42:3: "For thus said the LORD: you were sold for no price, and shall be redeemed without money." Instead of "redeemed without money," Don Isaac writes, "redeemed by money." In contrast to the divine redemption that is without money, the redemption of the Jewish financial elite relies on its capital. This contrast is in fact a comparison of the role of the financial elite for the Jewish communities to the divine providence over Jewish history. This rhetorical comparison, which presents the political and financial power of the Jewish elite as a "second" providence under the providence of God, is clearly an expression of the Jewish elitist consciousness of Don Isaac. The quotation of Is 42:7 – "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house" – and of Ex 6:27 – "These are they that spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are that Moses and Aaron" – strengthens also the image of Don Isaac and his colleague as divine saviours. The elitist consciousness that expresses itself in such rhetoric consists in borrowing attributes from God's providence for his people and from the prophets. The use of Is 66:20<sup>213</sup> to present the liberation of the Arzilan Jews as an "offering" of the Portuguese Jewish elites to the divine providence suggests the parallelism and hierarchy between the two providences. Moreover, this "offering" stands as an example of the fidelity of the Jewish leadership to Judaism, and it is exposed to Yehiel as a way for Jewish leaders to strengthen the social ideal they embody for the whole Jewish society.

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209 Ex 10:26.

210 Gn 43:12.

211 Is 66:20.

212 Is 52:3.

213 "And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering unto the LORD, upon horses, and in chariots, and in fitters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD" (Is 66:20).

Abravanel's narrative of the liberation of the Arzilan Jews plays with the two parallel providences:

"The LORD has led us both on our paths<sup>214</sup> [...] and He inclined all their captors to be kindly disposed toward us.<sup>215</sup> For the full price, within a few days or ten, we ransomed one hundred and fifty men, and so here in the city, and in all the other cities, the people of that land [Arzila] are now many, the ransomed of the LORD,<sup>216</sup> through us and thanks to the benevolent care of the LORD for us,<sup>217</sup> two hundred and twenty persons and the cost of the ransom of their souls<sup>218</sup> – ten thousand doubloons in gold. Our hands did shed this blood,<sup>219</sup> each man gave as he was able,<sup>220</sup> everyone with a willing heart brought the LORD's offering,<sup>221</sup> [...] We took no money from the kingdom or from any other people."<sup>222</sup>

The rapid success of Abravanel's mission in Morocco is first presented as a sign of God's providence for him. But then, in the second part of this passage, the financial intervention of the Portuguese Jewish elite seems to replace the divine providence. This substitution is expressed by several fragments of verses describing a sacrifice or an offering: Dt 21:7, Dt 16:17,<sup>223</sup> Ex 35:5<sup>224</sup>. The image of the offering and of the sacrifice is in this passage a way of expressing the responsibility of the Jewish elite for the destiny of the communities. Symptomatic of such rhetoric is the omission of the negation in Dt 21:7 – "And they shall speak and say: 'Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.'" By that change, the rite of breaking the heifer's neck becomes a representation of the care of the elite for the people and of the financial burden they assumed for the liberation of the Arzilan Jews. The biblical rhetoric of the offering is meant to magnify the leadership of the Jewish financial elite by its assimilation with antique Jewish institutions (the sacrifice and the offering) and to present it as the holder of the virtues of Judaism.

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214 Gn 24:27.

215 Ps 106:46.

216 Is 51:11.

217 Ezr 7:9.

218 Ps 49:9.

219 Dt 21:7.

220 Dt 16:17.

221 Ex 35:5.

222 Ps 105:13.

223 "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose; on the feast of unleavened bread, and on the feast of weeks, and on the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty" (Dt 16:17).

224 "Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD, whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, the LORD'S offering: gold, and silver, and brass" (Ex 35:5).

Further, using fragments of the *Hagadah* of Passover, Abravanel depicts the *seder* of the redeemed Arzilan Jews:

"And on this night which is a night of vigil,<sup>225</sup> in their villages and encampments,<sup>226</sup> they shall praise the LORD for He is good.<sup>227</sup> Together they shall lift up their voices<sup>228</sup> and all the sons of God shall shout for joy.<sup>229</sup> We were slaves for a short time and the LORD led us out<sup>230</sup> of slavery into freedom and out of bondage into redemption,<sup>231</sup> and now we are, as all of the multitude of Israel, free.<sup>232</sup> He who frees prisoners and brings them to prosperity<sup>233</sup> shall now bring forth and liberate the poor and the needy,<sup>234</sup> those remaining in captivity. They number about thirty. The LORD of hosts will protect them."<sup>235</sup>

In this picture of the *seder* of the redeemed, the historical distance between the present and the biblical Exodus from Egypt is blurred and fading. Thanks to the "providence" of the Jewish financial elite, the Arzilan Jews are experiencing the same transformation from slavery into freedom that is depicted in the *Hagadah*. Abravanel quotes several fragments of the *Hagadah* to compose a rhetorical description of a scene whose intention is to show how the "providence" of the Jewish elite strengthens the relationship of the people to the divine providence. This was the social and religious effect that the Jewish Portuguese elite wanted to create within its community. An act of leadership such as the liberation of the Arzilan Jews was also meant to spread in the whole Jewish society a social and religious ideal and a normative conduct. The scene of the *seder* of the redeemed is a dramatic image whose content is the renewal of the Jewish covenant and whose effect on its viewers should be the same. Through this skilled staging, Abravanel suggests once again to Yehiel the importance of the leadership of the Jewish financial elite, and so he hopes to cure him from his worries and inspire again his will to lead.

Abravanel stresses, at the end, the limitation of the "providence" of the Jewish financial elite. The unfortunate proof of it is the thirty Arzilan Jews who could not be redeemed. For that reason, Don Isaac trans-

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225 Ex 12:42.

226 Gn 25:16.

227 Ps 106:1 (Haggadah of Passover).

228 Is 24:14.

229 Jb 38:7.

230 Dt 6:21 (Haggadah of Passover).

231 Haggadah of Passover.

232 Haggadah of Passover.

233 Ps 68:7.

234 Is 41:17.

235 Zec 9:15.

fers the responsibility of their liberation to the divine providence. This way he suggests that the power of the financial elite is relative and that its influence in history only complements the divine providence over the whole Jewish history. In conclusion, the rhetoric used by Don Isaac in his narrative is intended to convey to Yehiel that the two providences – the one of God and the one of the Jewish financial elite – complement one another.

Abravanel finishes his narrative with a depiction of the reaction of his audience: "And he who surnames himself by the name of Israel<sup>236</sup> by hearing that, both his ears shall tingle.<sup>237</sup> They shall clap their hands and wag their head<sup>238</sup>: blessed be the name of the LORD!<sup>239</sup> How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders!"<sup>240</sup> This image of the reaction of the people hearing Don Isaac's narrative emphasizes, once again, the social and religious effect of the leadership of the financial elite. The people thank God for the success of Abravanel's mission. The relationship of the people to God and to its leadership is reaffirmed and strengthened. The joy of the people contrasts with the sorrow of Yehiel to which the letter refers at its beginning; it is meant to urge him out of his worries and to bring him to rejoice, like the people, at the hearing of the successful mission of a Jewish leader like himself.

### A Diplomatic Mission

After this long *narratio*, Abravanel moves to the practical purpose of this letter (*petitio*), which is linked to the royal obedience embassy of two Portuguese nobles: Lopo de Almeida and João Teixeira. These two ambassadors of Afonso V were going to Rome, through Pisa, to present the obedience of the king to the new Pope Sixtus IV. Twenty years later, Lopo de Almeida was essentially repeating the first part of the famous journey he made accompanying Eleonora to her wedding with Frederic III, of which he left a so vivid description in his letters to Afonso V.<sup>241</sup> João Teixeira, apparently a close friend of Abravanel, was bringing the letter along with other presents to Yehiel da Pisa.

Before discussing the specific content of Abravanel's demand, we would like to address the question of the identification of the name of

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236 Is 44:5

237 1 Sam 3:11.

238 Lam 2:15.

239 Ps 113:2.

240 Dn 3:33.

241 Lopo de Almeida, *Cartas de Itália*.

João Teixeira. The name written in the Hebrew manuscript is "doctor João Shizira" – הדוקטור ג'ואן שיזירה -. Netanyahu and other scholars kept that name, giving him a more Portuguese sound and appearance, "Sezira," although no such name ever appears in the sources of that period. Lipiner describes the history of this error.<sup>242</sup> Carmoly transcribed the name as written in the manuscript, understanding "doctor" as physician.<sup>243</sup> Kaufmann, in his article on the da Pisas, took over Carmoly's transcription "Sezira," referring to him as "le savant medecin João Sezira."<sup>244</sup> Then Carvalho took over Carmoly's transcription from Kaufmann in his monograph on Yehudah Abravanel, *Leão Hebreu, Filósofo* – although he mentioned that the name of such a physician is not to be found in the studies on Portuguese physicians by Sousa de Viterbo and Maximiliano Lemos.<sup>245</sup> Netanyahu followed Carmoly's transcription in his monograph, which was the standard reference for almost fifty years.<sup>246</sup> Lipiner, in his important study *Two Portuguese Exiles*, noticed the corruption of the name in the manuscript and corrected Carmoly's false attribution of the title of "physician." The title "doctor" before the name "João Sezira" refers, as Lipiner rightly states, to the title "doctor in law." Lipiner researched the Court jurists of Afonso V and tried to find a name close to "Sezira": he proposed as a possibility João Fernandes da Silveira, who was a jurist (*doutor em leys*) and the *Chancellor mór* of the king. He is mentioned for many embassies in Castile and Aragon (1455, 1463, 1474, 1483) and in Italy (1449, 1451, 1456-1459). Moreover, he was part, with Lopo de Almeida, of the Portuguese delegation to Dona Leonora's wedding in Italy in 1452.<sup>247</sup> Michele Luzzati found in the Archivio di Stato of Florence in the register of the notary Sir Giuliano del Pattiere (years 1473-1474) the notarized registration of the black slave that Abravanel gave as a present to Yehiel along with the letter.<sup>248</sup> We thank him deeply for generously offering us the possibility to publish his transcription of the deed. The

242 Lipiner, *Two Portuguese Exiles in Castile*, 75.

243 Eliakim Carmoly, "Toldot hahakham hashalem Don Yizhak Abarbanel," *Otsar nehmad* 2 (1857): 68.

244 David Kaufmann, "La famille de Yehiel de Pise," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 26 (1893): 84.

245 Joaquim de Carvalho, *Leão Hebreu, filósofo: para a história do platonismo no renascimento* (Coimbra, 1918), 12, reprint in Carvalho, *Obra Completa de Joaquim de Carvalho*, vol. 1 (Lisboa, 1978), 161-62.

246 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 19.

247 Antonio Henrique de Oliveira Marques, *Portugal na Crise dos Séculos XIV e XV*, 74, 330-32; Caetano de Sousa, *História*, vol. 12, part II, 8-9.

248 Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Notarile Antecosimiano, n. 16471 (già P 221 [1473-1474], ser Giuliano del Pattiere), ins. I, cc. 39v-41r, see our edition of the text in the appendix, see also Luzzati's mention of this document: Luzzati, "Caratteri", 40.

deed refers to the Portuguese Ambassador as "Magnificus miles et utriusque juris doctor dominus Johannes condam Ludovici domini Johannis Tessorii de Portugallia, orator sive ambaxiator illustrissimi domini domini Regis Regni Portugallie". We can now, thanks to Luzzati's discovery, identify the second ambassador as João Teixeira, "insigne professor de Jurisprudencia," according to Barbosa Machado's description. Barbosa Machado states also that due to his great scholarship and political wisdom, he was sent to accompany Lopo de Almeida in his obedience embassy to Sixtus IV.<sup>249</sup>

Like Lopo de Almeida, João Teixeira belongs to this new Portuguese humanistic nobility that surrounded Afonso V and his son, João II. Jurist and humanist scholar, he is known for having taken part in a second diplomatic mission, this time for João II, in 1490 in Castile.<sup>250</sup> The purpose of the mission was the marriage of Dom Afonso, João II's heir, with Dona Isabel, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabel King and Queen of Aragon and Castile. Teixeira's connections with Florentine humanism are well established. We possess an exchange of letters between him and Angelo Poliziano. Moreover, we know that he sent his three sons, Luis, Alvaro, and Tristão, to study under the direction of Poliziano. In a letter to João Teixeira (August 1489), Poliziano sums up what was the father's intention in sending his son to him: "You sent your sons to Italy so that they shall educate their customs, and shall be instructed in good literature and learn the liberal arts, according to what is proper to do for who shall occupy the highest positions."<sup>251</sup> Indeed, Teixeira's elder son, Luis, became in Italy one of the greatest Portuguese humanists and jurists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>252</sup> This is a striking parallel if one compares Luis with Yehudah Abravanel, Don Isaac's elder son, who following the steps of his father (a mainly Iberian humanist) and going beyond towards Florentine humanism and Platonism, became also one of the great humanists of that time.

As Abravanel refers to João Teixeira as a close friend, it is interesting to look at his humanistic *oração* in honor of Dom Pedro de Meneses's nomination by João II as Marquis de Vila Real.<sup>253</sup> This Portuguese

249 Macado, *Biblioteca*, vol. 2, 773-74.

250 Macado, *Biblioteca*, vol. 2, 773-74, ed. João José Alves Dias, *Portugal Do Renascimento À Crise Dinástica* (Lisboa, 1988), 709-10.

251 Theophilo Braga, *Historia da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. 1 (Lisboa, 1892), 179.

252 Gomes da Silva, *Humanism e Direito*, 121-46.

253 João Teixeira, *Obra que contê hũa Oração do Doutor ... Teixeira feyta quando fizerão o cõde do Pedro de meneses, Marques de vila Real* (Coimbra, 1562).

oration<sup>254</sup> of 1489 is today the only literary work extant from João Teixeira. Although the oration was composed almost twenty years after Abravanel's Portuguese letter, one can find in it a similar combination of classical literature (Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Lucan, Quintus Curtius, Virgil, Aristotle, and Plato) and Old Testament (Psalms, Kings, Job, Proverbs). The first part of the oration, which is both a mirror and a praise of the King João II, contains a detailed conception of the humanistic prince who has to be, beyond his military virtues, a well-read person and a patron of humanistic scholarship for the good and the fame of his kingdom. Referring in that regard to a pseudo letter from King Philip of Macedonia to Aristotle, João Teixeira writes:

"And you, mighty King [João II], you had the Prince, our Lord your son, taught by a very expert master in your house.<sup>255</sup> You will see how much, thanks to the liberal arts, the learning is increased. This is what caused Alexander to have the nickname „the great“ in the entire world. At the same hour he was born, the King Philip, his father, wrote to Aristotle a letter in the following manner:

Philip to Aristotle, may you be in good health,

My son is just born, and you shall know that I am not so grateful to the Gods for giving him to me, but for being born in your lifetime. I hope that being taught by you, he shall merit being my son and the heir of these Kingdoms. As Solomon says a wise king is the conservation of his people. Ptolemy of Philadelphia, whose library is said to exceed five thousands books: not being satisfied by them, as he heard that the Old Testament was given by God, he did not rest until he had it translated into Greek by seventy translators."<sup>256</sup>

The humanist preceptor of the prince, the antique great deeds of learned kings like Alexander, the library and the sponsorship of scholarly achievements: these are clear humanistic markers that refer both to the progressive humanistic shaping of the fifteenth-century Portuguese Court and to the progressive ascension of a new nobility of learned servants of the king such as Lopo de Almeida, João Teixeira, João Fernandes da Silveira, Vasco Fernandes de Lucena, and many others. As the *petitio* of our letter will show, Don Isaac – and surely other members of his family and of the Jewish financial elite – had a very good relationship with this humanistic nobility and, in fact, he seemed to consider

254 The oration was originally written and said in Portuguese, and then João's son, the great humanist Luis Teixeira, translated it into Latin. At the time of the printing of the oration (1562), only Luis's translation remained, so a new translation from Latin to Portuguese was made for the printed edition by Miguel Soares.

255 Teixeira is referring to the Italian humanist Cataldo Aquila Pariso.

256 There is no pagination in the edition. My translation is referring to the tenth and eleventh pages of the Latin text and to the ninth and tenth pages of the Portuguese text.

himself as belonging to it both socially as a Court financier and merchant and culturally as a humanistically trained Jew.

Abravanel reveals to his friend Yehiel the diplomatic mission – the obedience embassy of Afonso V to the new Pope Sixtus IV – which gave him the occasion to send him a very distinguished messenger with a letter, an oral message, and many presents:

"Great in counsel,<sup>257</sup> [...] our Lord the king,<sup>258</sup> [...] sends his messengers before him<sup>259</sup> to the Pope to bow down to him with their face to the earth, and lick the dust of his feet.<sup>260</sup> From time to time, at the anointing, all the messengers of the king bow down to the Pope. His messengers are the greatly exalted Prince Lopo de Almeida, and a wise, perceptive and good man, Doctor Joao Teixeira, who brings this letter to you. Both have access to the royal presence and are closest to him."<sup>261</sup>

This introduction of the two Portuguese ambassadors is obviously meant to stress the importance of their persons and of their mission. But it also shows how much the Jewish communication was integrated in the political and commercial exchanges between Portugal and Italy. One can reasonably consider that such a combination of Christian and Jewish interests in the communications between Portugal and Italy was common. Indeed, Sergio Tognetti found recently in the Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti of Florence a 1477 registry of Abravanel's and Latão's account for the order of "VII vilumi di libri di legie di Bartolo" at the bank of Francesco and Bernardo Cambini.<sup>262</sup> We thank him deeply for giving us the opportunity to publish this document in the appendix to our edition of Abravanel's letters. This document shows that five years after the present letter, Abravanel was still trading with Tuscany, using the representation of the Cambini bank in Lisbon. Rau refers also to a certain Gomes Latão, a Jewish student in Siena. She found some thirty years before Tognetti, in the same Archivio dell'Ospedale, a registry of February 1477 of the monthly payment he received from Portugal.<sup>263</sup> If we add to this the letters to Yehiel of 1481 and 1482, we can reasonably establish that Don Isaac and other Jewish Portuguese merchants used on a regular basis the financial and commercial ties between Portugal and Italy.

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257 Jer 32:19.

258 2 Sam 15:15.

259 Gn 32:4.

260 Is 49:23.

261 Est 1:14.

262 Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti di Firenze, Estranei, 235, c. 60r.

263 Rau, "Italianismo," 191; "Alguns estudantes," 69.



Abravanel explains to his friend how he transformed the royal embassy of Almeida and Teixeira to the new Pope into a secret embassy of the Jewish Portuguese community to Sixtus IV:

"The doctor in his goodness, knowing how to distinguish between good and evil, interceding for the welfare of all our kinsmen,<sup>264</sup> always seeking our peace and prosperity<sup>265</sup> because his hand is guided by God, <sup>266</sup> wonderful is his love for me,<sup>267</sup> I would bind him unto me as a crown<sup>268</sup> and he shall be a spokesman for me. <sup>269</sup> He will speak to the Pope. We have sought his favour, <sup>270</sup> to speak to the Pope of the affairs of the Jewish communities [...] and to convince him, according to the Torah, to respond to our petitions and requests. On his honour he decided to take a vow<sup>271</sup> to speak well concerning Israel.<sup>272</sup> He accepted our list of requests and petitions to serve as a reminder to him when he is in the presence of the Pope."<sup>273</sup>

Don Isaac underlines Teixeira's friendly attitude to the Jews and emphasizes their personal friendship using the model of friendship between King David and Jonathan (1 Sam 1:26) to describe it. One can easily imagine that Abravanel and Teixeira's shared humanistic interests were a good ground for a friendship. Even more, one is tempted to see in this friendship an indication of their belonging to a "circle" of Portuguese humanists. However, their friendship was not purely intellectual; it was based on mutual economical and political interests. The expression "we entreated his favour," taken from Dn 9:13, refers, in this passage, almost certainly to the financial compensation Abravanel paid to Teixeira for his secret mission. This combination of friendly esteem and affection with financial benefits was what enabled Teixeira's agreement to become Abravanel's secret messenger. The references, in this passage, to the figures of Aaron (Ex 4:16) and Esther (Est 5:6) clearly show that, thanks to his personal ambassador, Teixeira, Abravanel succeeded in "breaking into" the Pope. This remarkable transformation of the obedience embassy into a Jewish embassy reveals to us the mutual ties of dependence that existed in Portugal between the Christian nobility and the Jewish financial elite. It shows also the Jewish political benefit that it was possible to gain from such ties.

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264 Est 10:3.

265 Dt 23:7.

266 Gn 31:29.

267 2 Sam 1:26.

268 Jb 31:36.

269 Ex 4:16.

270 Dn 9:13.

271 Gn 28:20.

272 Nm 10:29.

273 Ex 12:14.

Abravanel turns now to the compensation he is asking of Yehiel for Teixeira's mission:

"If it pleases your Majesty, speak to these men with your beautiful gift of speech,<sup>274</sup> words of peace and truth,<sup>275</sup> and you shall say that from the ends of the earth you have heard songs,<sup>276</sup> songs in honour of the king our master [the king of Portugal], who dispenses justice and righteousness unto all his people,<sup>277</sup> and loves the Jews, a king who lays the foundations of justice in his land,<sup>278</sup> and in reward for his meritorious deeds, all the nations shall serve him.<sup>279</sup> [...] They will know that there is a God in Israel,<sup>280</sup> that there is among us someone who understands what is happening and that everywhere there are capable, pious, and trustworthy men<sup>281</sup> among the sons of Israel. [...] What he [Teixeira] will ask from you, consider it as my honour. <sup>282</sup> I beg you that in your goodness you assist him well. [...] He will tell you in secret of our request which he brings with him and what has happened with us."

Don Isaac stresses for his friend the importance of his diplomatic performance in front of the two Portuguese ambassadors. This performance consists in a speech praising the virtues of Afonso V. Abravanel gives his friend advice for the content of his speech. In fact, if one compares the content of the late fifteenth-century obedience orations given by Portuguese ambassadors to Abravanel's advice to Yehiel, one can see a perfect match between them. Many of the obedience orations were speeches narrating the grandeur of the deeds of Portuguese kings, in this way conveying to the Roman audience knowledge about the expanding Portuguese kingdom and about the religious and cultural level it reached. Typical of the rhetorical argumentation of the obedience oration is Vasco Fernandes' presentation of the content of his speech to Innocent VIII (1485):

"As for the obedience, Most Blessed Father, which we, who are now weakened by the long journey overland [...] have been sent to render to Your Blessedness from the farthest limit of Farther Spain by the illustrious John the Second, most worthy King of the Portuguese, before I speak of it I kneel in entreaty and respectfully beg your Holiness to hear first, and in brief, a few words about the remarkable merits of the Lusitanian royal house and about the valour and religious fervour of the said king, so that his love for

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274 Song 4:3.

275 Est 9:30.

276 Is 24:16.

277 2 Sam 8:15.

278 Prov 29:4

279 Ps 72:11.

280 1 Sam 17:46.

281 Ex 18:21.

282 Ps 22:26.

the Catholic faith and his compliance with this holy and apostolic Church may be the more manifest."<sup>283</sup>

Then follows a long description of the Portuguese *Reconquista* of Portugal and of the *Conquista* of important cities on the Moroccan shore. This description which focuses particularly on Afonso V's and João II's policy of expansion was meant to produce among the curial audience a great idea of the Portuguese kingdom:

"Therefore it seems to me that it can be said that Afonso, a glorious king, was not content with practicing the most sacred Christian religion within the frontiers of his ancestors but even awarded new provinces, new kingdoms, new islands, and as it were, new and unknown worlds to the name of Christ and the Roman Church, and also to you Most Blessed Father, and to your successors."<sup>284</sup>

Abravanel certainly knew what kind of oration the two ambassadors were about to deliver at the Curial Court. For that reason, he asks Yehiel to produce in his words of welcome exactly the effect that Almeida and Teixeira were expecting from their obedience oration, namely, the admiration of Italy for the virtues of Afonso V and for the Portuguese Kingdom. After such a speech of reception, the effect of the financial compensation that Yehiel is asked to give to Teixeira will be very much increased, and likewise the chances of success of the secret mission carefully planned by Don Isaac.

This portion of the letter is remarkable because it sheds new light on the two pillars of Abravanel's political influence, namely, his relationships with the Jewish financial elite and with the Christian nobility. Abravanel is interested to present to his Portuguese noble friends his friendship with Yehiel as an exemplar of the Jewish elite. Like Don Isaac and Yehiel, the international network of the Jewish financial elite is a network of people who adopted the culture of the Renaissance nobility, a network of economic and political knowledge, and a financial capital that can be used in different parts of the world for promoting commercial or political interests. Abravanel wants to transform the encounter of the two ambassadors with Yehiel into an event that will shape their image of the Jewish elite as an analogue to the Christian nobility. This way, he hopes to convince them of their interest in the continuation of the collaboration between nobility and Jewish elite.

<sup>283</sup> Rogers, *The Obedience of King of Portugal*, 38-39.

<sup>284</sup> Rogers, *The Obedience*, 45.

## The Presents for Yehiel and his Wife

João Teixeira did not only bring Yehiel a letter along with some secret oral messages, he brought also a series of manuscripts and presents. This material part of the epistolary exchange is described and commented at length at the end of Abravanel's letter. This piece gives us a very interesting insight into the social and cultural meaning he attributed to this exchange of presents.

"A man of your great accomplishment,<sup>285</sup> you requested that I, your servant, send to your Excellency the commentary of *Ktuvim*<sup>286</sup> by Rabbi David Kimhi, [...] and I am presenting before you *The Crown of the Elders* which I wrote, along with the commentary on Deuteronomy, which is not complete [...] The commentary of Deuteronomy is not yet done because I have had so little time at home. My travels always came as a whirlwind, scattering me<sup>287</sup> away from the gates of study [...] Here is the tract of *The Crown of the Elders*, it is so little, and it will seem even smaller to you, enthroned on high.<sup>288</sup> [...] You will see the manner in which I interpret the Torah [...] Perhaps the thoughts of my heart will be acceptable to you,<sup>289</sup> [...] may it remember your servant the son of your maidservant that sends his word to a distant country,<sup>290</sup> because I love my master,<sup>291</sup> and now, I offer you the first fruits of the soil which the LORD has given me."<sup>292</sup>

Both Yehiel's command of a copy of Kimhi's commentary and Abravanel's offering of two of his writings refer to their building and care for their library. Although our knowledge of Don Isaac and Yehiel's libraries is not extensive, we do have some evidence which clearly indicates the numerous manuscripts they contained.<sup>293</sup> Book collections in leading financial families were a Renaissance phenomenon.<sup>294</sup> They

285 Jer 32:19.

286 The third section of the Bible according to the rabbinic canon.

287 Hab 3:14.

288 Ps 113:5.

289 Ps 19:15.

290 Ps 147:15.

291 Ex 21:5.

292 Dt 26:10.

293 *Perush al hatorah, devarim* (Jerusalem, 1984), 3. Cassuto, *La famiglia Da Pisa*, 30.

294 On the libraries in fifteenth-century Iberia and Italia, see: Angel Gómez Moreno, *España y la Italia de los humanistas* (Madrid, 1994), 44-45, Mario Schiff, *La bibliothèque du Marquis de Santillana* (Paris, 1905), Aires Nascimento, "As livrarias dos príncipes de Avis," Jeremy Lawrance, "Nuevos lectores y nuevos generos: apuntes y observaciones sobre la epistolografia en el primer rinacimiento español," ed. V. G. de la Concha *Literatura en la Época del Emperador* (Salamanca, 1988), 81-99, "The spread of Lay Literacy in late medieval Castile," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 62 (1985): 79-94, "Nuño de Guzmán and early Spanish Humanism: some reconsiderations," *Medium Aevum* 51 (1982): 55-85, Nader, *The Mendoza Family*, 95-97, Eugenio Garin, "Le

transformed their houses into literary centers that, on the one hand, attracted intellectuals and, on the other hand, demonstrated to the public the social virtues of their owner. This is obviously the atmosphere captured in Abravanel's own description of his house in Lisbon a few years later (1483-1484):

"My home became a place of meeting for the wise [Avot 1:4], there were the thrones for judgment [Ps 122:5], going out from there [Gn 2:10], through books and authors, good discernment and knowledge [Ps 119:65] and the fear of God [Prov 1:7]. In my house and inside my walls [Is 56:5] there were enduring riches and righteousness [Prov 8:18], a memorial and a name [Is 56:5], science and greatness [Gittin 59a], as between the noble men of ancient stock [Gn 6:4]."<sup>295</sup>

Don Isaac was not only collecting and reading books, he was writing biblical commentaries and philosophical tracts. He is sending to his friend his first two works: one completed, *Ateret Zekenim*, and the other— still incomplete— a commentary of Deuteronomy.<sup>296</sup> Like his library, writing was for Abravanel a means to show his talent and disseminate his image as a political and cultural leader: "science and greatness" (*torah vegeḏulah*) according to the Talmudic formula of Abravanel's introduction to the commentary of the *Former Prophets*. Indeed, there could not have been a better place than the library of Yehiel, in which many Jewish scholars gathered, for disseminating Abravanel's ideas among the Italian Jewish elite. Genazzano's *Iggeret hamudot*, which contains many attacks against *Ateret Zekenim*, attests to this diffusion.<sup>297</sup> Of great interest is his explanation for the unfinished state of his commentary of Deuteronomy. Don Isaac tells his friend that his work as a merchant and financier, which forces him to travel constantly, interferes with the free time necessary for writing. This excuse is also a way to present this unfinished commentary as a testimony of

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Biblioteche. L'invenzione della stampa", *La cultura del Rinascimento* (Bari, 1973), 57-65, 173-74, Miguel Angel Ladero Quesada and Maria Concepcion Quintanilla Raso "Bibliotecas de la alta nobleza castellana en el siglo XV," *Livre et Lecture en Espagne et en France sous l'ancien régime: Colloque de la Casa de Velasquez* (Paris, 1981), 47-59, Tammara De Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei Re d'Aragona* (Milano, 1947).

<sup>295</sup> I am quoting the English translation of the introduction of Abravanel's commentary of the *Former Prophets* in Lipiner's book *Two Portuguese Exiles*, 55.

<sup>296</sup> *Ateret Zekenim*, Shaul Regev "nusah rishon leperush Abravanel lesefer devarim". On *Ateret Zekenim*, see Lawee, *Isaac Abravanel*, 59-82. On the commentary on Deuteronomy, see Benjamin Richler, Isaac Abravanel's "Lost Commentary on Deuteronomy," ed. T. Borrás and A. Sáenz-Badillos, *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, vol. I (Leiden, 1999), 199-204.

<sup>297</sup> Eliyyah Hayyim Ben Binyamin da Genazzano, *Lettera Preciosa*, ed. F. Lelli (Firenze, 2002), 154-61, 166-71.

Abravanel's involvement in economics and politics as well as in Jewish scholarship. Don Isaac describes his tract *Ateret Zekenim* as a new genre of biblical commentary, but also as an objective memory of Abravanel's admiration for Yehiel. Thus, Abravanel's gifts are both a way of influencing Yehiel's scholarship and a way of marking his presence in the da Pisa library and house.

Abravanel presents now to his friend a third present, a young slave, and introduces this gift by crafting an interesting conversation with his wife:

"The woman whom the LORD appointed for<sup>298</sup> Isaac your servant, even she declared: he is my brother.<sup>299</sup> God brought a worthy writing and language to you,<sup>300</sup> the book you have produced, to present an offering unto my Lord<sup>301</sup> [...] Why should my name be absent<sup>302</sup> from the doors of his house, a house where sages gather?<sup>303</sup> [...] And because I am not learned I have, behold, a young girl that has not known any man, black yet comely.<sup>304</sup> She is a maidservant, well trained to work [...]. I offer her to the mistress [...] so you shall remember my love, the love of women,<sup>305</sup> Excellency, when you shall appear before the LORD."<sup>306</sup>

The notary registry of this gift, to which we already referred, describes this black slave as following: "sclavam unam nigram nomine Biccina de Ghinea da Terra Nova, etatis annorum otto vel novem, nondum baptizzata." She seems to have been an eight- or nine- year-old slave from Guinea, which was from 1441 the main source for the Portuguese slave trade.<sup>307</sup> The quotation of Abravanel's wife and the distinction between the literary capacities of men and women both indicate the complex social position of the women of the Jewish elite. Her "voice" in this letter and her present seem to attest to her involvement in the economic and political affairs of her husband. However, her incapacity to write a Hebrew work and the material character of her present (in opposition to the intellectual character of Don Isaac's gift) are clearly

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298 Gn 24:44.

299 Gn 20:5.

300 Dn 1:4.

301 Lv 17:4.

302 Nm 27:4.

303 Ab 1:4.

304 Song 1:5

305 2 Sam 1:26.

306 Ex 23:17.

307 Oliveira Marques, *Portugal na crise dos séculos XIV e XV*, 39-40. On the Jewish perception of the black in the early modern period, see: Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York, 2004), Abraham Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture* (London, 2003).

stated in order to emphasize her social inferiority. The registry shows that the slave was given to Yehiel's son-in-law, David da Tivoli. Thus, the original addressee of the present, Yehiel's wife, did not receive it. Although the words of Abravanel's wife attribute to the slave the same social finality as the books, namely, to be an objective basis for the remembrance of the friendship between the two families, it is clear that this present was a way for Don Isaac to thank his friend for his financial contribution. The exchanges of services and of retributions are veiled in this letter by a rhetoric of liberality.

Abravanel ends his letter with a blessing of Yehiel's elder son, Isaac, stressing his friendly relationship with the key figures of the da Pisa family. After Abravanel's signature comes an interesting question: "Have the goodness to let me know whether this Pope is speaking peace to all our people<sup>308</sup> whether there are with him or in the city of Rome Jewish doctors and whether the Cardinals have doctors." It seems that Abravanel wanted to use the help of some Jewish physicians for the success of his diplomatic mission to the Pope. Dorman also suggested that it might have been a question related to the medical studies of his eldest son, Yehuda. Perhaps Abravanel wanted to send him to study in Italy as many other Portuguese did at that time.<sup>309</sup>

## ii. The Letter of 1481

The second Hebrew letter is only partially dated; it refers to the *Parasha* of "this is the blessing" which is read at the end of the Jewish holy day of *Sukot* for *Simhat Torah*. The letter refers to the Christian conversion and marriage of Clemenza, the second daughter of Yehiel, which took place in the beginning of July 1480 and which was masterfully described by Luzzati.<sup>310</sup> Hacker showed convincingly that this letter, which is in second position in the British library codex, does not refer to the death of Yehiel's wife, Ricca, whereas the first letter in the codex refers both to the conversion and marriage of Clemenza and to the death of Ricca: "Two events happened to you, the misfortune with the daughter and the death of your wife." It seems reasonable to think, as Hacker showed, that the second letter of the British library codex was written before the first.<sup>311</sup> Since the first letter of the codex is dated from *Hoshana Raba* of the Jewish year 5243, which was the 13th of October

308 Est 10:3.

309 Yehuda Abravanel, *Sihot al haahava*, trans. and ed. M. Dorman (Jerusalem, 1983), 27.

310 Luzzati, *La Casa dell'Ebreo*, 59-106.

311 Hacker, "Kvutzat iggerot...", 74-75 n. 60.

1482, and since Clemenza's wedding happened at the beginning of July 1480, it is very likely that Abravanel wrote the letter for *Simhat Torah* of the Jewish year 5242, which was the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1481. The copyist of the codex put the letters in the opposite order because he considered that they were both written the same year, and he knew that *Hoshanah Rabah* to which one letter is referring is before *Simhat Torah* to which the other letter is referring. But such a possibility would imply that Abravanel had written two letters to Yehiel within two or three days without mentioning it, whereas he states that his custom was to write to Yehiel each year, "from year to year," as it is written in the letter of 1481.

The letter is divided in four parts: the first is an apology for Abravanel's long silence and an explanation of it, namely, the plague that is hitting Portugal and that forced the entire Abravanel family to flee; the second, which constitutes the core of the letter, is a consolation on the conversion of Yehiel's daughter, Clemenza; the third concerns the exchange of manuscripts between the two correspondents; the fourth is Abravanel's blessing of Yehiel's offspring and especially of Isaac the elder son. The similarity with the first Hebrew letter is obvious: they both begin, although in opposite order, with a description of Abravanel's troubles (the plague in the second letter and the story of the liberation of the Arzilan Jews in the first) and with a consolation of Yehiel's sorrow (the conversion of his daughter in the second and the threat of closing the Jewish loan banks in Florence in the first). Both letters finish with issues concerning the exchange of codices and with a blessing for the continuity of the da Pisa family. In brief, the letter of 1481 is meant to console Yehiel and to strengthen the relationship between the two leaders when they both are facing a difficult situation at home.

### Apology

Abravanel opens his letter with a long explanation of his silence, which is also a description of his situation during the plague of the 1480s in Portugal:

"There is wrath gone out from the LORD, the plague has begun<sup>312</sup> [...] These past three years<sup>313</sup> I have forsaken my house,<sup>314</sup> I wandered with the daughters who are my daughters and the sons who are my sons,<sup>315</sup> [...] I

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312 Nm 17:11.

313 Gn 31:41. See Hacker for the interpretation of this time indication: Hacker, "Kvutzat Igerot...", 74-75.

314 Jer 12:7.

315 Gn 31:43.



have been a fugitive and a sojourner in the earth,<sup>316</sup> [...] Therefore I did not approach your table full of bounty<sup>317</sup> with the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart for you,<sup>318</sup> therefore I did not come to my Lord with a letter written by me from year to year as in former days which have been better than these.<sup>319</sup> [...] Lay not, I pray you, sins upon me,<sup>320</sup> Prince of our generation and great among the Jews,<sup>321</sup> and forgive, I pray you now, the transgression of your brother and his sin.<sup>322</sup> [...] As soon as God will relieve us [...] I will once again pasture your flock and tend it,<sup>323</sup> then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon who passes through the paths of the seas.<sup>324</sup> We shall prepare in your honor, our obligatory offerings and additional ones,<sup>325</sup> as I have always intended to do."

Although Abravanel indicates that he is not writing the present letter from his house in Lisbon, he insists on the effect of the plague, which cut him off from his house and from the communication network that it was part of. Don Isaac suggests that he could neither receive nor write any letter without being in the strategic position afforded him by his house in Lisbon. This statement, which is clearly exaggerated, along with the reference to the messengers arriving from the sea to Lisbon, indicates how the letters that Don Isaac sent each year to Yehiel were well prepared in their writing and were accompanied with presents—"offerings"—as it is said in the letter. Being cut off from his regular information network and being faced once again with the necessity to wander from one place to another, Abravanel surely could not prepare, as he intended, his epistle as well as the manuscripts and presents he usually sent with it.

### Consolation

After this excuse, Abravanel writes a consolation for the conversion of Yehiel's daughter, Clemenza. He follows exactly the same rhetorical steps as in the Portuguese letter. As in the Portuguese letter, Don Isaac begins his consolation by showing his deep sympathy with his corre-

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316 Gn 4:14.

317 Jb 36:16.

318 Ps 19:15.

319 Ecc 7:10.

320 Nm 12:11.

321 Est 10:3.

322 Gn 50:17.

323 Gn 30:31.

324 Ps 8:9.

325 Prayer for shabat Musaf.

spondent's grief. He tries to engage Yehiel's attention by even increasing his distress by a series of painful questions on the moral decline of the daughter of such a perfect and illustrious father.

"Here sounds the cry of the daughter of my people from a land far off,<sup>326</sup> its sound shall be like the serpent's<sup>327</sup> and reach the skies. Cast down from heaven unto earth,<sup>328</sup> the glory of the King's daughter within the palace.<sup>329</sup> The prince's daughter, the noble's daughter, has exchanged her glory [her religion] for that which does not profit.<sup>330</sup> Her taste and her scent have altered. I was writhing at hearing the bad news, and pangs of anguish have taken hold of me.<sup>331</sup> On account of the hurt of the daughter of my people I am distressed. I am black, gripped by desolation.<sup>332</sup> How is the gold become dim?<sup>333</sup> Daughter of youth coming from a waist so pure and so sacred, were you not fashioned for the faith? How have you forsaken God? How have you condemned the Holy One of Israel?<sup>334</sup> You that dwelt in the garden,<sup>335</sup> a protected garden,<sup>336</sup> a garden eastward in Eden,<sup>337</sup> under the guardianship of wisdom and money,<sup>338</sup> how have you fallen from heaven?"<sup>339</sup>

The metaphor of Clemenza's cry reaching Abravanel from far away and the one of her moral fall from the grandeur of the da Pisa family are used by Don Isaac to make more vivid his sympathy with Yehiel's sorrow and the gravity of Clemenza's deed. Having stressed his sympathy, Abravanel applies further the consolatory therapy to Yehiel's afflicted soul. He explains to him that the inherent instability of fortune is responsible for the apostasy of his daughter, and not any personal fault of his. Moreover, he tries to convince Yehiel to consider this familial calamity as part of the normal course of human history (and of Jewish history in particular) and so to accept it as an external event over which he has no influence. The stoic flavour of the argument is clear, although not stressed by any quotation. Abravanel closes his speech by a clear encouragement to Yehiel to become again the model of the Jewish

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326 Jer 8:19.

327 Jer 46:22.

328 Lam 2:1.

329 Ps 45:14.

330 Jer 2:11.

331 Isa 21:3.

332 Jer 8:21.

333 Lam 4:1.

334 Is 1:4.

335 Song 8:13.

336 Song 4:12.

337 Gn 2:8.

338 Ecc 7:12.

339 Is 14:12.

leader who remains faithful to his Judaism even in times of personal adversity. This moral strength is the necessary basis of the activism of the Jewish leader, and that is why Abravanel's consolation is aimed at restoring it:

"This I would answer to my heart,<sup>340</sup> for this we have searched. From the beginning, as the earth ever was, there is not a righteous man upon earth who escapes this rule: he who earned a good name earned for himself only wealth and honor [...] Who is mighty on earth, great, tall, and important, and would drink spiced wine<sup>341</sup> and enjoy within his tent<sup>342</sup> the juice of a pomegranate<sup>343</sup> in vessels diverse one from another and in gold vessels, that the cup would not pass over unto him also,<sup>344</sup> and that he would not drink a day or two at the hand of God, the cup of His fury,<sup>345</sup> the beaker, the bitter water that brings about the curse?<sup>346</sup> Therefore marvel not at the matter!<sup>347</sup> [...] Sons, life, and food<sup>348</sup> are rebellious and thorny.<sup>349</sup> They are riches kept by the owner leading to his suffering. [...] You are wise, give, I pray you, glory to God. God be blessed for all, put away evil from your flesh.<sup>350</sup> Do not investigate what is beyond your comprehension.<sup>351</sup> Do not ask what this was or why this was, for the judgment is God's<sup>352</sup> and there are no more prophets."<sup>353</sup>

Abravanel follows the same rhetorical path as in the Portuguese letter. First he tries to convert Yehiel's emotional attitude to a rational one, and then he encourages him to adopt the best view for continuing his leadership, namely, to distinguish between fortune and his commitment to embody the ideal of the Jewish leader.

### Exchange of Manuscripts

As in the former letter of 1472, a part of the letter is devoted to the exchange of manuscripts between the two leaders. In this part Don Isaac

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340 Lam 3:21.

341 Song 8:2.

342 Gn 9:21.

343 Song 8:2.

344 Lam 4:21.

345 Is 51:17.

346 Nm 8:18.

347 Ecc 5:7.

348 Moed Katan 28a.

349 Ez 2:6.

350 Ecc 11:10.

351 Hagiga 13a.

352 Dt 1:17.

353 Ps 74:9.

is asking his friend if he can retrieve the manuscripts containing writings of Profiat Duran and Yosef ibn Shem Tov that he lent to Yehiel in order to copy them. Likewise, Abravanel is asking Yehiel to lend him some manuscripts containing Immanuel of Rome's commentary on the Pentateuch and on the Prophets.<sup>354</sup> These demands of Abravanel shed some light on the exchanges of manuscripts between the two families; moreover, they confirm what we already knew from Abravanel's writings: Don Isaac had a special interest in biblical commentaries, in rhetoric, and in Aristotelian philosophy as shown by the request for Immanuel of Rome's commentary and by his possession of Profiat Duran's and Yosef ibn Shem Tov's writings.<sup>355</sup>

"My father, my father,<sup>356</sup> the books that I sent to your Excellency, the writings of Profiat Duran and Rabbi Yosef ibn Shem Tov, may his memory be blessed, I entreat the favor of your Honor,<sup>357</sup> if you already copied them and if you do not have use for them, hand them over to Doctor Gonsalo Mendes, my friend who is with you in your country, so that he may bring them to me at my home that I may read from them in my free time, because I do not have any copy of them left. And from the commentaries of Rabbi Immanuel, if you have some of them in your library, especially on the Pentateuch and on the Prophets, remember your word to your servant,<sup>358</sup> and so you will deal kindly and truly with me.<sup>359</sup> This is Torah and we are required to learn it<sup>360</sup> and we bring about the reward to a person of merit."<sup>361</sup>

Of linguistic interest is the Hebrew expression used by Abravanel to designate the library of Yehiel: *beit midrash* (בית מדרש). This word was used to designate the house of study, which was generally part of the synagogue or of the house of the Rabbi. Don Isaac transformed here its meaning from "public" into "private" in order to designate the private library that became at that time an important part of the house of Renaissance nobles and merchants. No doubt that Don Isaac and Yehiel's

354 For Immanuel of Rome's commentary on the Pentateuch, see the fifteenth-century codices of Parma's Biblioteca Palatina manuscripts number 3220-324, (n. 634 in ed. Benjamin Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*, codicological descriptions Malachi Beit-Arie [Jerusalem, 2001]). Abravanel is referring to Immanuel of Rome in *Ateret Zekenim* ([Jerusalem 1994], 113) and *Nahalat Avot* ([New York, 1953], 299).

355 Abravanel refers often to Profiat Duran: *Perush al Neviim rishonim* ([Jerusalem, 1965], 4), *Perush al neviim aharonim* ([Jerusalem, 1979], 24, 289, 460). Abravanel refers to Yosef ibn Shem Tov's *Kavod Elohim: Perush al Neviim rishonim* ([Jerusalem, 1965], 225).

356 2 Kgs 2:12.

357 Prov 19:6.

358 Ps 119:49.

359 Gn 47:29.

360 Brakhot 62a.

361 Shabat 32a.

private libraries were Jewish examples of Renaissance private libraries. This special room to which Abravanel referred in the beginning of the letter as the place where he used to read and write his letters had a special social function to which Don Isaac alludes: the library is the place where the Jewish merchant and banker has to dedicate his free time to study, which means to read and write. This way, he can add to his wealth knowledge and rhetorical skill and achieve a leadership based both on financial and cultural values.

The name "Gonsalo Mendes" we put in the English translation is not to be found in the Hebrew original text; the name there is: אנסלו מינדץ, "Ansalo Minditz". Rau refers to a certain Gonsalo Mendes, Portuguese law student in Siena in the 1470s, who used the services of the bankers Cambini, as did Abravanel.<sup>362</sup> Moreover, the 1477 registry of Abravanel's and Latão's account at the Cambini bank for the order of "VII vilumi di libri di legie di Bartolo," which we are publishing in the appendix, mentions a certain "Gonsalvo Menendy" in Siena to whom the book must be sent. It is more than probable that this "Gonsalvo Menendy" is the same person Rau is referring to in her articles, namely, Gonsalo Mendes. Gonsalo Mendes was the son of Pedro de Coimbra *Sobrejuiz* of the *Casa do Civel* in Lisbon. He was the *moço da câmara* of the Crown Prince João. King Afonso V granted him, by a letter of March 1469, an annuity of 4356 *reais brancos* for his studies in Italy. He finished his studies and his sojourn in Italy in 1482 and then began a career as a magistrate. It seems not unreasonable to think that at the time of the letter (1481) he was doctor in law or at least considered as such. Although the Hebrew transcription of the name of the doctor, "Ansalo Minditz," does not correspond exactly to his Portuguese name, Gonsalo Mendes is the only person known to us who seems to correspond to the "doctor" referred to in the letter. If this attribution is correct, then we have another example of Abravanel's ties with Portuguese humanists as in the first Hebrew letter where Abravanel mentioned his friendship with João Teixeira, another doctor in law and humanist who sent his sons to study in Italy under the direction of Poliziano.

### The Blessing of Yehiel's Offspring

Don Isaac finishes his letter with a comforting image of Yehiel's family gathered around him and united by its commitment to put into practice the cultural model he is incarnating:

<sup>362</sup> Rau, "Italianismo...", 200-201, "Alguns estudantes...", 49, 80.

"In Isaac shall your seed be called to you<sup>363</sup> and the responsibility will be upon his shoulders. David with his wife, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess,<sup>364</sup> and all the fruits of your loins will come to your sanctuary and they will offer you their sacrifice, the nearness of God,<sup>365</sup> and you shall have nothing but joy with them and with their offspring; to them shall flow the river of peace and a good blessing shall come upon them, kindness and truth shall not forsake you.<sup>366</sup> The blessing of the LORD enriches,<sup>367</sup> and the God before whom my fathers did walk<sup>368</sup> shall make your end better than your beginning<sup>369</sup> and he shall give you twice as much as you have,<sup>370</sup> a blessing which shall be more than sufficient, and your end shall greatly increase<sup>371</sup> with joyfulness and gladness of heart,<sup>372</sup> and the former misfortunes shall not be remembered."<sup>373</sup>

Abravanel closes his letter with the end of his consolation. The crisis of Clemenza's conversion and wedding is now resolved; the continuity of Yehiel's leadership will be assumed first by his elder son, Isaac, but also by his son-in-law, David da Tivoli, who married Yehiel's daughter Ahinoam (Fiore in Italian). The sorrow and despair from which Abravanel cured his friend by his consolatory speech is now replaced by the joy of the restored family order. "And the LORD changed the fortune of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). Abravanel uses this verse to convey to his friend that, like Job, he will recover more than he lost. Indeed, the aim of Abravanel's consolatory letter, here as in the two other letters we have studied, is to revive in its reader the psychological attitude that will enable him to pursue his leadership. The recovered unity of the family and the future blessing of the heir and of the father are rhetorical concluding arguments, which make the end of the letter an ideal "re-starting point" for its addressee.

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363 Gn 21:12.

364 1 Sam 27:3. Abravanel refers here to the second daughter of Yehiel, Fiore, who married David da Tivoli.

365 Ps 73:28.

366 Prov 3:3.

367 Prov 10:22.

368 Gn 48:15.

369 Ecc 7:8.

370 Jb 42:10.

371 Jb 8:7.

372 Dt 28:47.

373 Is 65:17.

## iii. The Letter of 1482

The third letter Abravanel sent to Yehiel da Pisa is dated from the 13th of October 1482. It was written to console him on the death of his wife, Ricca, and also on the already mentioned conversion of Clemenza, his daughter. Although the date of Ricca's death is unknown, it must have been between the period of Abravanel's former letter of 1481 and the one in which Abravanel wrote this third letter of 1482. Ricca, probably born in Pistoia, was the daughter of Sabato di Buonaventura da Terracina and Brunetta di Abramo Galli da Mantua (married in 1430). Both families were involved in money lending. She became the wife of Yehiel da Pisa around 1445 and gave birth to at least seven children, among them the already mentioned Clemenza and Isaac, who gave her name to one of his daughters.<sup>374</sup>

The first part of the letter describes Abravanel's flight from the plague epidemic of the early 1480s in Portugal. It stresses also Don Isaac's nostalgia for the consolatory letters of his friend. The second part is composed of three consecutive consolatory speeches on Ricca's death and to a lesser extent on Clemenza's conversion. In the first one, Abravanel insists on accepting the natural necessity of death. In the second one, he presents death as a relief from the sufferings of Jewish exile. In the third one, he promises his friend a religious and political reward for his present pain. One can see already from the general structure of the letter that it has the same rhetorical construction as the Portuguese letter. It follows the same movement from death as a necessity to death as a positive event. This rhetorical move had the therapeutic function of curing Yehiel's soul of his sorrow and the social function of bringing him back to an existential attitude that suited his political function. The rhetorical similarity between the Portuguese and the Hebrew letter should not make us forget the difference between their respective literary frameworks. Abravanel's Portuguese letter is a fine example of Iberian humanism, whereas the third Hebrew letter, like the other two, is an example of the Hebrew epistolary art of writing that was developed all along the medieval period, and then was adapted in the fifteenth century to some new exigencies of the humanistic letters.

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<sup>374</sup> Michele Luzzati, "La circolazione di uomini, donne e capitali ebraici nell'Italia del Quattrocento", 38-40, *La Casa dell'Ebreo*, 250, Andrew Gow Gordon Griffith, "Pope Eugenius IV and Jewish Money-lending: The Case of Salomone di Bonaventura during the Chancellorship of Leonardo Bruni," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994), 282-329.

## Nostalgia

In the first part of the letter, Don Isaac mixes skillfully the narrative of his flight from the plague and a nostalgic memory of Yehiel's letters in order to emphasize his friendship to him and his admiration for his writing skill.

"Prince and commander of peoples,<sup>375</sup> [...] God, God the LORD knows<sup>376</sup> that even in these days when I am a fugitive and wanderer in the earth,<sup>377</sup> when I come into the tent of my house,<sup>378</sup> I am my beloved's, and my desire is toward him,<sup>379</sup> when I go up into the bed prepared for me,<sup>380</sup> I muse on the work of your hands.<sup>381</sup> When I give sleep to my eyes, in a dream, in a vision of the night,<sup>382</sup> I behold your face,<sup>383</sup> a divine face.<sup>384</sup> I am satisfied when I awake with your image.<sup>385</sup> When I see someone from the wilderness coming from a dreadful land,<sup>386</sup> I hold him, and do not let him go until I know how you and your family fare."

Even in a time of survival like the one of the early 1480s plague in Portugal, Don Isaac does not forget his friend. On the contrary, every moment of rest or even of sleep awakes his friendly love to his friend and revives Don Isaac's desire of communication with him. The narrative of Yehiel's apparitions in the dreams of Abravanel is a powerful evocation of their friendship, an evocation that echoes, in our view, the humanistic revival of the classic friendship as it appears in the writings of Seneca and Cicero that were well known to Abravanel. The nostalgic memory of Yehiel's letter that follows the evocation of the dreams is of great interest because it reveals that the epistolary communication between Yehiel and Don Isaac was based on the consolatory genre:

"It has been three years now that I am scattered abroad and dispersed among people.<sup>387</sup> I thought of the days of old<sup>388</sup> that you animated with the

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375 Is 55: 4.

376 Jos 22:22.

377 Gn 4:14.

378 Ps 132:3.

379 Song 7:11.

380 Ps 132:3.

381 Ps 143:5.

382 Jb 33:15.

383 Ps 17:15.

384 Ps 42:3.

385 Ps 17:15.

386 Is 21:1.

387 Est 3: 8.

388 Ps 143: 5.



words of your lips.<sup>389</sup> All my bones<sup>390</sup> shouted for joy and were glad<sup>391</sup> with your reply.<sup>392</sup> [...] I was saying at the time; he shall comfort us for our work and the toil of our hands<sup>393</sup> with the breath of his lips,<sup>394</sup> and his words<sup>395</sup> will thoroughly heal<sup>396</sup> a broken and contrite heart,<sup>397</sup> as well as every sickness and every plague."<sup>398</sup>

The biblical allusions Abravanel uses at the end of this first piece clearly refer to consolation and to its curing function, especially the four verses from which Abravanel extracted relevant fragments for his allusion to the consolatory genre (we are putting in bold these fragments): "And he called his name Noah, saying: **This same shall comfort us in our work and in the toil of our hands**, which cometh from the ground which the LORD has cursed" (Gn 5:29); "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land; and he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and **with the breath of his lips** shall he slay the wicked" (Is 11:4); "If he rises again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause **him to be thoroughly healed**" (Ex 21:19); "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, **a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:19). The connection of the verbal form ינחמו ("shall comfort us" in the English translation) with the expression ברוח שפתיו ("with the breath of his lips") as well as the connection between רפא ירפא ("shall heal thoroughly") and לב נשבר ונדכא ("a broken and contrite heart") clearly refer to the consolatory effect of words and to their curing power for some psychological affections.

This memory of Abravanel indicates that the two leaders wrote each other consolations in order to support one another in their economical and political activities. The exchange of consolations was a way for the two leaders to construct their own image and to define the conceptions and the attitudes they must adopt to fulfil their leadership in the best way.

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389 Prov 23: 16.

390 Ps 35:10.

391 Ps 35:27.

392 Prov 15:23.

393 Gn 5: 29.

394 Is 11: 4.

395 Jb 37: 2.

396 Ex 21: 19.

397 Ps 51: 19.

398 Dt 28:61.

## First Consolatory Speech

Abravanel tells that he received the news of Ricca's death from two different sources: "I heard from the mouth of travelers traveling through the country, and in our city from the mouth of Abraham..." The first source seems to be some Italian or Portuguese merchants. Indeed, Abravanel refers earlier in the letter to "someone from the wilderness coming from a dreadful land," which seems to be also an Italian merchant or a Portuguese merchant coming from Italy. Don Isaac, as an international trader and as a financier, was part of the commercial and financial network that linked Portugal to Tuscany, and this way, he was receiving news from the da Pisa family.

The second source of information is Jewish; it seems to be Abraham Hayun, to whom we have already referred. He was a very important figure of the Portuguese Jewry at the time of Abravanel, involved in trade and in Jewish scholarship, and surely for these reasons in regular contact with the da Pisa family. As mentioned before, we have an exchange of letters between him and Isaac da Pisa, the elder son of Yehiel.<sup>399</sup> These letters, which were written in Sicily, Naples, and Tuscany in the year 1492, show the Hebrew rhetoric skill of Hayun and the high esteem in which he was held by Isaac da Pisa and surely by his father, Yehiel. Moreover the letters were copied and conserved in three codices (Jewish Theological Seminary MS 3921, London Montifiore Library MS 488, and Oxford Bodleian Library Heb MS 1989) that contain also Abravanel's third Hebrew letter referring to Abraham Hayun. This is not a mere coincidence, but rather the consequence of the fact that both Don Isaac and Abraham Hayun were appreciated by the Italian compilers of letters both as letter writers and as Jewish leading figures. Indeed, the literary features of Hayun's letters are relatively similar to those of Abravanel. This similarity, along with Hayun's known relationship with Yehiel da Pisa and Don Isaac, suggests that he was part of this Jewish Portuguese financial elite that developed through letters and other writings its own cultural leadership.

As in the former letters, Abravanel begins his consolation by engaging Yehiel's attention with words of sympathy and with words that emphasize his pain and his need for consolation.

"And I answered: I am so very sorry. How could I endure to see the destruction of whom my soul loved with so much joy and gladness of heart, bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh?<sup>400</sup> How could I raise my voice, a voice of rejoicing, as in the months of old, when I hear the sound of a cry?

399 Hacker, "Kvutzat igerot".

400 Gn 2:23.

One cannot come today before the gate of a king<sup>401</sup> like you with psalms and singing songs,<sup>402</sup> but only to console you and offer your heart good and comforting words,<sup>403</sup> to raise you from the bed of illness<sup>404</sup> and create a new heart and a new spirit<sup>405</sup> within you, holy man, as you were before this day brought forth breach upon breach,<sup>406</sup> [...]”

First Abravanel identifies himself with the sorrow of his friend. Then he promises him a speech that will cure him and bring him back to his *status quo ante* in which he was able to assume his role of leader. In this passage, the medical-rhetorical function of consolation and its social conservative goal appear clearly interwoven. The psychological health, which Abravanel wants his friend to recover, is the condition of his return to social leadership.

After this *captatio benevolentiae*, Abravanel begins his consolatory therapy, as in the Portuguese letter, by insisting on Yehiel's need to change his emotional relationship to the death of his wife and to the conversion of his daughter to a rational one that considers both as a necessity.

“Man of God<sup>407</sup> why is your heart grieved?<sup>408</sup> [...] Is not the whole land before you full of men and women that have forsaken the LORD<sup>409</sup> and exchanged their glory<sup>410</sup> for new gods? And also among us did they not increase as they have increased, these men of all estates who have transgressed the laws and none says: Restore?<sup>411</sup> [...] Why does a living man,<sup>412</sup> a man who has done mighty deeds<sup>413</sup> like you, lament? Is man made to live forever? Can man deliver his soul from the hands of death?<sup>414</sup> Did God make man to love forever? Did He redeem his soul from entering into the pit?<sup>415</sup> We enter the world only to disappear thereafter completely, whether it be beast or man, it shall not live.<sup>416</sup> [...] It shall be for the people

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401 Est 4:2.

402 Prov 25:20.

403 Zec 1:13.

404 Ps 41: 4.

405 Ez 18:31.

406 Jb 16:14.

407 1 Sam 2:27.

408 1 Sam 1:8.

409 Is 1:4.

410 Ps 106:20.

411 Is 42:22.

412 Lam 3: 29.

413 2 Sam 23:20.

414 Ps 89:49.

415 Jb 33:28.

416 Ex 19:13.

as for the priests,<sup>417</sup> one Torah,<sup>418</sup> death shall be their shepherd,<sup>419</sup> the small and the great alike.<sup>420</sup> The moth shall eat them up, nettles shall possess them."<sup>421</sup>

In order to produce a change of view in his friend, Abravanel reminds him that his social position does not protect him either from the historical phenomenon of conversion or from the natural necessity of death. Don Isaac was aware of the conversion of important parts of the Jewish Iberian elite by the very example of his family, which partly converted at the time of the persecutions of 1391.<sup>422</sup> In this passage, one can hear also a clear echo of the Stoic conception of death expressed in the Portuguese letter, although Abravanel does not refer to any Stoic author. The Stoic attitude towards death, which Don Isaac already taught to the Count of Faro, is here presented within the biblical framework of the Hebrew epistolary writing. Yehiel, who surely absorbed aspects of Florentine humanism, might have read into Abravanel's biblical rhetoric the omitted reference to Seneca. But Abravanel's omission had its own literary and cultural finality: it was an attempt to create a Jewish equivalent to the humanistic *consolatio*, which would rely only on Jewish classical sources (the Bible and rabbinical literature).

Continuing his effort to move Yehiel away from his personal grief, Don Isaac comes back to the story of the plague in Portugal and draws the attention of his friend to the universality of death that affects everyone without exception.

"Who can express to my Lord all the travail that has befallen us<sup>423</sup> these last three years in which we have seen evil, calamity upon calamity?<sup>424</sup> [...] The plague has begun among the people, and so the plague was among the numerous and great congregation of the LORD, overthrowing and destroying both the little and the great, it did not regard the old person, nor bestow favor on the young. Therefore, my Lord, man of God,<sup>425</sup> be not afraid, nor dismayed<sup>426</sup> by the trouble of man; may your hands be strong<sup>427</sup> and be

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417 Is 24: 2.

418 Lv 7: 7.

419 Ps 49: 15.

420 Dt 1:17.

421 Hos 9:6.

422 Ben Zion Netanyahu, "The Conversion of Don Samuel Abravanel," *Toward the Inquisition; Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, 1997), 99-125.

423 Nm 20:14.

424 Ez 7:26.

425 Jdg 13:8.

426 Jos 1:9.

427 Ez 22:14.

a valiant man.<sup>428</sup> In the day of evil,<sup>429</sup> put away evil from your flesh,<sup>430</sup> be strong and show yourself to be a man,<sup>431</sup> for apparently in vain is the net of death spread,<sup>432</sup> and the house appointed for all living<sup>433</sup> is death and there is nothing new under the sun."<sup>434</sup>

The narrative of the plague is meant to transform Yehiel's perspective on death from a particular and emotional one to a universal and rational one. It continues Abravanel's former argument on the necessity of death for humankind. The encouragements and appeals, which close the first consolatory speech, call on Yehiel to embrace this view of death and this way to overcome and cure his particular pain. For Abravanel, the Jewish leader proves his superiority by his capacity to consider death rationally and to see other misfortunes as part of the normal course of the world. To restore the leader to this universal and rational perspective, which allows him to accomplish his mission, is clearly the function of this first consolatory speech, and probably of many consolatory letters that these Jewish leaders exchanged.

### Second Consolatory Speech

The second speech of the letter offers an interesting Jewish adaptation of the consolatory argument of the positive role of death.

"Prince and great man,<sup>435</sup> open your eyes and behold this too, because from the day our city was destroyed and our temple became desolate,<sup>436</sup> from the day Yehuda was carried out of his land,<sup>437</sup> we have had no respite, nor rest.<sup>438</sup> Continually against us, they follow their own counsel;<sup>439</sup> Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites.<sup>440</sup> [...] Whoever he is, and wherever he is, distress and anguish overwhelm him<sup>441</sup> from the time he comes out of

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428 1 Kgs 1:52.

429 Ps 41:2.

430 Ecc 11:10.

431 1 Kgs 2:2.

432 Prov 1:17.

433 Jb 30:23.

434 Ecc 1:9.

435 2 Sam 3: 38.

436 Lv 26:31.

437 2 Kgs 25:21.

438 Jb 3:26.

439 Ps 81:13.

440 Ps 83:7.

441 Jb 15:24.

his mother's womb,<sup>442</sup> and even unto old age and white hairs.<sup>443</sup> [...] The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold<sup>444</sup> that have seen their glory, because of this growing evil, despised and feeble, why would they not consider their life as a life of sorrow and why would they not be glad when they can find a grave,<sup>445</sup> when they will rest on their last bed<sup>446</sup> from the burdens of time and from the multitude of its waves?<sup>447</sup> Weep not for the dead among the sons of Israel, neither bemoan him but weep for him that goes<sup>448</sup> from bad to worse [...]"

Abravanel asks once again of his friend to leave his particular misfortune and to adopt a comprehensive perspective on Jewish history. The shift from the level of the particular to the one of the "national" history is at the center of the consolatory cure. Indeed, the consolation is meant to restore the hierarchy between the two personalities of the leader (the private and the public), and, in the quoted passage, it is meant to remind Yehiel that he is committed first to the history of his people, and only after that to the particular one of his family. From the perspective of the history of Jewish exile, death is no more a misfortune, but the fortune to escape from the constant oppression of the Jewish minority by the Christian or Muslim majority. This consolatory change of perspective on death to which Abravanel is trying bring his friend makes the Jews living the daily humiliations of exile the real subject of preoccupation for Yehiel, and not the dead. As suggested by Abravanel's use of Jer 22:10,<sup>449</sup> this second consolation is written to revive Yehiel's commitment toward his community.

If, in the Portuguese letter, Abravanel presented death as a relief from worldly vicissitudes; here, in this Hebrew and Jewish letters, he describes death as a liberation from the vicissitudes of Jewish exile, judaizing in this way the consolatory argument of the positive role of death. This negative image of exile is part of the leadership conception of the Jewish elite; it prepares its leaders to be ready for the inherent instability of exile and to know how to react to its evils. Most likely, Abravanel intended to give here a Jewish version of the stoic humanistic conception of the leader as a man who has to know how to face the vicissitudes of fortune.

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442 Nm 12:12.

443 Ps 71:18.

444 Lam 4:2.

445 Jb 3:22.

446 Is 57:2.

447 Jer 51:42.

448 Jer 22:10.

449 "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country" (Jer 22:10).

### The Third Consolatory Speech

Don Isaac closes his letter with a third consolatory speech that stresses the religious and political reward Yehiel should expect if he faces courageously the death of his wife and the conversion of his daughter.

"I pray you, let the power of my Lord be great<sup>450</sup> to strengthen and fortify yourself,<sup>451</sup> be like the holy ones that are the mighty men,<sup>452</sup> the strong ones that are the foundations of the earth.<sup>453</sup> Lay it upon your heart that, as a man chastens his son with admonitions of love,<sup>454</sup> so the LORD your God chastens you.<sup>455</sup> [...] The One who preserves our soul in an eternal life<sup>456</sup> will give you a place among the selected who stand beyond the stars of God.<sup>457</sup> After being old and full of days, after being sated with favor, wealth and honor, you shall make princes out of your sons,<sup>458</sup> you will watch in your old days as your descendants, in their lands of origin, make wonderful fruits<sup>459</sup> as you wished [...] To my Lord Isaac your beloved son, the chosen of the LORD<sup>460</sup> who is sitting today upon your throne<sup>461</sup> in praise, and in name, and in glory,<sup>462</sup> please remember me to him<sup>463</sup> many times."

Like Moses in Nm 14:17 asking God to overcome his wrath, Abravanel asks Yehiel to overcome his sorrow and to become again a leader and a model for his community. Using the famous concept of "chastenings of love" (Brakhot 8a), Don Isaac consoles in a third manner his friend by presenting his recent misfortunes as a sign of God's special providence over him. The promise of Yehiel's future rewards and of the successful continuity of his "dynasty" (especially with his elder son Isaac) is the positive and visible side of Yehiel's same privileged relationship with God which brought him the present series of calamities. In brief, if Yehiel changes his view and considers his recent misfortunes from the perspective of the continuity of his family leadership, he will acknowledge this continuity even in a time of adversity and will contribute to

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450 Nm 14:17.

451 Dn 11:1.

452 Gn 6:4.

453 Ps 82:5.

454 Brakhot 5a.

455 Dt 8:5.

456 Ps 66:9.

457 Is 14: 13.

458 Ps 45:17.

459 Is 37:31.

460 2 Sam 21:6.

461 1 Kgs 5:19.

462 Dt 26:19.

463 1 Sam 20:6.

the future achievements of the family by his return to financial and public affairs. As in the Portuguese letter, Abravanel finishes his consolation by the resolution of the crisis occasioned by the death of one member of the family, which generated a conflict between the private and public dimension of the family. As in the Portuguese consolation, the conception of the leader who overcomes adversity and receives in return a providential care is a psychological instrument for strengthening the family leadership.

### Concluding Remarks

The study of the literary and historical content of Abravanel's Portuguese and Hebrew letters has confirmed the parallelism we revealed between the Portuguese and Hebrew codices. Our commentary of the Portuguese letter has hoped to present a series of clear evidences of Abravanel's absorption of Iberian humanism. Through the study of the Hebrew letters, we intended to show that, parallel to his assimilation of Iberian humanism, Don Isaac developed in his correspondence with Yehiel da Pisa a Hebrew and Jewish adaptation of it. Abravanel's dual letter writing reflects the social duality of the Sephardic financial elite, which on the one hand served the nobility and, on the other, assumed a leading position in the Jewish community. Don Isaac acclimatized the humanistic consolatory genre and the stoic conception of the leader, which he used in his correspondence with Portuguese nobles, to the political and social preoccupations of the Jewish elite. As a consequence, one can consider Abravanel's Hebrew letters as an early example of a Jewish adaptation of humanism. These letters were copied and conserved in several sixteenth-century manuscripts to serve as models for Hebrew epistolary writing. The integration of these letters in manuscripts which bear clear signs of humanistic interest in epistolary rhetoric reflects faithfully the content of Abravanel's letters and shows that the manuscript transmission of the letters – both in Hebrew and in Portuguese – followed the literary and cultural intention of their author and inserted them within a fitting literary framework.

These four letters are parts of Don Isaac's social and political ascension in the years 1460-1481. This ascension has already been described by important scholars including Netanyahu, Lipiner, Ferro Tavares, and Lawee.<sup>464</sup> Our edition hopes to contribute to the clarification of the background of this ascension by presenting in the addendum a little-

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464 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 12-32, Ferro Tavares, *Os Judeus*, 273-349, Lipiner, *Two Portuguese Exiles*, 46-79, 101-58, Lawee, *Isaac Abravanel*, 9-15.



known Portuguese document which is the 1470 answer of the Council of Santarem to a royal consultation on currency policy. This document, which was originally published in the years 1874-1880 by the great historian of the Portuguese currency, Teixeira de Aragão, contains a letter written probably by Don Isaac's father, Don Yehuda, with another Castilian Jew in the year 1453.<sup>465</sup> This letter was addressed to King Afonso V and presented a report on the situation of the Portuguese currency as well as a series of measures to be taken. Without entering into the details of the history of the Portuguese currency at that time, it is important to notice that already in 1453, Don Yehuda and probably other members of the Abravanel family were considered by King Afonso V as reliable authorities in international trade and currency policy. Don Yehuda and the other Castilian Jews advised the king on a series of "monetarist" actions in order to prevent the devaluation of the Portuguese currency and concomitant social effects. These steps were: the strengthening of the value of the Portuguese golden "escudo" so that it would be equal to the Castilian "dobra"; the prohibition of any exportation of valuable Portuguese currencies or precious metals; the strict limitation of certain professions like international traders, money changers, and jewelers to Portuguese nationals; and, the necessity for the king to care through economical measures for the general well-being of his people so as to increase his own wealth.<sup>466</sup>

If we take as a point of comparison King Afonso V's confirmation of Don Isaac's property in Queluz in 1480 (this property was given in 1478 to Don Isaac in reward for his financial services to Duke Fernando of Bragança),<sup>467</sup> we can notice a clear continuity in the leading financial position of the Abravanel family during the reign of Afonso V (1448-1481). Indeed, through his commercial activities and his financial services to the Braganças and to King Afonso V, Don Isaac gained an important position in the Court. But economy is not a sufficient explanation for this success and fame. There is a need to take into consideration Abravanel's strong ties with the Portuguese humanistic elite (João Teixeira, Lopo de Almeida, and Gonsalvo Mendes) as well as the cultural role of his humanistic rhetoric. Abravanel's mastering of Iberian humanism transformed him in the eyes of his noble patrons into a true member of the Court society. Moreover, this mastering of humanism permitted him to increase his influence on the minds of his patrons and so to gain

465 Augusto Carlos Teixeira de Aragão, *Descrição Geral e Histórico das Moedas Cunhadas em Nome dos Reis, Regentes e Governadores de Portugal* (Porto, 1963), 374-81.

466 Ferro Tavares, *Os Judeus*, 280-281, "Subsídios para o estudo da história monetária do Século XV (1448-1495)", *Nummus* 4-6 (1981-1983): 9-59.

467 Lipiner, *Two Portuguese exiles*, 106-16.

a greater political profit from the economic services he gave them, as we saw in the case of the obedience embassy of Lopo de Almeida and Texeira to the Pope Sixtus IV. Within the network of the Jewish economic elite, Don Isaac's Jewish adaptation of humanistic rhetoric and leadership conceptions allowed him to appear as an attractive leader who deserved to be supported. This way, Abravanel could add to his economic power and his social position at the Court the support of the Jewish elite in Portugal and in the Diaspora. In brief, Abravanel's humanism had an important role in the conversion of his financial position into a political one at the Court and within the Portuguese Jewry.

As we have tried to show in the present study, the four letters are structured partially or entirely by the consolatory rhetoric. This consolatory rhetoric, which following its revival by Petrarch became a central element in fifteenth-century humanism, is used by Abravanel in order to heal the psychological wound of his addressee, a wound that threatens to reverse the hierarchy between the social and political role of the leader and his private personality. Both Abravanel's Portuguese and Hebrew letters are composed, partially or entirely, in order to restore and preserve the elitist or aristocratic basis of the Portuguese and Jewish society. The leadership ethos that Don Isaac's letters try to revive in their addressees is an aristocratic ethos that demands from the leader that he overcome his personal misfortune in order to fulfil his social and political mission. In the Portuguese letter and to a lesser extent in the Hebrew ones, Abravanel follows the humanistic trend of the revival of the Stoic model of the leader who is prepared to deal with the uncertainty of fortune. Another important part of the leadership conception at work in the letters is the continuity of the familial dynasty, which has to overcome the crisis of each generation. The continuity between family leadership (education of the sons) and personal leadership (individual exemplary actions) is the ideal state, which each letter tries to restore.

The model of the learned leader which emerges from the many quotations of the Portuguese letter and from the exchanges of manuscripts in the Hebrew epistles has at least two main social functions: first, it determines a norm for both the Portuguese and Jewish elite while providing a social and religious model for the rest of the society; second, it indicates a model of cultural integration within the Christian nobility as well as a Jewish imitation of its features. If we focus on the Hebrew letters, the values that these letters are promoting and for which they stand as a rhetorical expression are the following: the ability to face personal misfortunes, religious and "national" responsibility, family and class commitment, political and financial skills, and scholar-

ship. In brief, letters like Abravanel's, between Jewish leaders and between Jewish and Christian leaders, contributed to the constitution of a self-image of the Jewish elite and to its social homogenization around a series of values.

If the comparison of the Portuguese and Hebrew letters reveals the influence of the Stoic model of the leader in both cases, the same comparison shows that the difference between the Portuguese and Hebrew epistles consists in the different historical and political frameworks in which they were written and in which they were supposed to produce their effect. This difference finds its expression in the two different rhetorics used by Abravanel. In the Portuguese letter, Don Isaac plays with the identification of the Renaissance Christian noble with Roman and Greek classical models, whereas in the Hebrew epistles, he insists on the commitment of the Jewish leader to his religion and culture through the biblical rhetoric he is using. Although both the Portuguese and Hebrew letters use much of the same consolatory rhetoric, one cannot fail to notice the exilic character of Don Isaac's letters to Yehiel or the Court character of his letter to Dom Afonso. Indeed the Hebrew letters are written to emphasize the vital role of the Jewish leader for his community and even for the Diaspora, whereas the Portuguese letter intends to secure and improve Dom Afonso's position within the Court. The humanistic rhetoric of the Portuguese letter contributes to the achievement of its political goal, because it makes this goal more attractive and legitimate by associating it with the Roman Stoic tradition of Cicero and Seneca and with other classical examples. The biblical rhetoric of the Hebrew letters has a similar function: it connects their Jewish political goals with a rhetoric, which both embodies the commitment of the writer to his religion and cultural past and tries to convey it to the addressee.

To conclude, the comparison of the Portuguese and Hebrew letters reveals that Abravanel developed two parallel rhetorics which are relatively similar in their literary genre (consolation) and in their content (conception of the leader). The differences between the two types of letters indicate more an adaptation to different political and cultural situations than a radical difference or opposition. From this perspective, it is possible to see in Abravanel's Portuguese and Hebrew letters two types of humanistic letters, a Portuguese one and a Hebrew and Jewish one. Or to put it in another way, the disappearance of the classical references of the Portuguese letter in Abravanel's letters to Yehiel da Pisa is a phenomenon of acclimatization of Iberian humanism within the religious and cultural framework of the Jewish economical elite.

This conclusion has some important repercussions for the scholarly debate on the Jewish reception of humanism and Renaissance culture. Without entering into the details of the debate, one can divide scholarship on Jewish Renaissance into two approaches. Umberto Cassuto, in his founding monograph *Gli Ebrei a Firenze nell'età del Rinascimento* (Florence 1918),<sup>468</sup> was the first to compare on a large scale the Jewish literary production to the humanistic one.<sup>469</sup> He discovered three areas of Jewish reception of humanism: poetry among the followers of Immanuel of Rome, who first introduced the sonnet into Hebrew poetry; kabbalah and philosophy with the Jewish entourage of Ficino and Pico della Mirandola (above all Johanan Allemano), who were involved in the elaboration of Florentine Neo-Platonism and produced Hebrew works influenced by humanism and Neo-Platonism; and epistolary writing, which was particularly developed by Italian Jews at the end of the fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century. Cecil Roth, in his famous study *The Jews in the Renaissance*,<sup>470</sup> basically followed Cassuto's discovery, adding many aspects and emphasizing the Italian Renaissance as a time of exchange and openness between Christians and Jews. Robert Bonfil, whose main claim is that the discourse on the influence of the Renaissance on Italian Jews is a truism, because Italian Jews were part of Italian culture and as such had to integrate elements of the dominant culture, challenged this view.<sup>471</sup> The real question is whether the Italian Jews defined their Judaism and their Jewish culture as part of the dominant Renaissance culture, or as distinct from it, if not against it. Bonfil's answer is that Jews distinguished themselves from the dominant Christian culture during the Renaissance, the success of the Kabbalah being a metaphor for it. The contribution of an approach, which emphasizes the multilingual writing of the Jewish economic elite, is first, that it permits a better description of the Jewish reception of humanism. Indeed, Abravanel first adopted humanistic rhetoric in his Portuguese letters and then adapted it to his Hebrew letter. Moreover, a multilingual approach clarifies also the Jewish adaptation of humanism and its limitation. Indeed, we saw that all references to classical literature disappeared and that Abravanel used the *melitsah* style as a Jewish equivalent to humanistic rhetoric either in vernacular or in Latin. Notwithstanding this tendency to a pure Hebrew rhetoric, Don

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468 Cassuto, *Gli ebrei a Firenze*.

469 On this debate, see: David Ruderman (ed.), *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York, 1992), Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish Culture in Renaissance Italy: a Methodological Survey", *Italia* 9 (1990): 63-96.

470 Cecil Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1977).

471 Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley, 1996).

Isaac's Hebrew letters are written according to the fashion of consolatory rhetoric of the time and adopt humanistic conceptions of leadership. The multilingual correspondence of the Jewish economic elite was surely a cultural background which enhanced the appearance of humanistic works written by Jews in vernacular (like the *Dialoghi d'amore* of Yehuda Abravanel) and of a Hebrew literature influenced by humanistic trends (Abravanel's biblical commentaries or Messer Leon's *Nofet Zufim*). The participation of Renaissance Jewish elite in two agoras (Jewish and Christian, Hebrew and Romance vernacular languages) had as its result that elitist Jews perceived themselves as part of Renaissance culture, simultaneously maintaining a rather conservative approach of their Hebrew and Jewish culture and still introducing many new aspects into it. Abravanel is surely a good example of this ambiguous Jewish relationship to Renaissance culture. On the one hand, he seems to have adopted quite easily the new Court culture and to have been able to reproduce it in vernacular languages or to introduce parts of it in his Hebrew writings. On the other hand, his Jewish adaptation of humanistic trends is counterbalanced by a constant preoccupation with drawing borders between Jewish culture and dominant Renaissance culture, which leads him to a conservative attitude towards Jewish medieval literary genres like biblical commentaries or *melitsah* rhetoric. The present edition of the bilingual correspondence of Abravanel shows, we hope, how the two main interpretations of Jewish reception of humanism can be harmonized by a multilingual approach, which emphasizes both the assimilation and rejection of dominant culture resulting from the bilingual writing of elitist Jews like Don Isaac.

### 3. The Past Editions of Abravanel's Letters

Abravanel's Portuguese letter was rediscovered in the 1880s by the great Portuguese philologist, Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos, in the codex CIII 2-20 of the Biblioteca Publica of Evora. Actually, Rivara and Matos had recently published the catalogue of the manuscripts of this famous library in the years 1850-1879.<sup>472</sup> The transcription of the letter was handed over by Vasconcellos to Jeanette Schwerin, born Abravanel, and she published it with a German translation and a short notice on the historical background of the letter in the *Magazin für die Wis-*

<sup>472</sup> Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara and Joaquim Antonio de Sousa Telles de Matos, *Catalogo dos manuscritos da biblioteca publica eborense*, vol. 1-4 (Lisboa, 1850-1871).

*senschaft des Judenthums* of the year 1891.<sup>473</sup> This edition and translation, despite its numerous errors, was certainly a great contribution to the studies on Abravanel's life and work, which were just beginning at that time. But it did not propose any study of the literary content of the letter nor of its historical and cultural background.

In 1928, for the first issue of the *Revista de Estudos Hebráicos*, another great historian of the Portuguese literature and philosophy, Joaquim de Carvalho, published the copy of Abravanel's letter in the Alcobacense codex 475/297 of the Biblioteca Nacional of Lisbon.<sup>474</sup> This new edition was due to the publication by Gabriel Pereira in 1910 of the catalogue of the Alcobacense codices 443 and 475/297,<sup>475</sup> which revealed the existence of a second copy of Abravanel's Portuguese letter. Carvalho published this new version of the letter with an introduction on the historical and literary context of the letter, which proposed convincingly the date of 1470-1471 for the writing of the letter and revealed the importance of this letter for resolving the question of Abravanel's participation in the plot of the Bragança against King João II. As in the case of Vasconcellos, one can only regret that these two great pioneers of Portuguese philology did not pay more attention to this letter and did not produce a more extended study of its literary features. In the case of Carvalho, it is all the more puzzling when one considers the fact that he wrote a monograph on Yehuda Abravanel, Don Isaac's son. Unfortunately, the explanation has to be found in Carvalho's inherited suspicion and disdain for Jews and Judaism, which expresses itself in many ways in his introduction to Abravanel's letter. Thus, Carvalho begins his introduction with these words: "Isaac Abrabanel or Abravanel, the most notable of the Jews born and bred in fifteenth-century Portugal does not yet have his Portuguese biographer, even though his biography like no other one opens [...] a perspective on the involvement of the Jews in the Portuguese public life of the fifteenth century and on the repercussion of Western culture on the closed mentality of the Lisbon *Talmud Torah*, if not authentic *Yeshiva*. Indeed Isaac Abravanel, in contrast to the majority of his coreligionists, did not live only in the narrow and isolated circle of the obscure relationships and little interests of the usurers, stall tenders and craftsmen of the Jewish quarter."<sup>476</sup>

473 Jeanette Schwerin, "Ein Brief Don Isaac Abravanel's in portugiesischer Sprache," *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 18 (1891): 133-45.

474 Joaquim de Carvalho, "Uma epístola de Isaac Abarbanel," *Revista de estudos hebráicos* 1 (1928), 231-238, reprinted in *Obra Completa de Joaquim de Carvalho*, vol. 3 (Lisboa, 1982), 115-125.

475 Pereira, *Os codices 443 e 475*.

476 Carvalho, *Obra*, 115-16.

The third and last edition was made recently by Herman Prins Salomon for the second issue of *Cadernos de Estudos Sefarditas* in 2002.<sup>477</sup> The important contribution of this edition is that it is based on a comparison of the two copies of the letter and that it proposes in footnotes the most significant differences between the two versions. Like the two former editions, this one contains a very brief historical introduction.

With the remarkable exception of Gutwirth's 1998 article, "Don Ishaq Abravanel and Vernacular Humanism in Fifteenth Century Iberia," which offers the first general study of the letter, though, without giving a critical edition of the text, Abravanel's Portuguese letter was never published in a full critical edition nor with a suitable introduction to its historical and literary background.

Abravanel's Hebrew letter of 1472 was published by Eliakim Carmoly in the *Journal Otsar Nehmad* of the year 1857, which was issued in Vienna. The letter was preceded by a biography of Don Isaac and his sons and followed by the first printed edition of Yehuda Abravanel's Hebrew poem *Complaint on Fate*.<sup>478</sup> The biographical introduction of Carmoly relies mainly on Abravanel's own introductions to his commentaries and on Barukh Hezeketo's biographical introduction to the 1551 Ferrara edition of *Maanei Hayeshuah*.<sup>479</sup> As a result, there is actually in this introduction no study of Abravanel's letter, with the exception of a brief clarification of the historical context of King Afonso V's conquest of Arzila.

The edition of the letters of 1481 and 1482 was made by the Jewish Russian scholar Menashe Grossberg as an addendum to the London 1901 edition of the Pseudo Abraham ibn Ezra *Sefer Haatsamim*.<sup>480</sup> The edition is a simple transcription of the two letters copied in the codex British Library Heb MS 1081. Grossberg did not add to his edition any study of the letter, only a long remark on Abravanel's consolatory argument of death as relief from the vicissitudes of the Jewish exile. In this interesting remark, he is insisting on the necessity for the Jews to come back to the Land of Israel in order to free themselves from the never-ending misfortune of exile.

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477 Herman Prins Salomon, "A Carta de Dom Isaac Abravanel ao Conde de Faro," *Cadernos de Estudos Sefarditas* 2 (2002): 135-40.

478 Eliakim Carmoly, *Otsar Nehmad* 2 (1857): 47-75.

479 Abravanel, *Maanei Hayeshuah* (Ferrara, 1551), 2b-4a.

480 Pseudo Abraham ibn Ezra, *Sefer Haatsamim* (London, 1901), 34-43.

#### 4. The Present Edition

The edition we are presenting is first an attempt to propose a critical edition of Abravanel's four letters based of course on the former editions but also on a systematic comparison of the different manuscript copies of each letter. This way, we are able to present the Portuguese letter and the second Hebrew letter with the indication of the textual variants of the text in the different manuscripts. The first and third Hebrew letters are only extant in one manuscript copy, so there is no question of variation of the text. The second intention of this edition is to present the letters with a critical apparatus which reveals most of the sources of the Portuguese letter as well as all biblical quotations (or quasi quotations) of the Hebrew letters. Along with this critical apparatus, we introduce this edition of the letters with a detailed study of their literary content, their historical context, and their reception and manuscript transmission within sixteenth-century Portuguese and Jewish circles. To make this apparatus more complete, we include in the appendix two unpublished documents (the notary registry of the slave referred in Abravanel's first letter and the registry of Abravanel's and Latão's account at the bank of Francesco and Bernardo Cambini) and one already published document that is unknown to most scholars (the 1470 answer of the Council of Santarem to a royal consultation on currency policy). Thus, we hope to have succeeded in making of this edition of Abravanel's familiar letters an introduction to the Jewish reception of early Iberian humanism and to Abravanel's special role in the emergence of Portuguese humanistic circles and in the Jewish adaptation of some of their cultural trends.

The third intention of this edition is to make accessible to a broad readership Abravanel's Portuguese and Hebrew letters and our discussion of them. This is why we give an English translation of the four letters. Translating a late medieval Portuguese text into modern English poses considerable problems. We tried to be as faithful to the original syntax as the intelligibility of the translation allows it. As for the translation of the Hebrew letters, we must first recall that a partial English translation of the first letter was made by Franz Kobler and published in his large anthology *Letters of Jews through the Ages* in 1952.<sup>481</sup> This translation does not conserve the biblical style of the letter and its intention is to present in modern English the content of the letter. Kobler's whole anthology of letters is a great achievement, and we profited greatly from it and especially from his translation of Abra-

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481 Franz Kobler, *Letters of Jews through the Ages*, vol. 1 (London, 1952), 320-25.



vanel's first Hebrew letter. Nonetheless, we adopted another attitude in translating Don Isaac's Hebrew letters. Indeed, we took the decision to keep as much as possible the same biblical style in the English translation as in the original Hebrew letters. The result will surprise readers who are not accustomed to this Hebrew epistolary genre. But after the first astonishment, they will be able to experience – and maybe enjoy – what was the reading of a highly stylized Hebrew letter. The introduction also intends to clarify all topics that are dealt with in each letter so that the reading of the English translation can be as easy and as clear as possible. Thus, we hope that scholars from different backgrounds will find some interest in Abravanel's letters and will integrate them in their future research, expanding the present scholarship on Jewish humanism with new connections and comparisons that are still to be made.

The Letters

Edition and Translation



A Portuguese Letter

1470-1471

Carta que o Barbanel mandou ao Conde de Faro<sup>1</sup>  
sobre a morte do Conde<sup>2</sup> de Odemira<sup>3</sup> seu sogro.

S.or,

Bem assi como nos principios das infirmitades os rremedios<sup>4</sup> das  
mediçinas<sup>5</sup> nã prestam<sup>6</sup>, nem<sup>7</sup> a natureza a elas<sup>8</sup> obedece<sup>9</sup>, assim<sup>10</sup> em  
quãto<sup>11</sup> esta<sup>12</sup> fresca a paixão da morte dos dividos<sup>13</sup>, nã<sup>14</sup> se devem  
de<sup>15</sup> apresentar as consolatorias palavras porq [porque] com a força da  
dor e sobejo<sup>16</sup> nojo, nã<sup>17</sup> podem ser rrecebidas<sup>18</sup>. Lesse em Job ao dous  
cap.os que seus cõpanheiros<sup>19</sup> quãdo o<sup>20</sup> vierã<sup>21</sup> consolar, e o acharão  
tam trabalhado, lhe não falarão sete dias e sete noites nẽ soom.te  
[soomente] hũa palavra<sup>22</sup> em quãto<sup>23</sup> a dor<sup>24</sup> era

- 
- 1 farão [Alc].  
2 cõde [Alc].  
3 demira [Alc].  
4 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.  
5 as medicinas [Ev].  
6 prestão [Ev].  
7 nẽ [Alc].  
8 ellas [Alc].  
9 obedesse [Ev].  
10 assi [Alc].  
11 emqdo [Ev].  
12 estaa [Alc].  
13 divados [Ev].  
14 nã [Alc].  
15 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.  
16 sobejo [Ev].  
17 nam [Alc].  
18 reuibidas? [Ev].  
19 compan'ros [Ev].  
20 ho [Alc].  
21 vierã [Alc].  
22 palabra [Ev].  
23 emqto [Ev].  
24 door [Alc].

Letter that Abravanel sent to the Count of Faro  
concerning the death of the Count of Odemira, his  
father-in-law

Sir,

As with the beginning of all illnesses, the remedies of medicine often fail, and nature refrains from obeying them, so that when the pain of the death of relatives is fresh, one ought to abstain from offering words of consolation. The strength of the pain and the excessive mourning prevent their being heard.<sup>1</sup> In Job, chapter two, one reads that when his friends came to console him and found him so distressed, they refrained from speaking to him, not even one word, for seven days and seven nights, while his pain was

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1 Cf. Fernando del Pulgar, „No so yo de aquellos que presumen quitqr con palabras la tristeza no aun madura, furtando su oficio al tienpo, que le suele quitar madurando“ (Ferando del Pulgar, *Letras.- Glosa a las Coplas de Mingo Rebulgo* [Madrid, 1958], 70).

grande ate<sup>25</sup> q [que] elle começou de<sup>26</sup> falar seu negocio<sup>27</sup>. E eu, S.ñor<sup>28</sup>, assi temendo<sup>29</sup> de<sup>30</sup> neste trabalho escrever a V. S. nem me sentindo abastante para<sup>31</sup> vos<sup>32</sup> nelle saber<sup>33</sup> aconselhar<sup>34</sup>, deixei<sup>35</sup> passar os dias primeiros<sup>36</sup> de vosso nojo. E ora q vossa carta vi<sup>37</sup> tive lugar<sup>38</sup> p.a [para] sobre isso escrever a V. S. como em mim<sup>39</sup> cabe posto q não seja<sup>40</sup> como devia.

Como muitos crerão, e eu mui<sup>41</sup> certo sei, mui magnifico<sup>42</sup> S.ñor aver auido em vosso nobre e humano coração maior<sup>43</sup> lugar a dor<sup>44</sup> e sentimento<sup>45</sup> da morte do ilustre<sup>46</sup> Conde vosso padre q a nova gloria da sução<sup>47</sup>, e honra<sup>48</sup> da herança<sup>49</sup> q delle ouvistes<sup>50</sup>. O q<sup>51</sup> me muito aprouve e pensei<sup>52</sup> não reprehender<sup>53</sup> vosso grande nojo e aspero doo<sup>54</sup>, mas a mostrar evidentes rrazões<sup>55</sup>, por onde grande nojo<sup>56</sup> deveis aver<sup>57</sup>,

- 
- 25 ate [Alc].
  - 26 a [Ev].
  - 27 neguocio [Alc].
  - 28 Sor [Ev].
  - 29 temêdo [Ev].
  - 30 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.
  - 31 pa [Alc].
  - 32 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.
  - 33 o pode [Ev].
  - 34 cõselhar [Alc].
  - 35 dexej [Ev].
  - 36 primros [Ev].
  - 37 vj [Ev].
  - 38 loguar [Alc].
  - 39 mĵ [Alc].
  - 40 seia [Ev].
  - 41 muj [Ev].
  - 42 manifico [Ev].
  - 43 mayor [Alc].
  - 44 door [Alc].
  - 45 sintim.to [Ev].
  - 46 Illustre [Ev].
  - 47 soçessam [Alc].
  - 48 homrra [Alc].
  - 49 e erença [Ev]?
  - 50 ouvestes [Alc].
  - 51 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.
  - 52 Penssej [Ev].
  - 53 nō rreprender [Alc].
  - 54 dóó [Ev].
  - 55 rezoos [Ev].
  - 56 noio [Ev].
  - 57 daver [Ev].

so strong. They waited until he began to voice his pain.<sup>2</sup> Fearing to write to your Lordship in your time of distress, and not feeling myself wise enough to offer counsel, I therefore permitted the first few days of your mourning to pass. Now that your letter has arrived, I feel at ease writing to you about this misfortune, as is my duty, although perhaps not as timely as my response should have been.

Many believe, as do I, that your magnificent Lordship has more space in his noble and human heart for pain and sorrow for the death of the illustrious Count, your father, than for the new glory resulting from your succession and the honor of the inheritance you have received from him. I believe your attitude to be the correct one and I would not reprove your great mourning and bitter sorrow, but rather find reasons to support this mourning.

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2 Cf. Enrique de Villena's *Tratado de Consolacion*: „The [consolatory] way they [the friends of Job] used, after having arrived at Job's place, is divided into three parts, according to the biblical text. First, when they saw him disfigured, they tore their robes, threw dust in the air onto their heads, and they sat down with him. Second, they remained in silence for seven days allowing him to express his complaints and resentments. Third, each one gave words and advice of friendly consolation” (Villena, *Obras Completas*, vol. 1, ed. Pedro Catedra [Madrid 1994], 228-229).



e todo o Reino geralmête sua morte<sup>58</sup> deve sentir, porq lembrando vos o amor que vos tinha e como o paternal divido era feito em sua bontade<sup>59</sup> mui natural, amando vos como a p.prio f.o [proprio filho], tratandovos como a grande S.ñor confiandosse de vos como de<sup>60</sup> irmão, e como em vossa ausencia<sup>61</sup> cõ mui principal amor e cordeal sospiro<sup>62</sup> em vos falava e mais que todas cousas amava ouvir aq.llas [aquellas] que de vos trasiã lembrança<sup>63</sup>. Lembrandovos isso mesmo o cuidado de seu espiritu<sup>64</sup> quando fora do Reino ereis, onde quanto mais conhecia vosso esforço<sup>65</sup>, tanto mais temia vosso periguo, ora<sup>66</sup> os cuidados e trabalhos que vossa honra<sup>67</sup> rrecebia<sup>68</sup> com tanta paçiençia, certamête<sup>69</sup> S.nor a lembrança destas cousas<sup>70</sup> vos devem por sua morte causar mais sentimento; porq se amamos os padres por serem causa de nosso ser, e pela<sup>71</sup> obrigação<sup>72</sup> que de seus beneficios e amor lhe devemos; a este padre por todos os rrespeitos não devemos menos estimar, nem seu faleçimento nos deve menos doer que do p.prio e carnal pai que vos gerou, mas muito mais: pois cõ menos inclinacão de natureza<sup>73</sup> tanto como elle vos amava, e pois conhecidas suas virtudes, muito mais se deve estimar<sup>74</sup> seu faleçimento a quem conheceu<sup>75</sup> a autoridade de sua presença, e a graça e mansidão<sup>76</sup> de seu estado singular<sup>77</sup>, seu calar<sup>78</sup> e guarda de segredos, que he hũa virtude q muito convem<sup>79</sup> aos S.ñres de a guardarem, e de lha gardarem. Lembrevos a authoridade<sup>80</sup> e sageza<sup>81</sup>

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58 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

59 vontade [Ev].

60 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

61 ausencia [Ev].

62 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

63 mais q todas las cousas falava e amava ouvir aquellas que de vos trazião lembrença [Ev].

64 spū [Alc].

65 esforsso [Ev].

66 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

67 homrra [Alc].

68 revibia [Ev].

69 certam.to [Ev].

70 couzas [Ev].

71 plla [Alc].

72 obriguação [Alc].

73 natura [Alc].

74 destimar [Alc].

75 conheceo [Alc].

76 mancição [Ev].

77 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

78 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

79 cõvem [Alc].

80 ha antiguidade [Alc].

81 saguiza [Ev].

The entire Kingdom as well, should be affected by his death. You no doubt remember the love he had for you, how his paternal duty toward you was the natural outcome of his goodness, loving you as his own son, treating you as a great lord, and confiding in you as in a brother. During your absences he repeatedly spoke of you with the deepest love and the warmest feelings. More than anything he liked to hear of concerns which brought you to mind. You remember his worry when you were outside the Kingdom – the more he knew of your efforts there, the more he feared the danger you faced as well as the worries and pain which your Majesty so patiently bore. Certainly, Sir, the memory of these things should cause even greater pain for you over his death. If we love our fathers for being the cause of our existence, and for the obligations due them for what they lovingly provide us with, then we should not estimate any less this father of yours in all these considerations, neither should his death cause you less pain than the death of your own biological father who gave you life. On the contrary, it should cause you even more pain. Lacking a natural, biological predisposition, he truly did love you as much as did your father. In fact, his virtues being well known, his death must also significantly affect those who have experienced the authority of his presence, the grace and leniency of his unique personality, and his silence and keeping secrets – a virtue it would behoove noblemen to watch over and to keep. Remember the authority, the wisdom,

e boã esqwença de sua cavalaria, quãtos años<sup>82</sup> comportou as calmas dos verãos<sup>83</sup> e os frios e tempestades das invernos, com diversas<sup>84</sup> batalhas de imigos pospoendo todo los<sup>85</sup> trabalhos, esquecendo<sup>86</sup> todos os<sup>87</sup> medos cõ mui repouzado<sup>88</sup> esforço por serviço de D.s [Deus] e del Rey, e acrecentamêto de seu nome.

Disse o filosofo<sup>89</sup> q a rrepublica<sup>90</sup> era como hũ corpo animado<sup>91</sup>: e bem assi como a dor ou p.d.imento [padecimento] de hum membro se<sup>92</sup> sente por todo o corpo, e padece por causa delle, e quanto o membro he mais nobre, he mayor a dor ou periguo, que se de seu dano segue: assim os falecim.tos [falecimentos] dos nobres que sã<sup>93</sup> os verdad.ros [verdadeiros] membros da terra, a todos pertence sua dor e sentim.to [sentimento] e todos recebem perda em seu falicim.to. Pois S.ñor se os<sup>94</sup> que parentes e<sup>95</sup> subditos nao sã, he necessario de sintirem sua morte, como vos podereis vos della<sup>96</sup> escusar, a quem por isto<sup>97</sup> e por outros muitos respeitos de natureza e rezão mais que a todos vos pertence.

E posto S.ñor que a humanidade sinta paixão da morte dos tais<sup>98</sup> devidos, não<sup>99</sup> tem porem por isso<sup>100</sup> justa querella por q naturalmête segundo philosophia<sup>101</sup> e por o pecado de Adam segundo fee todos somos obriguados á<sup>102</sup> morte e he divida<sup>103</sup> assim obrigatoria<sup>104</sup> q não nos devemos agravar em pagala; por que como diz Seneca<sup>105</sup> nos<sup>106</sup>

82 annos [Ev].

83 verões [Ev].

84 Diverssas [Ev].

85 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

86 esquessendo [Ev].

87 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

88 rreprouzado [Alc].

89 Philosopho [Ev].

90 Rep [Ev].

91 armado [Ev].

92 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

93 sam [Alc].

94 dos [Alc].

95 nem [Alc].

96 dello [Alc].

97 estes [Alc].

98 taes [Alc].

99 nom [Alc].

100 nisso [Alc].

101 philosophia [Ev].

102 aa [Alc].

103 devida he [Alc].

104 obrigatoria [Alc].

105 (como diz Seneca) [Ev].

106 os [Ev].

and the judiciousness of his knighthood. How many years he endured the heat of the summers, the cold and the tempests of the winters! How he endured the different battles with enemies, not heeding his own pains, equably forgetting all his fears in service to God and the King, thereby increasing the distinction of his name.

The philosopher has said that the republic is like a living organism. As the entire body feels and suffers the pain generated by one of its organs – and the nobler the body part, the greater the pain and danger resulting from its damage – so with the death of the nobles, who are the most important organs of the nation, and everyone must perforce experience pain, sorrow and loss at their passing. Sir, if the people who are neither his relatives nor his vassals feel great pain at his death, how can you be emancipated from this pain? Regarding that and many other aspects of nature and reason, you should experience this pain more deeply than anyone.

Sir, although humanity feels great pain upon the death of such relatives,<sup>3</sup> it cannot find any just cause for lamentation, because by nature, according to philosophy and following the sin of Adam according to faith, we all have an obligation to death. The debt itself is so imperative that we should not exacerbate this debt as we honor it. Because, as Seneca writes in *The Remedies Against Fortune*,

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3 Cf. Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum* II 1,4: „It is human at the death of one's dear one to shed tears as evidence of one's devotion; it is manly to place a limit upon them and to control them after they have flowed for some time" (Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum libri I-VIII*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo [Albany, 1975], 58). See also Seneca, *Ad Lucilium* XCIX 15, 21, *Epistulae Morales*, vol. 2, 138-43; Villena, *Obras*, 242-243.

remedios contra fortuna com esta cõdição entrei que sahisse, nos reçebemos<sup>107</sup> esta alma e esta vida como almoxerifes p.a [para] darmos della conta, e p.a<sup>108</sup> a tomar não ha tempo certo, mas quando quiser<sup>109</sup> este Rey cujos<sup>110</sup> oficiaes somos. Diz Seneca nas epistolas, q com a mesa posta avemos de esperar p.lla [pella] morte como por hospede<sup>111</sup> que senã vier ao jamtar vira a çena<sup>112</sup>, e assi de dia em dia, porque como dizem os legistas, não ha hi<sup>113</sup> cousa tam certa como a morte e<sup>114</sup> tam inçerta como a hora em que ha de ser, e portanto, na tragedia primeira diz a ninguem foi D.s [Deus] tam favoravel a q pmetesse [promettesse] hũ dia de vida, mas a XXXVIII c.<sup>115</sup> de Isaias (q Se [Seneca] nunca não vio en outrem)<sup>116</sup> diz que p.meteo D.s<sup>117</sup> a el Rey<sup>118</sup> Ezechias<sup>119</sup> sendo em artigo de morte XV anos<sup>120</sup> de vida e deste soo se lee<sup>121</sup> que fosse certos anos<sup>122</sup> seguro da morte. E<sup>123</sup> n.hum<sup>124</sup> [nenhum] outro<sup>125</sup> teve tal privilegio<sup>126</sup>, porque a primeira cousa que D.s falou

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107 rreçebemos [Alc].

108 pera [Alc].

109 quizer [Ev].

110 cujos [Ev].

111 ospede [Alc].

112 çea [Ev].

113 ahy [Ev].

114 nem [Ev].

115 aos XXXVI cap.os [Ev].

116 q Seneca nã vio [Alc].

117 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

118 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

119 Izechias [Alc].

120 quinze annos [Ev].

121 lê [Ev].

122 annos [Ev].

123 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

124 hũ [Ev].

125 houtro [Ev].

126 privilegio [Ev].

we enter life with the condition that we also leave it.<sup>4</sup> We receive this soul and this life as treasurers who must account for it. And concerning the date when payment is due, there is no fixed time. It occurs when the King, whose officers we are, desires it.<sup>5</sup> In his letters, Seneca maintains that we must wait for death like a table prepared for a host who, if he does not come for lunch, will arrive in time for dinner, and so on from day to day.<sup>6</sup> In fact, as logicians say, nothing is more certain than death, and nothing is more uncertain than the hour when it will take place. Hence, it is mentioned in the first tragedy that God was never so inclined toward someone that He promised him one day of life,<sup>7</sup> whereas chapter 38 of Isaiah, which Seneca could not know, relates that God promised to King Hezekiah, when he was at the point of death, fifteen more years of life.<sup>8</sup> He is the only person about whom one can read that he was certain of the number of years remaining before his death. No one else ever received that privilege.<sup>9</sup> God's first

4 „Sensualite sayth. Thou shalt dye. Reason answereth. This is the nature of man, and not a punyishment. Sen. Thou shalt dye. Rea. Upon the condition I entered that I shuld depart. Sen. Thou shalt dye. Rea. The lawe ciuile is, that thou shalt restore that thou hast receyued” (Ralph Graham Palmer, *Seneca's De Remediis fortuitorum and the Elizabethans* [Chicago, 1953], 31).

5 Cf. Petrarca *Rerum Familiarum* II 1.6-7: „The complaint [querela] therefore is not about the death of one man, but about the mortality of nature which introduced us into this life subject to the rule that we must exit at the command of the one who calls us back. 'But he was recalled before his time which seemed the painful result of a too hasty edict'. There is no fixed time in this life. We are debtors without limits. Now we cannot complain about swiftness as if we were asked before term to give back what we owe as soon as we accept it” (Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum*, 58). See also Seneca *Ad Marciam* 10, 2 and *Ad Polibium* X, 4-5, *Moral Essays*, vol. 2, 26-29, 384-87, and Cicero *Tusculanarum disputationum* I XXXIX, 93, *Tusculan Disputations*, 110-111.

6 Cf. Seneca *Ad Lucilium* LXXXII, 21-22: „But take Leonidas: how bravely did he address his men! He said: 'Fellow-soldiers, let us to our breakfast, knowing that we shall sup in Hades!' The food of these men did not grow lumpy in their mouths, or stick in their throats, or slip from their fingers; eagerly did they accept the invitation to breakfast, and to supper also...” (Seneca, *Ad Lucilium*, vol. 2, 254-57), cf. *Ad Marciam*, X, XXII-XXIII, *Ad Polibium*, I-II, IV, IX, XI, *Ad Lucilium*, XXIV, XXX, XXXVI, LXI, LXX, LXXVII-LXXVIII, LXXXII, XCII, XCIX, CI, CVII, CX.

7 Maybe Abravanel refers to these verses of *Hercules Furens*: „With heart too brave Alcides, thou doest haste to visit the grieving ghost; at the appointed time the Parcae come. No one may linger when they command, no one may postpone the allotted day; the urn receives the nations hurried to their doom” (Seneca, *Tragedies*, vol. 1, ed. F.J. Miller [London, 1969], 16-19, verses 186-91).

8 See Is 38.

9 Cf. *Rerum Seniles* I 5, 37-38: „Rather you should marvel that what I doubt ever happened throughout the centuries to anyone else but King Hezekiah has happened to you, so that through your prophet's pronouncement you are assured that several years of life still remain for you now. For they cannot be so few that there are not at least two! Thus, whereas no mortal can be certain of a single day or even an entire hour, you have a guarantee of years, unless perhaps we are to believe the man when he declares that death is near, but not when he predicts the length of your life” (Petrarch, *Letters on Old Age*, 21). See also Villena, *Obras*, 237.

e mandou a<sup>127</sup> Adam, logo foi sob<sup>128</sup> pena<sup>129</sup> de morte, e logo o ameaçou cõ ella quando se achou nu<sup>130</sup> lhe mandou dar vestiduras de peles de animais mortos<sup>131</sup> e logo o vestio de mortos. E<sup>132</sup> nos de mortos vestimos e<sup>133</sup> de mortos calçamos, e<sup>134</sup> de mortos comemos e<sup>135</sup> todos nossos exercicios sao sobre fundamento de morte: coma nas maldicões de Adam foi prometido que terra era e que terra se avia de tornar. Não temos logo querela da morte, pois faz o que deve, nem menos se pode dizer que toma os homens desaperebidos<sup>136</sup>, porque ella manda seus embaixadores; diante vem a mancebia tam<sup>137</sup> perigosa e fervente, e tam vezinha da morte, a velhice trabalhosa e fea, as dores com tanta paixão e martirio<sup>138</sup> e tam parentas della vimos cauzas<sup>139</sup>, vem as cans<sup>140</sup> bandeiras da morte como diz Tulio no livro da velhice, a primeira ora<sup>141</sup> que tivemos de vida (diz a tragedia) foi logo convertida em<sup>142</sup> morte.

E<sup>143</sup> pois das cousas<sup>144</sup> naturais não devemos tomar nojo, como da morte que he mais natural que todas se tomara<sup>145</sup>, mayormête<sup>146</sup> dos que vão a melhor lugar do<sup>147</sup> que qua tinham, e por seus mereçimentos esperão aver muito maior<sup>148</sup> gloria ante Deus, do q neste mundo de trabalhos podiam ter prazer nem bemaventurança, dos quais o S.or Conde deve ser. E alem de ser<sup>149</sup> morte cousa justa ao corpo e p.veitosa [proveitosa] a alma dos bons e tambem a lembrança della e remedio para muitos desconsolados, os quais se cuidassem que as suas

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127 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

128 sobre [Ev].

129 pña [Alc].

130 nuu [Alc].

131 e lhe ouve ds de dar vestiduras e de pelles de animais mortos ho vestio [Alc].

132 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

133 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

134 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

135 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

136 desapcebidos [Alc].

137 Not in BPE C III 2-20.

138 marteiro [Alc].

139 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

140 caãs [Alc].

141 hora [Ev].

142 a [Ev].

143 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

144 cauzas [Ev].

145 toma [Ev].

146 maiormte [Ev].

147 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

148 mayor [Alc].

149 sua [Ev].

words and commandment to Adam held within them the threat of the punishment of death. He threatened him with it immediately.<sup>10</sup> When He found Adam naked, He commanded at once that he be given clothes made of the skin of dead animals, and He immediately dressed him with dead bodies.<sup>11</sup> And so, we wear clothes and shoes made of dead bodies; we eat dead animals. All our actions relate to death. In the maledictions of Adam, God informs him that dust he is and unto dust he shall return.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we do not have any just cause to lament death – it does what it must do – nor can we aver that it takes man by surprise, because it dispatches its ambassadors in advance: it first sends youth, so dangerous and ardent, and then, so close to death, the tortured and ugly old age, the pains, the pangs, and the martyrdom, and much else that relates to death. The white banners of death come, as Tulio writes in his book *On Old Age*,<sup>13</sup> even our first hour of life, as is written in the Tragedy, is already transmuted into death.<sup>14</sup>

If one ought not to feel deep sorrow regarding natural events, how could one experience deep sorrow about death, which is more natural than anything else? Moreover, among the dead who are on their way to a place which is better than the one they once inhabited, and for their merits, expecting to receive more glory in front of God than they could have acquired in this world of sufferings through pleasure and good fortune,<sup>15</sup> one must include the Sir, the Count. Beyond death as the just and natural outcome for the body, and a useful one for the soul, the memory of death is a remedy for the many un-consolated; for those who might otherwise believe that their

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10 Gn 2:17.

11 Gn 3:21.

12 Gn 3:19.

13 The reference is unclear; it could refer to the end of the *De senectute*; see chaps. 19-23.

14 Petrarch writes in the letter *Rerum Familiarum* I 1: „Thus I experienced danger even before being born and I approached the very threshold of life under the auspices of death“ (Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum*, 8).

15 On this *topos* cf. Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum*, 58-61 (*Rerum Familiarum* II 1, 9-19). See also Villena, *Obras*, 235, 285.



desaventuras não avião cabo nem<sup>150</sup> fim, viviriam em muita penna<sup>151</sup> e perpetua desesperação, assim o diz Job e também a morte e<sup>152</sup> freio para<sup>153</sup> todo os vícios, a quem della tem continua lembrança. Lembrate da morte (diz o Ecclesiastes) e<sup>154</sup> não pecaras. Ensina Socrates a desprezar as cousas do mundo, dizendo: se es rijo, as doenças te enfraqueçeram; e se homem de prol, la vem a velhiçe q te fara feio, se rico azouguado he o dinheiro que fuge azinha [asinha] donde esta; se de boa linhagem isso he honrra de teus parentes e a elles louvas e não a ti, e ainda he louvor de homens mortos. Aristoteles levou outra regra no prim.o [primeiro] da Ethica, todos porem acharão a morte mui p.prio meio para tirar inveja e cobiça e todos os outros vícios. Assas he grande defeito<sup>155</sup> q o melhor e mais honrado Rei<sup>156</sup> e S.ñor do mundo ha de morrer como que não valha nada e no primeiro da vida qe hue o nascer e no fim della q he o morrer, todos os nascidos são iguais, em que não ha poder ter nem valer. Escrevesse que era costume em Persia quando novamente coroavão Rey entre<sup>157</sup> suas honrras e ceremonias vinha hũ pedreiro cõ çertas maneiras de pedras, e requerialhe parante todos, que de quais daquellas pedras queria q<sup>158</sup> lhe fizessem a sepultura, por que no mayor seu triumpho<sup>159</sup> não lhe esquecesse a morte, e lambrandosse della, todas aquellas cousas, emprestadas per tam pouco tempo, ligeiramente desprezasse. Outros Reis por este respeito costumavão ter nas suas mesas cabeças de homens mortos.

Todos estes exemplos são escuzados quãdo pello olho vemos oje<sup>160</sup> morrer meu pai e ontem meu irmão, e outro dia meu filho e meu amigo e de manham<sup>161</sup> morrerei eu. Vedes ia S.or que não fica<sup>162</sup> do Conde de Mira nem de quantos morrem, senão a fama<sup>163</sup> de seus famosos feitos ao mûdo por algum pouco tempo<sup>164</sup>, e o mereçimêto de suas virtuosas obras ante Deu; p.a que he loguo nojo do q se cobrar não pode, em vão

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150 no [Ev].

151 pña [Alc].

152 not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

153 pera [Alc].

154 not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

155 feito [Alc].

156 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

157 antre [Alc].

158 not in the BPE C III 2-20.

159 triumpho [Ev].

160 hoie [Ev].

161 manhã [Alc].

162 vedes que ja outra cousa não fica [Alc].

163 o nome [Alc].

164 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

misfortune has neither conclusion nor end, and so would live in great pain and continuous despair, as Job himself laments.<sup>16</sup> Death is also a deterrent against all the vices for the one who keeps it constantly in his memory. Remember death, says Ecclesiastes, and you shall not sin.<sup>17</sup> Socrates taught us to despise the material possessions of this world, saying: if you are vigorous, illness will weaken you; if you are a noble man, old age will make you vile; if you are rich, money is clever at disappearing; if you are high-born, the honor belongs to your parents and the praise is for them, not for you, and it is only praise for the dead. Aristotle highlighted another principle in the first [book] of the *Ethics*.<sup>18</sup> All consider death to be a very appropriate means of removing envy, greed, and all other vices. Its effect is so strong that the best and most honored king or nobles of the world must die as the lowest of mortals. In the first day of life which is birth, and at its end which is death, all are equally born. There is no power, no property, no merit.<sup>19</sup> It is written that there was a custom in Persia, when upon crowning a new king, the honors and ceremonies included bringing a bricklayer who came bearing different kinds of stones. The King was asked in front of the assembled crowd from which stone he wished his sepulcher to be fashioned. So that even in his moment of triumph he should not forget death. In remembering death he temperately disdains all that we borrow for such a short period of time. Other kings, for the very same reason, would display skulls of dead men on their tables. One does not even need these examples,<sup>20</sup> when one witnesses through one's own eyes today the death of my father, yesterday that of my brother, another day the death of my son or my friend, and tomorrow I will die myself. You see, nothing remains from the Count of Mira, nor from others who have died, but their celebrated actions in this world and the merit of their virtuous accomplishments before God. Why mourn that which cannot be recovered?

16 Cf. Jb 3:20-22, 7:1-10, 20-22, 14:1-15, 17:11-16.

17 There is no such verse in Ecclesiastes; this may refer to Ecclesiastes 7:2. See the entire seventh chapter.

18 Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099 a 30-1101 b 10, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham (London, 1982), 42-57.

19 Cf. Villena, *Obras*, 281.

20 Cf. Petrarca, *Rerum Familiarum* II 1, 30: „It is superfluous to add a number of examples..." (Petrarca, *Rerum familiarum*, 63).

he o sobejo sentimento<sup>165</sup> das couzas<sup>166</sup> passadas, lembraivos S.ñor de vos mesmo, pois vedes estes juguos<sup>167</sup>, e fazei (como a<sup>168</sup> Deus louvores fazeis) cabedal de vossa fama e consciencia. Lembrevos sua alma pois tanto a<sup>169</sup> amastes na vida, e vos amava q este he o maior e mais necessario beneficio q lhe podeis fazer. Lembrevos seus criados para acharem em vos sempre emparo e favor, e isto em maneira q fazendo bem a elles não façais a vos mal, por q carga de gente he carga de pobreza e<sup>170</sup> de pecados e cuidados cansaço sem p.veito, e<sup>171</sup> o que S.ñor melhor<sup>172</sup> sabeis que eu dizer posso. S.ñor<sup>173</sup> porque dos grandes e de nobre coração, ate a morte pertence trabalhar per acreçentar em seus estados, mayormête no q justamête<sup>174</sup> lhe pertence nã<sup>175</sup> he<sup>176</sup> divida cousa q algã<sup>177</sup> das cousas q o dito<sup>178</sup> S.ñor Cõde vosso Padre tinha, leixeis por negrigençia, pois justo titulo em ellas tendes, e graças a Deus, sois dellas mereçedor, e mui sabeo<sup>179</sup> para as bem<sup>180</sup> guovernarm como a serviço de Deus e del Rey nosso S.ñor e bem de vossa fama pertemçe, pello qual justamente e sem reprehensão, podeis e deveis requerer os adiantados q o dito S.ñor tinha, e sendo denegado não deveis por isso de<sup>181</sup> tomar fadiga nem nojo por q a honra nem a mingoa vos fara bem muj pouca mingoa. Procurai sossego e repouso por descanso de dez annos q ha q vos não deixao<sup>182</sup> trabalhos, e por consolardes aquelles S.ñres q tanta tristeza ora tem, a quem vosso prazer he ultimo remedio, e por criardes aqlles S.ñres que D.s faça tam grandes e discretos como seu paj, e de [dê] a gloria a seu Avõ<sup>183</sup>.

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165 he logo o sintmtto sobeio [Ev].

166 perdas [Alc].

167 iogos [Ev].

168 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

169 ho [Ev].

170 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

171 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

172 muj bem [Ev].

173 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

174 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

175 na [Ev].

176 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

177 nehua [Ev].

178 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

179 desposto [Alc].

180 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

181 Not in the BPE C III 2-20.

182 leixão [Alc].

183 Not in the Cod. Alc. 297.

Excessive sorrow over the past is in vain. Remember yourself, Sir, and now that you have understood this, convert your fame and conscience into an asset, as you would accumulate praises for God. Remember his soul that you loved so much during his life and that loved you. This is the greatest and most necessary act which would then honor his memory. Remember your servants, that they should always find in you protection and favor, but in a way that while benefiting them, you shall not be harmed by them, because the burden of people is a burden of poverty, sins and worries; a weariness without benefit, which is a thing that my Lord knows better than I could say. Sir, it is part of the duties of great and noble men to work to improve until death their position, particularly in what is rightly due your father. It is not right that you shall negligently abandon some of what belonged to your father, the Count. In fact, you have a just claim to them, and thanks to God, you deserve them and possess the wisdom necessary for administering them correctly, as is proper and necessary for the service of God and the King, as well as for the benefit of your fame. For that reason, with justice and without any hesitation, you could and should demand the offices which Sir, your father possessed, and should they be denied to you, you should be neither worried nor upset, because you shall not even minimally be lacking in honor. Attain calm and rest by virtue of a period of ten years in which labor will not leave you. This will enable you to console these noblemen who now have so much sorrow, and whose ultimate remedy is your happiness and your success. You will give rise to gentlemen that God shall make so great and discrete as your father, and God shall give glory to your ancestor.



First Hebrew Letter  
1472

## טופס כתב שלח הרב דון יצחק אברבנאל זלה"ה לכמהר"ר יחיאל מפיסה זלה"ה שנת לר"ב לפ"ק<sup>1</sup>.

למועד הזה בשנה האחרת<sup>2</sup> ראשי ראשי<sup>3</sup> נשוא פנים הוא הראש<sup>4</sup> יצ"ו הגיעתני אגרת שלומך ושמעה אזני ותבן לה<sup>5</sup> את כל התרגום<sup>6</sup> בתוך עם טמא שפתים<sup>7</sup>, תאנה הם מבקשים<sup>8</sup> להתעולל עלילות ברשע<sup>9</sup> להתגולל עליך ולהתנפל עליך<sup>10</sup> לשלול שלל ולבוז ב<sup>11</sup> על לא חמס בכפיד<sup>12</sup>. וכי ראיתי חמס וריב בעיר<sup>13</sup> ההוא מקום המשפט<sup>14</sup> כי אראה כי אזלת יד<sup>15</sup> המשקל והמשורה ותהי האמת נעדרת<sup>16</sup> ונבהלתי מראות<sup>17</sup>, וכי שמעתי ותרגז בטני<sup>18</sup> בהתאסף ראשי עם<sup>19</sup> נגדך, סאון סואן ברעש<sup>20</sup>

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|----|---|
| 1  | טקסט המוצג כאן נמצא בכתב יד פריס כ"ח H 83 A (מהמאה ה 16, מסי סרט בספרייה הלאומית F03167). |
| 2  | בראשית יז, כא.  |
| 3  | מלכים ב ד, יט.  |
| 4  | ישעיה ט, יד.  |
| 5  | איוב יג, א.   |
| 6  | מלכים ב יט, כו.   |
| 7  | ישעיה ו, ה.   |
| 8  | שופטים יד, ד.   |
| 9  | תהילים קמא, ד.  |
| 10 | בראשית מג, יח.  |
| 11 | יחזקאל לח, יב.  |
| 12 | איוב טז, יז.  |
| 13 | תהילים נה, י.   |
| 14 | קהלת ג, טז.   |
| 15 | דברים לב, לו.   |
| 16 | ישעיה נט, טו.   |
| 17 | שם כא, ג.   |
| 18 | חבקוק ג, טז.  |
| 19 | דברים לג, ה.  |
| 20 | ישעיה ט, ד.   |

Letter that Rabbi Don Isaac Abravanel, may his  
memory be blessed in the world to come, sent to  
his honor, our Master Rabbi Yehiel, may his  
memory be blessed in the world to come, the year  
5232 [1472].

Venerable is a leader like yourself,<sup>1</sup> may the LORD protect you. The letter you wrote telling me of your situation has arrived one year ago. My ears have heard and understood<sup>2</sup> your fury in the midst of a people of impure lips.<sup>3</sup> They sought an opportunity to perpetrate wickedness, to attack you and fall upon you,<sup>4</sup> to pillage and plunder,<sup>5</sup> although there is no injustice in your hands.<sup>6</sup> I see lawlessness and strife in the city,<sup>7</sup> in the place of justice.<sup>8</sup> I see that judgment and measure are gone and that truth is lacking.<sup>9</sup> I was alarmed when I understood your concern. I heard and I trembled when the heads of the people gathered against you, and boots stamped fiercely<sup>10</sup> to

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1 Is 9: 4.

2 Jb 13:1.

3 Is 6:5.

4 Gn 43:18.

5 Ez 38:12.

6 Jb 16:17.

7 Ps 55:10.

8 Eccl 3:16.

9 Is 59:15.

10 Is 9:4.



לחטות משפט גבר<sup>21</sup>, ירא וסר מרע<sup>22</sup> כמוך, לענות [לעוות] אדם בריבו<sup>23</sup> איש לבצעו<sup>24</sup> בוצע בצע<sup>25</sup>, נעויתי משמוע<sup>26</sup>, דאגתי מנהמת לבי<sup>27</sup>, להיות היהודים עתידים<sup>28</sup> בכל מקום אשר תדרוך כף רגליהם<sup>29</sup> לבוא בנקרת הצרות<sup>30</sup> ובנקיקי המציקות<sup>31</sup>, להיות כל איש צרר משתרר גם השתרר עליהם<sup>32</sup> ועל זרעם, כי הרשע מכתיר את הצדיק<sup>33</sup>, אמר אויב ארדוף אשיג אחלק שלל<sup>34</sup>, על כן יצא משפט מעוקל<sup>35</sup>. והנוגשים אצים<sup>36</sup>, שמו זהב כסלם [בסלם] לקחת אותנו לעבדים<sup>37</sup> לתת למסישה [למשיסה] יעקב וישראל לבוזזים<sup>38</sup>. [...] מסתכל הוית ההולכים בתורת ה'<sup>39</sup> החרדים אל דברו<sup>40</sup> עוברי בעמק הבכא<sup>41</sup> מרוח סעה מסער<sup>42</sup>, נפשם מחלה ונועה<sup>43</sup>, האנשים האלה שלמים הם אתנו<sup>44</sup>, ה' עליהם יראה<sup>45</sup>, המה יבאו אל מקדשו המה יקרבו אליו<sup>46</sup> ועליהם תבוא ברכת טוב<sup>47</sup>.

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21	איכה ג, לה.
22	משלי יד, טז.
23	איכה ג, לו.
24	ישעיה נז, יא.
25	משלי טז, כז.
26	ישעיה כא, ג.
27	תהילים לח, ט.
28	אסתר ח, יג.
29	דברים יא, כד.
30	שמות לג, כב.
31	ישעיה ז, יט.
32	במדבר טז, יג.
33	חבקוק א, ד.
34	שמות טז, ט.
35	חבקוק א, ד.
36	שמות ה, יג.
37	בראשית מג, יח.
38	ישעיה מב, כד.
39	תהילים קיט, א.
40	ישעיה סז, ה.
41	תהילים פד, ז.
42	שם נה, ט.
43	במדבר כז, לג.
44	בראשית לד, כא.
45	זכריה ט, יד.
46	יחזקאל מד, טז.
47	משלי כד, כה.

deny a man his right,<sup>11</sup> a man like you who fears and retreats from evil,<sup>12</sup> to wrong a man in his cause,<sup>13</sup> each one seeking his own advantage and pursuing ill-gotten gain.<sup>14</sup> I was distressed to hear about your misfortune, worry cried out in my heart<sup>15</sup> to see that Jews should be prepared, wherever the soles of their feet shall tread,<sup>16</sup> to approach the brink of misfortune and the depths of torment; that every Jew-baiter would make himself a Lord over them<sup>17</sup> and over their offspring. For the wicked does attack the righteous and the foe does say: „I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil”,<sup>18</sup> therefore right is altered and perverted.<sup>19</sup> The taskmasters are pressing.<sup>20</sup> They put money in their baskets whilst seizing us as slaves,<sup>21</sup> offering up Jacob and Israel as plunder. [...] <sup>22</sup> You have seen those who follow the teaching of the LORD<sup>23</sup> and tremble at His word<sup>24</sup> passing through the valley of Baca.<sup>25</sup> The sweeping winds and storm brought them disease and exile. These people are our friends,<sup>26</sup> the LORD watches over them. They shall enter into His sanctuary, be near Him,<sup>27</sup> and be blessed.

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11 Lam 3:35.

12 Prov 14:16.

13 Lam 3:36.

14 Prov 15:27.

15 Ps 38:9.

16 Dt 11:24.

17 Nm 16:13.

18 Ex 15:9.

19 Hab 1:4.

20 Ex 5:13.

21 Gn 43:18.

22 Text is missing.

23 Ps 119:1.

24 Is 66:5.

25 Ps 84:7.

26 Gn 34:21.

27 Ez 44:16.

גם אתה כאחד מהם<sup>48</sup>, ירא ה' במצוותיו חפץ מאוד<sup>49</sup>, תמים אתה בדרכך<sup>50</sup>, גם כי תלך בגיא צלמות<sup>51</sup>, עמל וכעס תביט<sup>52</sup> מגוי לא חסיד<sup>53</sup> בכל אשר תעמול תחת השמש<sup>54</sup> על ה' ועל משיחו<sup>55</sup>, שכרך הרבה מאוד<sup>56</sup>, ותחת הנחשת אשר לקחו מאתך זהב וכסף יבא<sup>57</sup>, ברכת ה' היא תעשיר<sup>58</sup>, ותחת און אשר עשו נגדך שעמלת בו ששון ושמחה ישיגוך<sup>59</sup>, צדק לפניך יהלך<sup>60</sup> לאור באור החיים<sup>61</sup> באור פני מלך<sup>62</sup> וזורעי עמל יקצרהו<sup>63</sup>.  
 גם אני לא אחשוך פי<sup>64</sup> הואלתי לדבר אל אדוני<sup>65</sup> על דברת בני האדם<sup>66</sup> את עמלינו ואת לחצינו<sup>67</sup>, מנהיגי הקהל הזה, שוכני סנה<sup>68</sup> התלאות כמטרה לחץ<sup>69</sup>. הט אונך ושמע<sup>70</sup>, <בת! מחוק> שומע אל אביונים<sup>71</sup>, התלאה אשר מצא<sup>72</sup> עם ה',

48	עובדיה א, יא.
49	תהילים קיב, א.
50	יחזקאל כח, טו.
51	תהילים כג, ד.
52	שם י, יד.
53	שם מג, א.
54	קהלת א, ג.
55	תהילים ב, ב.
56	בראשית טו, א.
57	ישעיה ס, יז.
58	משלי י, כב.
59	ישעיה לח, י.
60	תהילים פה, יד.
61	איוב לג, ל.
62	משלי טז, טו.
63	איוב ד, ח.
64	שם ז, יא.
65	בראשית יח, כז.
66	קהלת ג, יח.
67	דברים כו, ז.
68	שם לג, טז.
69	איכה ג, יב.
70	משלי כב, יז.
71	תהילים סט, לד.
72	שמות יח, ח.

You too are one of them, you who fear the LORD and are fervently devoted to His commandments.<sup>28</sup> You are blameless in your ways<sup>29</sup>. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death<sup>30</sup> and see misery and distress from an ungodly nation, for all your labor under the sun<sup>31</sup> for the LORD and His anointed,<sup>32</sup> your reward shall be very great.<sup>33</sup> For the brass which they took from you, the gold and the silver, shall be yours. It is the blessing of the LORD which enriches.<sup>34</sup> For the wrong they committed against you and which you endured, you shall obtain gladness and joy. Justice shall precede you<sup>35</sup> in the light of life, in the light of the King's face,<sup>36</sup> and those who sow mischief shall reap their just deserts.<sup>37</sup>

I too, will not refrain from speaking out.<sup>38</sup> I have taken upon myself to tell my Lord<sup>39</sup> of our toil and our distress<sup>40</sup> at the hands of the sons of men, we leaders of this community, who encounter many difficulties, suffering hardships, targets of their arrows. Incline your ear and listen,<sup>41</sup> listen to the needy,<sup>42</sup> to the hardships which have befallen the LORD's people, rebuke and

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28 Ps 112:1.

29 Ez 28:15.

30 Ps 23:4.

31 Eccl 1:3

32 Ps 2:2.

33 Gn 15:1.

34 Prov 10:22.

35 Ps 84:14.

36 Prov 16:15.

37 Jb 4:8.

38 Jb 7:11.

39 Gn 18:27.

40 Eccl 3:18.

41 Prov 22:17.

42 Ps 69:34.

תוכחה ונאצה<sup>73</sup> עשה עם [!] ה' לקהלת ארזילה ממלכות ישמעאלים. פקח עיניך<sup>74</sup>, פוקח עורים<sup>75</sup>, נשיא אלקים<sup>76</sup>, האזינה עדי<sup>77</sup> ושמע, ראה עני ועמלי<sup>78</sup> יום ליום ולילה<sup>79</sup>, רהבם עמל ואון<sup>80</sup>, לא שלותי ולא שקטתי ולא נחתי<sup>81</sup> זה ששה חודשים.

הנה אדוננו המלך יאריך ה' ימים על ממלכתו<sup>82</sup> עמד וימודד ארץ<sup>83</sup> המון עמים רבים<sup>84</sup> נשא נס לגוים<sup>85</sup> ופשו פרשיו ופרשיו מרחוק יבואו<sup>86</sup>. ויקבץ אניות הים ומלחיה<sup>87</sup> כל תופשי משוט כל חובל<sup>88</sup>, ויעבור ארץ אפריקאה, לרשת משכנות לא לו<sup>89</sup>, ויחן שם על עיר ארזילה, עיר מלוכה, רבתי בגוים<sup>90</sup>, ויורה שם חץ וישפוך עליה סוללה<sup>91</sup>, ואיש לא עמד בפניהם<sup>92</sup>. ויעלו העם העירה איש נגדו וילכדו את העיר<sup>93</sup> ואת הכל שללו, כסף וזהב אשר עמם<sup>94</sup> משה עד שלמון בזזו להם<sup>95</sup> כי המלך והקרוכים אליו היושבים ראשונה במלכות<sup>96</sup> בביזה לא שלחו את ידם<sup>97</sup>, ראה ויחר גוים

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73	ישעיה לו, ג.
74	משלי כ, יג.
75	תהילים קמו, ח.
76	בראשית כג, ו.
77	במדבר כג, יח.
78	תהילים כה, יח.
79	שם יט, ג.
80	שם צ, י.
81	איוב ג, כו.
82	דברים יז, כ.
83	חבקוק ג, ו.
84	ישעיהו יז, יב.
85	שם ה, כו.
86	חבקוק א, ח.
87	יחזקאל כז, ט.
88	שם כז, כט.
89	חבקוק א, ו.
90	איכה א, א.
91	ישעיה לו, לג.
92	יהושע כא, מב.
93	שם ו, כ.
94	דברים כט, טז.
95	יהושע ח, כז.
96	אסתר א, יד.
97	שם ט, י.

disdain<sup>43</sup> did the LORD bring to the community of Arzila from the Kingdom of the Ishmaelite. Open your eyes, open the eyes of the blind,<sup>44</sup> you who are chosen by God, heed me and hear, behold my affliction and suffering,<sup>45</sup> day to day and night<sup>46</sup> the best of them are trouble and sorrow. <sup>47</sup> I have had no repose, no quiet and no rest<sup>48</sup> for six months.

Our Lord the king [of Portugal], may God prolong his days in his kingdom, he who stands and shakes the earth,<sup>49</sup> the leader of many people, lifted up a sign to the nations,<sup>50</sup> his horsemen spread themselves and came from afar.<sup>51</sup> He gathered the ships of the sea with their mariners, all that handle the oar and all that pilot,<sup>52</sup> and crossed over to Africa to possess dwelling places that are not his.<sup>53</sup> He encamped there against the city of Arzila, the city of kings great among the nations,<sup>54</sup> he shot there arrows and laid siege against it.<sup>55</sup> Not one man withstood them.<sup>56</sup> The people went up into the city, every man straight in front of him, and they took the city and plundered all of it, they kept silver and gold, and took cattle and herbs as their booty.<sup>57</sup> The king and those who have access to the royal presence<sup>58</sup> did not lay hands on the spoil.<sup>59</sup> See, the gentiles were ill tempered

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43 Is 37:3.

44 Ps 146:8.

45 Ps 25:18.

46 Ps 19:3.

47 Ps 90:10.

48 Jb 3:26.

49 Hab 3:6.

50 Is 5:26.

51 Hab 1:8.

52 Ez 27:29.

53 Hab 1:6.

54 Lam 1:1.

55 Is 37:33.

56 Jos 21:42.

57 Jos 8:27.

58 Est 1:14.

59 Jos 8:27.

לעשות כרצון איש ואיש<sup>98</sup>. ויחרימו כל אשר בעיר מאיש ועד אישה<sup>99</sup>, עשרת אלפים במכסת נפשות<sup>100</sup> אשר למות למות ואשר לשבי לשבי<sup>101</sup>.

אחרי כן לקח לו מדינת טאנגיר שרתי במדינות<sup>102</sup>, מפחדו תרעש הארץ<sup>103</sup>. ועם היות קהל היהודים האמללים<sup>104</sup> היושבים בארזילה מפוזר ומפורד<sup>105</sup> בתוך העיר<sup>106</sup> מזה אחד ומזה אחד<sup>107</sup>, ורבים היו חללי חרב מבני קדר<sup>108</sup> אשר הלכו שבי לפני צר<sup>109</sup>, הנה בחמלת ה'<sup>110</sup> הפלא חסיד לו<sup>111</sup> ממכון שבתו השגיה<sup>112</sup> על גוזליו ירחף<sup>113</sup> ומבני ישראל לא מת אחד<sup>114</sup>. אז נבהלו אלופי אדום<sup>115</sup> כי ראו עולליהם יונקי שדים<sup>116</sup> וזקנים כבדו מזוקן<sup>117</sup> לא נפקד מהם איש<sup>118</sup>. ויהי כל נפש יוצאי העיר<sup>119</sup> בשביה נער וזקן<sup>120</sup> בנות ציון ואנשים מבני ישראל חמישים ומאתים<sup>121</sup> העטופים ברעב<sup>122</sup> ובצמא בערום ובחוסר כל<sup>123</sup>. וכי ראינו

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- 98 שם א, ח.
  - 99 יהושעו, כא.
  - 100 שמות יב, ד.
  - 101 ירמיהו מג, יא.
  - 102 איכה א, א.
  - 103 ירמיהו י, י.
  - 104 נחמיה ג, לד.
  - 105 אסתר ג, ח.
  - 106 בראשית יח, כד.
  - 107 שמות יז, יב.
  - 108 ישעיה כא, יז.
  - 109 איכה א, ה.
  - 110 בראשית יט, טו.
  - 111 תהילים ד, ד.
  - 112 שם לג, יד.
  - 113 דברים לב, יא.
  - 114 שמות ט, ו.
  - 115 שם טו, טו.
  - 116 יואל ב, טו.
  - 117 בראשית מח, י.
  - 118 במדבר לא, מט.
  - 119 שמות א, ה.
  - 120 איכה ב, כא.
  - 121 במדבר טז, ב.
  - 122 איכה ב, יט.
  - 123 דברים כח, מח.

and complied with every man's pleasure.<sup>60</sup> They utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, ten thousand the number of souls, those destined for captivity, to captivity, and those destined for the sword, to the sword.<sup>61</sup>

Afterwards the king seized the city of Tangier, great among the nations,<sup>62</sup> at his wrath the earth trembles.<sup>63</sup> As the community of these unfortunate Jews lived in Arzila, scattered and dispersed<sup>64</sup> within the city, one on the one side and the other on the other side,<sup>65</sup> although a great number were slain with the sword among the children of Kedar [Muslims] that went into captivity before the enemy,<sup>66</sup> the LORD being merciful,<sup>67</sup> He singled out the faithful.<sup>68</sup> From His dwelling place<sup>69</sup> He hovered over His young<sup>70</sup> and none of the children of Israel died.<sup>71</sup> Then were the chiefs of Edom alarmed<sup>72</sup> when they saw that from the babes suckling at the breast, to the elderly dim with age, not one was missing. All the souls that came out of the city in captivity, both young and old, daughters of Israel and the children of Israel: two hundred and fifty men, faint with hunger,<sup>73</sup> thirst, naked, and lacking everything.<sup>74</sup>

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- 60 Est 1:8.
  - 61 Jer 43:11.
  - 62 Lam 1:1.
  - 63 Jer 10:10.
  - 64 Est 3:8.
  - 65 Ex 17:12.
  - 66 Lam 1:5.
  - 67 Gn 19:16.
  - 68 Ps 4:4.
  - 69 Ps 33:14.
  - 70 Dt 32:11.
  - 71 Ex 9:6.
  - 72 Ex 15:15.
  - 73 Lam 2:19.
  - 74 Dt 28:48.



בני ציון היקרים<sup>126</sup> עם אלהי אברהם<sup>125</sup> <בני ישראל מחוק> המסולאים בפז<sup>126</sup> לעבדים ולשפחות נמכרו<sup>127</sup>, בכור עוני<sup>128</sup> וברזל באה נפשם<sup>129</sup>, וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה בחומר ובלבנים<sup>130</sup> ובכל המלאכה נמבזה ונמס<sup>131</sup> והנשים תשגלנה<sup>132</sup>, בנות ישראל בזויות [כזויות] מחוטבות תבנית היכל<sup>133</sup> עומדות בידי אכזרים לגלות ערותן<sup>134</sup>, והילדים אשר חנן ה'<sup>135</sup> ילדים אשר אין בהם כל מום<sup>136</sup>, הנטעים מגודלים בנעוריהם<sup>137</sup>, שאלו לחם פורש אין להם<sup>138</sup>, למדו לשונם<sup>139</sup> שם אלהים [אלהיו] אחרים אלהי נכר הארץ<sup>140</sup> ועינינו ראות וכלות אליהם כל היום<sup>141</sup>, הסכמנו יחידי הקהל לקרוא לשבויים דרור ולאסירים פקח קוח<sup>142</sup> לתת כופר נפשם<sup>143</sup> מכפסינו וזהבינו<sup>144</sup> אם מעט ואם הרבה<sup>145</sup>.  
 ולי אני עבדך<sup>146</sup> עם יתר המנהיגים צדיקים וטובים ממני הרימו מתוך העדה<sup>147</sup> שנים עשר נשיאים כמספר השבטי ישראל<sup>148</sup> לעשות מעשה

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- 124 איכה ד, ב.  
 125 תהילים מז, י.  
 126 איכה ד, ב.  
 127 אסתר ז, ד.  
 128 ישעיה מח, י.  
 129 תהילים קה, יח.  
 130 שמות א, יד.  
 131 שמואל א טו, ט.  
 132 ישעיה יג, טז.  
 133 תהילים קמד, יב.  
 134 ויקרא יח, ט.  
 135 בראשית לג, ה.  
 136 דניאל א, ד.  
 137 תהילים קמד, יב.  
 138 איכה ד, ד.  
 139 ירמיה ט, ד.  
 140 דברים לא, טז.  
 141 שם כח, לב.  
 142 ישעיה סא, א.  
 143 שמות ל, יב.  
 144 יחזקאל טז, יז.  
 145 קהלת ה, יא.  
 146 מלכים א א, כו.  
 147 במדבר יז, י.  
 148 מלכים א יח, לא.

We saw the precious sons of Zion,<sup>75</sup> the people of the God of Abraham,<sup>76</sup> once valued as gold,<sup>77</sup> now sold as bondmen and bondwomen,<sup>78</sup> in the furnace of affliction,<sup>79</sup> shackled in iron. They made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and in brick,<sup>80</sup> and in every manner of work that is contemptible and despised.<sup>81</sup> Their wives were raped. Daughters of Israel, that were as cornerstones carved in a palace,<sup>82</sup> are placed in the hands of cruel men, forced to uncover their nakedness.<sup>83</sup> And the children whom God has graciously given,<sup>84</sup> youths without blemish,<sup>85</sup> plants grown up in their youth,<sup>86</sup> they asked for bread, and none breaks it for them. Their tongues learned the names of other gods, the foreign gods of the land.<sup>87</sup> Our eyes looked unremittingly, straining to see them.<sup>88</sup> We, the leaders of the community, decided to proclaim release for the captives and liberation for the imprisoned,<sup>89</sup> to offer a ransom for their soul<sup>90</sup> with our silver and gold,<sup>91</sup> however much or little.<sup>92</sup>

I, your servant, and other leaders who are more just and better than I, selected twelve chiefs from the community, corresponding to the number of tribes of Israel, to perform the tasks

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75 Lam 4:2.

76 Ps 47:10.

77 Lam 4:2.

78 Est 7:4.

79 Is 48:10.

80 Ex 1:14.

81 1 Sam 15:9.

82 Ps 144:12.

83 Lv 18:9.

84 Gn 33:5.

85 Dn 1:4.

86 Ps 144:12.

87 Dt 31:16.

88 Dt 28:32.

89 Is 61:1.

90 Ex 30:12.

91 Ez 16:17.

92 Eccl 5:11.

הצדקה<sup>149</sup> להוציא ממסגר אסיר<sup>150</sup>, וישלחו אותי ואיש אחד מהמנהיגים מעיר אל עיר אנשים תמיד עוברים בארץ<sup>151</sup> להוציא את בני ישראל ממצרים<sup>152</sup>, לתת פדיון נפשם<sup>153</sup>. וכה אמרו אלינו השרידים ברוח נדיבה הרבו עלינו מאד מוהר ומתן<sup>154</sup>, ואתם כתבו על היהודים האלה כטוב בעיניכם<sup>155</sup> והוציאו כל איש ואשה מיד עושק<sup>156</sup>, עני ואביון מגוזלו<sup>157</sup>, לא תשאר פרסה<sup>158</sup>, וכסף משנה קחו בידכם<sup>159</sup> והביאו את כל אחיכם מכל חגים מנחה לה<sup>160</sup>, בכסף יגאלו<sup>161</sup>.

שנינו אנחנו בדרך נחנו ה<sup>162</sup> על דבר כבוד שמו<sup>163</sup>, ויתן אותנו לרחמים לפני כל שוביהם<sup>164</sup>, ובכסף מלא<sup>165</sup> בימים או עשור<sup>166</sup> פדינו מאה וחמישים איש<sup>167</sup>, וגם פה העירה ובשאר המדינות הן רבים עתה עם הארץ<sup>168</sup> פדויי ה<sup>169</sup> על ידינו כיד ה' הטובה עלינו<sup>170</sup> מאתים ועשרים נפשות ויקר פדיון נפשם<sup>171</sup> עשרת אלפים כפולות זהב. ידנו שפכו את הדם הזה<sup>172</sup>, איש כמתנת ידו<sup>173</sup> כל נדיב לב

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- 149 ישעיה לב, יז.  
 150 שם מב, ז.  
 151 יחזקאל לט, יד.  
 152 שמות ו, כז.  
 153 תהילים מט, ט.  
 154 בראשית לד, יב.  
 155 אסתר ח, ח.  
 156 ירמיה כא, יב.  
 157 תהילים לה, י.  
 158 שמות י, כז.  
 159 בראשית מג, יב.  
 160 ישעיה סו, כ.  
 161 שם נב, ג.  
 162 בראשית כד, כז.  
 163 תהילים עט, ט.  
 164 שם קו, מו.  
 165 בראשית כג, ט.  
 166 שם כד, נה.  
 167 נחמיה ה, יז.  
 168 שמות ה, ה.  
 169 ישעיה נא, יא.  
 170 עזרא ז, ט.  
 171 תהילים מט, ט.  
 172 דברים כא, ז.  
 173 שם טז, יז.

of righteousness,<sup>93</sup> and to release the prisoners from the dungeon.<sup>94</sup> I and someone else from among the leaders were sent from one city to another, men who continually traverse the land<sup>95</sup> to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt<sup>96</sup> and pay the ransom for their souls.<sup>97</sup> So those who remained told us: with a generous spirit request a bountiful dowry, gifts,<sup>98</sup> and pay concerning these Jews [of Arzila] as you see fit. Free every man and woman from the hand of the oppressor,<sup>99</sup> the poor and the needy from those who ravage them. Not a hoof shall remain behind.<sup>100</sup> Take double money in your hand<sup>101</sup> and bring all your brethren out of all the nations as an offering unto the LORD,<sup>102</sup> that they shall be redeemed by money.<sup>103</sup>

The LORD has led us both on our paths<sup>104</sup> for the sake of the glory of His name, and He inclined all their captors to be kindly disposed toward us.<sup>105</sup> For the full price, within a few days or ten, we ransomed one hundred and fifty men, and so here in the city, and in all the other cities, the people of that land [Arzila] are now many, the ransomed of the LORD,<sup>106</sup> through us and thanks to the benevolent care of the LORD for us,<sup>107</sup> two hundred and twenty persons and the cost of the ransom of their souls<sup>108</sup> – ten thousand doubloons in gold. Our hands did shed this blood,<sup>109</sup> each man gave as he was able,<sup>110</sup> everyone with a willing heart brought the

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93 Is 32:17.

94 Is 42:7.

95 Ez 39:14.

96 Ex 6:27.

97 Ps 49:9.

98 Gn 34:12.

99 Jer 21:12.

100 Ex 10:26.

101 Gn 43:12.

102 Is 66:20.

103 Is 52:3.

104 Gn 24:27.

105 Ps 106:46.

106 Is 51:11.

107 Ezr 7:9.

108 Ps 49:9.

109 Dt 21:7.

110 Dt 16:17.

יביאו את תרומת ה' <sup>174</sup>, הבכור כבכורתו והצעיר כצעירתו <sup>175</sup> בצע כסף לא לקחנו <sup>176</sup> מממלכה ומעם אחר <sup>177</sup>.

ויען וביען העניים ומרודים אלה לא נבדק בידם מאומה מן החרם <sup>178</sup> ערום הלכו מבלי לבוש <sup>179</sup> ואין להם לאכול וכלם גוי אשר לא תשמע לשונו <sup>180</sup> הוצרכנו לבקש מפה ומפה איש ואשתו הבנות בנותיו והבנים בניו <sup>181</sup> להושיב יחידים ביתה <sup>182</sup> להשיב לב אבות על בנים <sup>183</sup> ולעשות להם בתים וכלים מכלים שונים <sup>184</sup> בגד ללבוש ולתת לפניהם דבר יום ביומו בר ולחם <sup>185</sup> וככה יהיה שנתים ימים עד אשר ידעו מפשט אלהי הארץ <sup>186</sup> ואף בניהם ילמדו שפה אחת דברים אחדים <sup>187</sup> מעם לועז <sup>188</sup>.

והלילה הזאת ליל שמורים הוא <sup>189</sup> כולם בחצריהם ובטירותם <sup>190</sup> יודו >לה' חסדו מחוק < לה' כי טוב <sup>191</sup>, יחד ישאו קולם <sup>192</sup> ויריעו כל בני אלהים <sup>193</sup>, עבדים היינו זה ימים מועטים ויוציאנו ה' אלהינו <sup>194</sup> מעבדות לחירות ומשעבוד לגאולה <sup>195</sup>, ועתה הננו אנחנו ככל המון ישראל <sup>196</sup> בני חורין <sup>197</sup>. מוציא

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- 174 שמות לה, ה.  
175 בראשית מג, לג.  
176 שופטים ה, יט.  
177 תהילים קה, יג.  
178 דברים יג, יח.  
179 איוב כד, ז.  
180 דברים כח, מט.  
181 בראשית לא, מג.  
182 תהילים סח, ז.  
183 מלאכי ג, כד.  
184 אסתר א, ז.  
185 בראשית מה, כג.  
186 מלכים ב יז, כו.  
187 בראשית יא, א.  
188 תהילים קיד, א.  
189 שמות יב, מב.  
190 בראשית כה, טו.  
191 תהילים קו א, הגדה של פסח.  
192 ישעיה כד, יד.  
193 איוב לח, ז.  
194 דברים ו כא, הגדה של פסח.  
195 הגדה של פסח.  
196 מלכים ב ז, יג.  
197 הגדה של פסח.

LORD's offering,<sup>111</sup> the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth.<sup>112</sup> We took no money from the kingdom or from any other people.<sup>113</sup>

Actually, nothing of the property of these impoverished individuals that was doomed stuck to their hand.<sup>114</sup> They were naked for lack of clothing.<sup>115</sup> They had nothing to eat and they were all a people whose language you do not understand. We had to inquire from husbands and wives if the daughters were indeed their daughters, and the children their children,<sup>116</sup> so that we might restore the lonely to their homes,<sup>117</sup> reunite parents with children,<sup>118</sup> and provide them with necessary items, diverse one from another, clothing to wear, and to give them each day corn and bread. It will take two years until they know the rules of the God of the land<sup>119</sup> and until their sons of Israel learn the same language and words of a strange [Portuguese] people.<sup>120</sup>

And on this night which is a night of vigil,<sup>121</sup> in their villages and encampments,<sup>122</sup> they shall praise the LORD for He is good.<sup>123</sup> Together they shall lift up their voices<sup>124</sup> and all the sons of God shall shout for joy:<sup>125</sup> we were slaves for a short time and the LORD led us out<sup>126</sup> of slavery into freedom and out of bondage into redemption,<sup>127</sup> and now we are, as all of the multitude of Israel, free.<sup>128</sup> He who frees

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111 Ex 35:5.

112 Gen 43:33.

113 Ps 105:13.

114 Dt 13:18.

115 Jb 24:7.

116 Gn 31:43.

117 Ps 68:7.

118 Mal 3:24.

119 2 Kgs 17:26.

120 Ps 114:1.

121 Ex 12:42.

122 Gn 25:16.

123 Ps 106:1 (Haggadah of Passover).

124 Is 24:14.

125 Jb 38:7.

126 Dt 6:21 (Haggadah of Passover).

127 Haggadah of Passover.

128 Haggadah of Passover.

אסירים בכושרות<sup>198</sup>, יוציא מכור הברזל<sup>199</sup> העניים והאביונים<sup>200</sup> הנשאים מהם בשבי והמה כשלשים איש, ה' צבאות יגן עליהם<sup>201</sup>. והנה לא נפדו עד הנה כי נפלו ביד אדונים קשים<sup>202</sup> ובעונות אבותם<sup>203</sup> אותם אדוניהם הלכו בדרך רחוקה<sup>204</sup> מעבר לים<sup>205</sup> ואינם פה עמנו היום<sup>206</sup>, והיה כבואם בוא יבוא ולא יאחר<sup>207</sup> פדותם בעייה המוציא אותם מתחת סבלות מצרים<sup>208</sup>, נפוצות יהודה יקבץ<sup>209</sup> ממוצא וממערב<sup>210</sup> ולא ישמע עוד חמס בארצינו שוד ושבר בגבולינו<sup>211</sup> ולא יתן המשחית לבא אל ביתינו לנגוף<sup>212</sup>.

הן אלה קצות הדברים<sup>213</sup> היו עלי לטרוח<sup>214</sup> טרחם ומשאם כל היום וכל הלילה לא יחשו<sup>215</sup>, ומה שמץ דבר<sup>216</sup> הגדתי לפניך יודע דעת עליון<sup>217</sup>. סוף דבר<sup>218</sup> בכל ממלכות<sup>219</sup> הארץ הלזו<sup>220</sup> לא שמענו ולא האזנו עין לא ראתה<sup>221</sup> עם רב מישראל<sup>222</sup> כזה עבד עבדים

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- 198 תהילים סח, ו.  
 199 דברים ד, כ.  
 200 ישעיה מא, יז.  
 201 זכריה ט, טו.  
 202 ישעיה יט, ד.  
 203 דניאל ט, טז.  
 204 במדבר ט, י.  
 205 דברים ל, יג.  
 206 שם כט, יד.  
 207 חבקוק ב, ג.  
 208 שמות ו, ז.  
 209 ישעיה יא, יב.  
 210 תהילים עה, ז.  
 211 ישעיה ס, יח.  
 212 שמות יב, כג.  
 213 אויב כו, יד.  
 214 ישעיה א, יד.  
 215 שם סב, ו.  
 216 אויב כו, יד.  
 217 במדבר כד, טז.  
 218 קהלת יב, יג.  
 219 דברי הימים ב, ו.  
 220 יחזקאל לו, לה.  
 221 ישעיה סד, ג.  
 222 במדבר כא, ו.

prisoners and brings them to prosperity<sup>129</sup> shall now bring forth and liberate the poor and the needy,<sup>130</sup> those remaining in captivity. They number about thirty. The LORD of hosts will protect them.<sup>131</sup> They are not yet ransomed because they have fallen into the hands of harsh masters.<sup>132</sup> Because of the iniquities of their masters, they left for a long journey to the other side of the sea and so they are not with us today.<sup>133</sup> Their return will surely come, and their redemption will not be delayed,<sup>134</sup> with the help of the LORD who shall deliver them from the burdens of the Egyptians<sup>135</sup> and assemble the dispersed of Israel<sup>136</sup> from the East and from the West. Violence shall no more be heard in the land, neither desolation nor destruction within their borders,<sup>137</sup> and He will not suffer the destroyer to come into our houses to smite us.<sup>138</sup>

These are but glimpses of the burdens I bore through the days and nights without respite. What I have related to you is but a mere whisper, you who possess the knowledge of the Most High.<sup>139</sup> When all is said and done, throughout the entire kingdom of Portugal we have not heard nor seen that many people of Israel who are the lowest of

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129 Ps 68:7.

130 Is 41:17.

131 Zec 9:15.

132 Is 19:4.

133 Dt 29:14.

134 Hab 2:3.

135 Ex 6:7.

136 Ex 6:7.

137 Ps 60:18.

138 Ex 12:23.

139 Nm 24:16.



יהיה<sup>223</sup> ביום שבות זרים חילו<sup>224</sup> ונשים רבות מיהודה כאלה שבזיות חרב<sup>225</sup> ועל כן כל השומע בשם ישראל יכנה<sup>226</sup> תצלינה שתי אזניו<sup>227</sup>, ספקו כפים ויניעו ראשם<sup>228</sup>, יהי שם ה' מבורך<sup>229</sup> אתוהי כמה רברבין ותמהוהי כמה תקיפין<sup>230</sup>.  
גדול העצה<sup>231</sup> ייא הנה אדונינו המלך<sup>232</sup> ישמח בה<sup>233</sup> שולח אל מעלת האפיפיור מלאכים לפניו<sup>234</sup> לבא להשתחות לו לשמו ועפר רגליו ילחכו<sup>235</sup> כפעם בפעם בהמשח הגדול שישתחו לו כל מלאכיו, ומלאכיו המה השר מאד נעלה<sup>236</sup> לופו די אלמדה והחכם עיניו בראשו<sup>237</sup> איש טוב זה<sup>238</sup> הדוקטור ג'ואן שיזירה [טיזירה] המוביל כתבי אליך, והמה רואי פני המלך הקרובים אליו<sup>239</sup>. ויען הדוקטור בטוב לבבו בין דין לדין בין נגע לנגע<sup>240</sup> דובר שלום לכל זרעינו<sup>241</sup>, תמיד ידרוש שלומם וטובתם<sup>242</sup> כי יש לאל

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- 223 בראשית ט, כה.  
224 עובדיה א, יא.  
225 בראשית לא, כו.  
226 ישעיה מד, ה.  
227 שמואל א ג, יא.  
228 איכה ב, טו.  
229 תהילים קיג, ב.  
230 דניאל ג, לג.  
231 ירמיה לב, יט.  
232 שמואל ב טו, טו.  
233 תהילים קד, לד.  
234 בראשית לב, ד.  
235 ישעיה מט, כג.  
236 תהילים מז, י.  
237 קהלת ב, יד.  
238 שמואל ב יח, כו.  
239 אסתר א, יד.  
240 דברים יז, ח.  
241 אסתר י, ג.  
242 דברים כג, ז.

slaves, when strangers carried away his army,<sup>140</sup> or so many women of Judah taken captive by the sword.<sup>141</sup> Upon hearing that, the ears of the Jews shall tingle.<sup>142</sup> They will clap their hands and shake their heads:<sup>143</sup> blessed be the name of the LORD!<sup>144</sup> How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders!<sup>145</sup>

Great in counsel,<sup>146</sup> may God preserve you, our Lord the king, he will rejoice in the LORD,<sup>147</sup> sends his messengers before him<sup>148</sup> to the Pope to bow down to him with their face to the earth, and lick the dust of his feet.<sup>149</sup> From time to time, at the anointing, all the messengers of the king bow down to the Pope. His messengers are the greatly exalted Prince Lopo de Alemeida,<sup>150</sup> and a wise, perceptive and good man, Doctor Joao Teixeira,<sup>151</sup> who brings this letter to you. Both have access to the royal presence and are closest to him.<sup>152</sup> The doctor in his goodness, knowing how to distinguish between good and evil, interceding for the welfare of all our kinsmen,<sup>153</sup> always seeking our peace and prosperity<sup>154</sup> because his hand is guided by

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140 Ob 1:11.

141 Gen 31:26.

142 1 Sam 3:11.

143 Lam 2:15.

144 Ps 113:2.

145 Dn 3:33.

146 Jer 32:19.

147 Ps 104:34.

148 Gn 32:4.

149 Is 49:23.

150 On Lopo de Almeida (1416-86), see the introduction and also, for a complete description of his life, Joaquim Candeia Silva, *O Fundador do „Estado Português da Índia“ D. Francisco de Almeida* (Lisboa, 1996), 29-39.

151 On João Teixeira (active in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century) and on the reading of his name in the manuscript, see the introduction and also Barbosa Machado, *Biblioteca Lusitana*, vol. 2 (Lisboa, 1752), 773-74; Nuno J. Espinosa Gomes da Silva, *Humanismo e Direito em Portugal no Século XVI* (Lisoba, 1964), 120-25.

152 Est 1:14.

153 Est 10:3.

154 Dt 23:7.

ידו<sup>243</sup>, נפלאתה אהבתו אלי<sup>244</sup> אענדהו עטרת לי<sup>245</sup>, ובעבור שהוא יהיה שם לפה<sup>246</sup>,  
 הוא ידבר אל האפיפיור, חילינו פניו<sup>247</sup> שידבר בעניני הקהלות, ישמרם שומר ישראל<sup>248</sup>  
 ויוכיח לפניו על פי התורה לתת את שאלתינו ובקשתינו<sup>249</sup> והיה בעבור כבודו גזר אומר  
 וידור נדר<sup>250</sup> לדבר טוב על ישראל<sup>251</sup>, וצרור שאלותינו ובקשותינו לקח בידו להיות לו  
 לזכרון<sup>252</sup>, אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אדוני<sup>253</sup>, דבר נא באזני<sup>254</sup> האנשים האלה הם מדברך  
 נא<sup>255</sup> דברי שלום ואמת<sup>256</sup>, ואמרת שמכנף הארץ זמירות שמעת<sup>257</sup>, שיר למעלות<sup>258</sup>  
 למלך אדונינו, והיותו עושה משפט וצדקה לכל עמו<sup>259</sup>, אוהב את היהודים, מלך במשפט  
 יעמיד ארץ<sup>260</sup>, ושבשכר מצוה זו כל הגוים יעבדוהו<sup>261</sup>, יהי שמו לעולם וירד מים עד ים<sup>262</sup>  
 ותנשא מלכותו<sup>263</sup>, למען ידעו כי יש אלהים בישראל<sup>264</sup> ויש אתנו יודע עד מה<sup>265</sup> ובכל מקום  
 אנשי חיל יראי אלהים אנשי אמת<sup>266</sup> מבני ישראל המה. ולדוקטור לבדו

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- 243 בראשית לא, כט.  
 244 שמואל ב א, כו.  
 245 איוב לא, לו.  
 246 שמות ד, טז.  
 247 דניאל ט, יג.  
 248 תהילים קכא, ד.  
 249 אסתר ה, ז.  
 250 בראשית כח, כ.  
 251 במדבר י, כט.  
 252 שמות יב, יד.  
 253 אסתר ה, ח.  
 254 שמות יא, ב.  
 255 שיר השירים ד, ג.  
 256 אסתר ט, ל.  
 257 ישעיה כד, טז.  
 258 תהילים קכא, א.  
 259 שמואל ב ח, טו.  
 260 משלי כט, ד.  
 261 תהילים עב, יא.  
 262 שם עב, ח.  
 263 במדבר כד, ז.  
 264 שמואל א יז, מו.  
 265 תהילים עד, ט.  
 266 שמות יח, כא.

God,<sup>155</sup> wonderful is his love for me,<sup>156</sup> I would bind him unto me as a crown<sup>157</sup> and he shall be a spokesman for me.<sup>158</sup> He will speak to the Pope. We have sought his favour,<sup>159</sup> to speak to the Pope of the affairs of the Jewish communities, may the Guardian of Israel<sup>160</sup> protect them, and to convince him, according to the Torah, to respond to our petitions and requests. On his honor he decided to take a vow<sup>161</sup> to speak well concerning Israel.<sup>162</sup> He accepted our list of requests and petitions to serve as a reminder to him when he is in the presence of the Pope. If it pleases your Majesty, speak to these men with your beautiful gift of speech,<sup>163</sup> words of peace and truth,<sup>164</sup> and you shall say that from the ends of the earth you have heard songs,<sup>165</sup> songs in honor of the king our master [the king of Portugal], who dispenses justice and righteousness unto all his people,<sup>166</sup> and loves the Jews, a king who lays the foundations of justice in his land,<sup>167</sup> and in reward for his meritorious deeds, all the nations shall serve him.<sup>168</sup> May his name endure forever,<sup>169</sup> he shall rule from sea to sea and his kingdom shall be exalted. They will know that there is a God in Israel,<sup>170</sup> that there is among us someone who understands what is happening and that everywhere there are capable, pious, and trustworthy men<sup>171</sup> among the sons of Israel. And particularly to the

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155 Gn 31:29.

156 2 Sam 1:26.

157 Jb 31:36.

158 Ex 4:16.

159 Dn 9:13.

160 Ps 121:4.

161 Gn 28:20.

162 Nm 10:29.

163 Song 4:3.

164 Est 9:30.

165 Is 24:16.

166 2 Sam 8:15.

167 Prov 29:4.

168 Ps 72:11.

169 Ps 72:17.

170 1 Sam 17:46.

171 Ex 18:21.

אתה תדבר דברים טובים נחומים<sup>267</sup> ישא מדברך<sup>268</sup> חן וכבוד<sup>269</sup>, כי הוא רוחי ונשמת<sup>270</sup>, אוהב טהור לב<sup>271</sup> גדול ליהודים<sup>272</sup>, ואשר ידרוש מאתך תהלתי<sup>273</sup>, אותה אבקש שבטובתך תנחהו תעשה לו עזר כנגדו<sup>274</sup>, האם אין עזרתי בי<sup>275</sup> ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת<sup>276</sup> והוא יגיד לך בסתר את בקשתינו אשר אתו ואת הקורות אותנו, ואיש אל ידע<sup>277</sup> בכל אלה מהגוים האחרים.

רב העלילה<sup>278</sup> אתה צוית פקודך שאשלח לכבודך פני הכתובים לרד"ק זלה"ה וחצגתי לפניך<sup>279</sup> עטרת זקנים אשר עשיתי ופני ספר אלה דברים אשר אני עושה, והנה לבד זה מצאתי<sup>280</sup> מפני הכתובים מלבד ספר תהלות אשר הוא הוא אצלכם, וטוב אחרית הספר מראשיתו<sup>281</sup> פני חדש לספר איוב, מה מתוק מדבש<sup>282</sup>, חברו חכם חרשים<sup>283</sup> היה בימי במלכות אראגון, והוא מתושבי הארץ הלזו<sup>284</sup>, קחנו והיה אתך בכל אשר תאמר. ופני ספר אלה הדברים לא נשלם עדנה בסבת שבת<sup>285</sup> הבית מעט ומסעי יסערו להפיצני<sup>286</sup>

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- 267 זכריה א, יג.
  - 268 דברים לג, ג.
  - 269 תהילים פד, יב.
  - 270 איוב לד, יד.
  - 271 משלי כב, יא.
  - 272 אסתר י, ג.
  - 273 תהילים כב, כו.
  - 274 בראשית ב, יח.
  - 275 איוב ו, יג.
  - 276 בראשית מז, כט.
  - 277 שמואל א כא, ג.
  - 278 ירמיה לב, יט.
  - 279 בראשית מג, ט.
  - 280 קהלת ז, כט.
  - 281 שם ז, ח.
  - 282 שופטים יד, יח.
  - 283 ישעיה ג, ג.
  - 284 יחזקאל לו, לה.
  - 285 תהילים כו, ד.
  - 286 חבקוק ג, יד.

doctor speak kind and comforting words<sup>172</sup> so that he shall receive from your words grace and glory,<sup>173</sup> because he is my spirit and my breath.<sup>174</sup> He is a friend pure in heart,<sup>175</sup> highly esteemed by the Jews.<sup>176</sup> What he will ask from you, consider it as my honor. <sup>177</sup> I beg you that in your goodness you assist him well. I am myself unable to help in this circumstance. Please deal kindly and steadfastly with me.<sup>178</sup> He will tell you in secret of our request which he brings with him and what has happened with us. Let no man know any thing, no man from the other nations.

A man of your great accomplishment,<sup>179</sup> you requested that I, your servant, send to your Excellency the commentary on *Ktuvim*<sup>180</sup> by Rabbi David Kimhi, may his memory be blessed in the world to come, and I am presenting before you *The Crown of the Elders* which I wrote, along with the commentary on Deuteronomy, which is not complete. Aside from these books, I have found from the commentary on *Ktuvim* only the one volume on the Psalms which you already have, and the end is better than the beginning.<sup>181</sup> I have also found a new commentary on the Book of Job, which is sweeter than honey.<sup>182</sup> A mysterious sage wrote it when he dwelt in the Kingdom of Aragon. He now lives in the land of Luso [Portugal]. Take this book and it shall be an aid to you. The commentary on Deuteronomy is not yet done because I have had so little time at home. My travels always came as a whirlwind, scattering me<sup>183</sup> away from

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172 Zec 1:13.

173 Ps 84:12.

174 Jb 34:14.

175 Prov 22:11.

176 Est 10:3.

177 Ps 22:26.

178 Gn 47:29.

179 Jer 32:19.

180 The third section of the Bible according to the rabbinic canon.

181 Eccl 7:8.

182 Jgs 14:18.

183 Hab 3:14.

מדלתות העיון ולא יכולתי. והיה בהניח <בתת מחוק> ה' <שנת מחוק> לי<sup>287</sup> לא אתן שנת לעיני<sup>288</sup> עד הקימי עד עשותו<sup>289</sup> ואביא את אשמו לאדוני<sup>290</sup> וכל הדבר הקשה<sup>291</sup> יעלה על מזבחך<sup>292</sup> לרצון לכפר עליו<sup>293</sup> וסמכת את ידך עליו<sup>294</sup>.  
והנה מאמר עטרת זקנים הלא מצער הוא<sup>295</sup> ותקטן עוד בעיניך<sup>296</sup> המגביהי לשבת<sup>297</sup>, וראוי היה על היותו מעט מעט אגרשנו מפניך<sup>298</sup>, אבל מה אעשה, ותשורה אין להביא מיגיע כפי לפניך איש האלהים<sup>299</sup>, על כן קדמתי<sup>300</sup> לשלוח לך למשרה המאמר הקטן, עיניך תחזינה מישרים<sup>301</sup> ועיניך עליו מראשו לסופו וכל דבר לא יכחד ממך<sup>302</sup>, וממנו תראה הדרך אשר באתי בו בפני התורה, האם אני הולך בדרך כל הארץ<sup>303</sup> או הייתי עוקש דרכים<sup>304</sup>, ואולי הגיון לבי לפניך<sup>305</sup> לא הדריכוהו בני שחץ<sup>306</sup> ימצא חן בעיני אדוני<sup>307</sup>.  
והספר הזה מנחה היא שלוחה לאדוני<sup>308</sup> קח נא את ברכתי אשר הובאת לך<sup>309</sup>,

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- 287 דברים כה, יט.
  - 288 תהילים קלב, ד.
  - 289 ירמיה כג, כ.
  - 290 ויקרא ה, ו.
  - 291 שמות יח, כו.
  - 292 הושע י, ח.
  - 293 ויקרא א, ד.
  - 294 במדבר כז, יח.
  - 295 בראשית יט, כ.
  - 296 שמואל ב ז, יט.
  - 297 תהילים קיג, ה.
  - 298 שמות כג, ל.
  - 299 שמואל א ט, ו.
  - 300 יונה ד, ב.
  - 301 תהילים יז, ב.
  - 302 שמואל ב יח, יג.
  - 303 יהושע כג, יד.
  - 304 משלי כח, ו.
  - 305 תהילים יט, טו.
  - 306 איוב כח, ח.
  - 307 בראשית מז, כה.
  - 308 שם לב, יט.
  - 309 שם לג, יא.

the gates of study and so I could not finish it. When the LORD grants me rest,<sup>184</sup> I will not cease to work until I have completed it and have brought my offering unto my Lord,<sup>185</sup> and until all the difficult matters have been reviewed and blessed by you.

Here is the tract of *The Crown of the Elders*, it is so little, and it will seem even smaller to you, enthroned on high.<sup>186</sup> And it would have been better, it being so small, that I not present it at all, but what shall I do? There is nothing else I can bring as a gift to you, man of God.<sup>187</sup> That is why I anticipated and sent you this small tract as a present. Let your eyes judge impartially,<sup>188</sup> read it from beginning to end, and nothing shall be hidden from you.<sup>189</sup> You will see the manner in which I interpret the Torah, if I am presenting things as they should be, following the accepted path, or if my work deviates from this path. Perhaps the thoughts of my heart will be acceptable to you,<sup>190</sup> since the proud beast has not trodden on it,<sup>191</sup> and it will find favour in the eyes of my Lord.<sup>192</sup> This book is a present sent unto my Lord.<sup>193</sup> Please accept my present which has been brought to you as a blessing.<sup>194</sup>

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184 Dt 25:19.

185 Lv 5:6.

186 Ps 113:5.

187 1 Sam 9:7.

188 Ps 17:2.

189 2 Sam 18:13.

190 Ps 19:15.

191 Jb 28:8.

192 Gn 47:25.

193 Gn 32:19.

194 Gn 33:11.



עמך ישב במקום אשר יבחר אדני<sup>310</sup>, המדרש הוא העקר<sup>311</sup>. עוד כל ימי הארץ<sup>312</sup> למען  
 תזכור<sup>313</sup> עבדך בן אמתך<sup>314</sup> השולח אמרתו ארץ מרחקים<sup>315</sup> כי אהבתי את אדוני<sup>316</sup>, והנה  
 הבאתי את פרי ראשית האדמה אשר נתן לי ה'<sup>317</sup>.  
 אדוני צדק בוחן לבות וכליות<sup>318</sup> יודע הן בני עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרי<sup>319</sup> ישרתונך<sup>320</sup>  
 והאשה אשר הוכיח ה'<sup>321</sup> לעבדך ליצחק<sup>322</sup> היא גם היא אמרה אחי<sup>323</sup>, האלהים אנה  
 לידך<sup>324</sup> ספר ולשון כשרים<sup>325</sup> מעשה אצבעותיך<sup>326</sup> להקריב קרבן לאדוני<sup>327</sup> לקשר  
 מעדנות<sup>328</sup> אהבתו, למה יגרע שמי<sup>329</sup> מדלתי ביתו<sup>330</sup> בית ועד לחכמים<sup>331</sup>, אלהים יכוננה  
 עליון<sup>332</sup>, לבלתי הקריב קרבן לאדוני במועדו<sup>333</sup> מנחת זכרון<sup>334</sup>, ויען לא ידעתי ספר<sup>335</sup>, הנה  
 נא לי נערה בתולה<sup>336</sup> שחורה היא ונאוה<sup>337</sup>, והיא שפחה מלומדת

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- 310 דברים יב, יד.  
 311 במדבר רבה פרשה יד פסקה ט.  
 312 בראשית ח, כב.  
 313 דברים טז, ג.  
 314 תהילים קטז, טז.  
 315 שם קמז, טו.  
 316 שמות כא, ה.  
 317 דברים כו, י.  
 318 ירמיה יא, כ.  
 319 בראשית ב, כג.  
 320 ישעיה ס, י.  
 321 בראשית כד, מד.  
 322 שם כד, יד.  
 323 בראשית כ, ה.  
 324 שמות כא, יג.  
 325 דניאל א, ד.  
 326 תהילים ח, ד.  
 327 ויקרא יז, ד.  
 328 איוב לח, לא.  
 329 במדבר כז, ד.  
 330 שופטים יא, לא.  
 331 אבות א, ד.  
 332 תהילים פז, ה.  
 333 במדבר ט, ז.  
 334 שם ה, טו.  
 335 ישעיה כט, יב.  
 336 בראשית יט, ח.  
 337 שיר השירים א, ה.

May it remain with you wherever my Lord shall choose to dwell:<sup>195</sup> study is all.<sup>196</sup> So long as the earth endures,<sup>197</sup> may it remember your servant the son of your maidservant that sends his word to a distant country,<sup>198</sup> because I love my master,<sup>199</sup> and now, I offer you the first fruits of the soil which the LORD has given me.<sup>200</sup>

My righteous Lord who tests hearts and minds,<sup>201</sup> you know that these are my sons, bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh,<sup>202</sup> and they shall serve you.<sup>203</sup> The woman whom the LORD appointed for<sup>204</sup> Isaac your servant, even she declared: he is my brother.<sup>205</sup> God brought a worthy writing and language to you,<sup>206</sup> the book you have produced, to present an offering unto my Lord<sup>207</sup> to strengthen your love and allegiance to him. Why should my name be absent<sup>208</sup> from the doors of his house, a house where sages gather?<sup>209</sup> Will God The Most High protect her<sup>210</sup> if she does not bring to my Lord in its appointed season an offering,<sup>211</sup> an offering of acknowledgment?<sup>212</sup> And because I am not learned I have, behold, a young girl that has not known any man, black yet comely.<sup>213</sup> She is a maidservant, well trained to

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195 Dt 12:14.

196 Bamidbar Raba 14:9.

197 Gn 8:22.

198 Ps 147:15.

199 Ex 21:5.

200 Dt 26:10.

201 Jer 11:20.

202 Gn 2:23.

203 Is 60:10.

204 Gn 24:44.

205 Gn 20:5.

206 Dn 1:4.

207 Lv 17:4.

208 Nm 27:4.

209 Ab 1:4.

210 Ps 87:5.

211 Nm 9:7.

212 Nm 5:15.

213 Song 1:5

לעבוד, דברה לשונה בחכה<sup>338</sup> כאחד ממנו<sup>339</sup>, אקריבה נא אותה אל הגבירה אשתך כגפן פוריה בירכתי ביתה<sup>340</sup> תזכור אהבתי אהבת נשים<sup>341</sup> לפני מעלתו כאשר בא זכרוןך אל פני האדון<sup>342</sup>. ואשמע בקולה<sup>343</sup>. והנה הדוקטור גבירי יוליכה לכבודך כי היתה נאמנת בביתו כל הימים והלכה עמו כאשר היתה באמונה אתו<sup>344</sup>.

הבן יקיר לך<sup>345</sup> מבני הנביאים<sup>346</sup> בנך בכורך <כי מחוק> שמי בקרבן<sup>347</sup> ר' יצחק י"א, ברך ה' חילו<sup>348</sup>, הרבה עליו מאד מהר<sup>349</sup> פקודתיו שובע שמחות, שובע שמחות את פניו<sup>350</sup>, מפיל אני תחינתי לפני המלך<sup>351</sup>, ה' יאר פניו אליך ויחונך<sup>352</sup>, חנון יחנך לקול זעקך<sup>353</sup> רוח חן ותחנונים<sup>354</sup>, כנפשך ונפש עמל<sup>355</sup>, זרזיר מתנים<sup>356</sup> ירוץ אל המערכה<sup>357</sup> לעבוד עבודתך

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- 338 איוב לג, ב.  
 339 בראשית ג, כב.  
 340 תהילים קכח, ג.  
 341 שמואל ב א, כו.  
 342 שמות כג, יז.  
 343 שמואל א טו, כד.  
 344 אסתר ב, כ.  
 345 ירמיה לא, יט.  
 346 מלכים א כ, לה.  
 347 שמות כג, כא.  
 348 דברים לג, יא.  
 349 בראשית לד, יב.  
 350 תהילים טז, יא.  
 351 ירמיה לח, כו.  
 352 במדבר ו, כה.  
 353 ישעיה ל, יט.  
 354 זכריה יב, י.  
 355 משלי טז, כו.  
 356 שם ל, לא.  
 357 שמואל א יז, כב.

work and she speaks the language we speak. I offer her to the mistress, your wife, who is like a fruitful vine in your house,<sup>214</sup> so you shall remember my love, the love of women,<sup>215</sup> Excellency, when you shall appear before the LORD.<sup>216</sup> I listened to her voice.<sup>217</sup> The doctor, my master, will bring her to your Excellency, because she was raised in his house until now, and she followed him as if she had been brought up with him.

Your darling son, the son of prophets,<sup>218</sup> your eldest son, he shares my name, Rabbi Isaac,<sup>219</sup> may God preserve him, may the LORD bless his substance<sup>220</sup> and cover him with a generous dowry.<sup>221</sup> His presence, and the memory of him as well, brings fullness of joy. I presented my request before the king,<sup>222</sup> may the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, may He grant you His favour and respond immediately to the sound of your cry in a spirit of grace and petition. With the constancy and devotion of a labourer, like a swift and royal greyhound, may you run to the battle<sup>223</sup> to accomplish your

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214 Ps 128:3.

215 2 Sam 1:26.

216 Ex 23:17.

217 1 Sam 15:24.

218 1 Kgs 20:35.

219 On Isaac Da Pisa, see Yosef Hacker, „Kvutzat igerot al gerush hayehudim misefarad umisitziliah veal goral hamegorashim“, (eds.) E. Ektes and J. Salmon, *Prakim betoldot hahevrah hayehudit biyemei habeinayim uvaet hahadasha* (Jerusalem, 1982), 64-97; Albert W. Greenup, „A Kabbalistic Epistle by Isaac b. Samuel Hayim Sephardi,“ *Jewish Quarterly Review* 21 (1931): 365-75; Moshe Idel, „Igerto shel rabbi Izhaq miPisa beshalosh nusraoteah,“ *Kovez al Yad* 20 (1982): 161-214; Yael Nadav, „Iggeret hamekubal rabbi Izhaq Mar Hayim al torat hazahzahut,“ *Tarbiz* 26 (1957): 440-58.

220 Dt 33:11.

221 Gn 34:12.

222 Jer 38:26.

223 1 Sam 17:22.

לבי רודה ורוצה את אבניך, וכי ירחק ממך<sup>358</sup> ענוש יענש<sup>359</sup> לחזות בנועם אדוני ולבקר  
 בהיכלו<sup>360</sup> כולו אומר כבד<sup>361</sup>.  
 כותב בפרשת ה' נראה אליכם<sup>362</sup> [פרשת שמיני, יג-כ בחדש ניסן], שנת לר"ב תרבה  
 נחלתו<sup>363</sup>. יצחק בן לאדוני דון יהודה אברבנאל זלה"ה בלישבונה.  
 הודיעני בחסדך אדוני, האפיפיור הזה אם הוא דובר שלום לכל זרעינו<sup>364</sup> ואם יש אתו  
 או במדינת רומי רופאים יהודים או אם יש לקארדינלים רופאים.

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358 דברים יב, כא.

359 שמות כא, כב.

360 תהילים כז, ד.

361 שם כט, ט.

362 ויקרא ט, ד.

363 במדבר כז, נד.

364 אסתר י, ג.

work as you desire. [...] <sup>224</sup> And may any punishment keep its distance from you and may you behold the graciousness of the LORD and visit early in His temple, <sup>225</sup> which resonates with the cry of Glory. <sup>226</sup>

As is written in the *Parasha*, <sup>227</sup> „the LORD appears unto you,” <sup>228</sup> [6-13 of March] in the year 5232 [1472], may His inheritance grow. <sup>229</sup> Isaac son of my Lord Don Yehudah Abravanel, may his memory be blessed in the world to come, in Lisbon.

Have the goodness to let me know whether this Pope seeks the welfare of our people, <sup>230</sup> and whether there are with him, or in the city of Rome, Jewish doctors, and whether the Cardinals have doctors.

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<sup>224</sup> Text unclear.

<sup>225</sup> Ps 27:4.

<sup>226</sup> Ps 29:9.

<sup>227</sup> *Parasha* is the section of the Pentateuch the Jews read each week; it serves also as a date, because each week of the calendar is associated with a *Parasha*.

<sup>228</sup> Lv 9:4.

<sup>229</sup> Nm 26:54.

<sup>230</sup> Est 10:3.



Second Hebrew Letter  
1481



## וגם הכתב הזה נעתק מכתב אחר שלח דון יצחק אברבנילה הנ"ל אל אדונינו הנ"ל ליא'.

כי יצא הקצף מלפני ה' החל הענף<sup>2</sup> אש מתלקחת בתוך<sup>3</sup> העיר אשר אנכי בקרבה<sup>4</sup>. כי עלה  
מות בחלונינו בא בארמונותינו<sup>5</sup> מפני אשר ירד עליו ה' באש<sup>6</sup>, מפני חרב היונה<sup>7</sup>, מפני פחד  
ה' <sup>8</sup> לפניו ילך דבר<sup>9</sup>. זה לי שלש שנים<sup>10</sup> עזבתי נחלתי נטשתי את ביתי<sup>11</sup> שמתי לדרך  
פעמי<sup>12</sup> הבנות בנותי והבנים בני<sup>13</sup> ילידי חניכי ביתי<sup>14</sup>. והייתי נע ונד בארץ<sup>15</sup> כציפור לעוף  
כדרור לנוד<sup>16</sup>, ונלך מרוח סועה מסער<sup>17</sup>, מחיל

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- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | הטקסט מוצג כאן מבוסס על כתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית 1081 (Add. 27129). |
| 2  | במדבר יז, יא.  |
| 3  | שמות ט, כד.  |
| 4  | במדבר יא, כא.  |
| 5  | ירמיה ט, כ.  |
| 6  | שמות יט, יח.   |
| 7  | ירמיה מו, טז.  |
| 8  | ישעיה ב, י.  |
| 9  | חבקוק ג, ה.  |
| 10 | בראשית לא, מא.   |
| 11 | ירמיה יב, ז.   |
| 12 | תהילים פה, יד.   |
| 13 | בראשית לא, מג.   |
| 14 | שם יד, יד.   |
| 15 | שם ד, יד.  |
| 16 | משלי כו, ב.  |
| 17 | תהילים נה, ט.  |

This letter is also copied from another letter that, as previously mentioned, Don Isaac Abravanel sent to our Master Yehiel, may he rise at the end [with the resurrection] amen.<sup>1</sup>

There is wrath gone out from the LORD, the plague has begun,<sup>2</sup> fire is flashing up amidst<sup>3</sup> the city in which I find myself, for death has come through our windows and entered our palaces,<sup>4</sup> because the LORD descended upon it in fire,<sup>5</sup> before the oppressing sword,<sup>6</sup> before the terror of the LORD,<sup>7</sup> before Him goes the plague.<sup>8</sup> These past three years<sup>9</sup> I have forsaken my house,<sup>10</sup> I wandered with the daughters who are my daughters and the sons who are my sons,<sup>11</sup> all the children born and raised in my house. I have been a fugitive and a sojourner in the earth,<sup>12</sup> as the meandering, flying swallow. We left because of the stormy wind and tempest, from rampart

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1 The title of the letter is referring to another of Abravanel's letter preceding this one in the codex of the British Library 1081 (Add. 27129). Hacker showed that this letter was written one year before the first letter in the manuscript, for which reason we position it as the second letter in this edition.

2 Nm 17:11.

3 Ex 9:24.

4 Jer 9:20.

5 Ex 19:18.

6 Jer 46:16.

7 Is 2:10.

8 Hb 3:5.

9 Gn 31:41. See Hacker for the interpretation of this time indication: Hacker, „Kvutzat Igerot...“, 74-75.

10 Jer 12:7.

11 Gn 31:43.

12 Gn 4:14.

אל חיל<sup>18</sup> ומהר לגבעה מדלג על ההרים מקפץ על הגבעות<sup>19</sup> להמלט על נפשנו<sup>20</sup>. על כן לא  
 בא לשלחנך<sup>21</sup> מלא דשן<sup>22</sup> אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך<sup>23</sup>, על כן לא באתי אל אדוי במגילת  
 ספר כתוב עלי<sup>24</sup> מדי שנה בשנה<sup>25</sup> בימים הראשונים היו טובים מאלה<sup>26</sup>. וגם עתה<sup>27</sup> הנני  
 הנני<sup>28</sup> מפוזר ומפורד בין העמים<sup>29</sup> ולא באתי עד עתה אל המנוחה ואל הנחלה<sup>30</sup> מקום  
 אשר דבר המלך ודתו<sup>31</sup>, העיר רבתי עם<sup>32</sup> אשר היה שם אהלי בתחלה<sup>33</sup> ועוד היום אנכי  
 מגורש מעדן מלהט החרב המתהפכת<sup>34</sup> אכלה סביב<sup>35</sup> ועוד ידו נטויה<sup>36</sup>. אל נא תשת עלי  
 חטאת<sup>37</sup> נשיא הדור וגדול ליהודים<sup>38</sup> אנא שא נא פשע אחיך וחטאתו<sup>39</sup> מדוע אחרו פעמי  
 מרכבותי<sup>40</sup>, וסלחת לעוני<sup>41</sup> כי לא במרד ולא במעל<sup>42</sup> עשיתי זאת, ירחיב הי' לנו<sup>43</sup> וישוב

18	שם פד, ח.
19	שיר השירים ב, ח.
20	בראשית יט, יז.
21	שמואל א כ, כט.
22	איוב לו, טז.
23	תהילים יט, טז.
24	שם מ, ח.
25	זכריה יד, טז.
26	קהלת ז, י.
27	יואל ב, יב.
28	ישעיה סה, א.
29	אסתר ג, ח.
30	דברים יב, ט.
31	אסתר ד, ג.
32	איכה א, א.
33	בראשית יג, ג.
34	בראשית ג, כד.
35	איכה ב, ג.
36	ישעיה ה, כה.
37	במדבר יב, יא.
38	אסתר י, ג.
39	בראשית ג, יז.
40	שופטים ה, כח.
41	תהילים כה, יא.
42	יהושע כב, כב.
43	בראשית כו, כב.

to rampart,<sup>13</sup> from mount to hill, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills,<sup>14</sup> trying to escape with our lives.<sup>15</sup> Therefore I did not approach your table full of bounty<sup>16</sup> with the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart for you,<sup>17</sup> therefore I did not come to my Lord with a letter written by me from year to year as in former days which have been better than these.<sup>18</sup> Yet even now, here I am, here I am,<sup>19</sup> scattered abroad and dispersed among the people.<sup>20</sup> And I have not yet arrived at the place of rest and inheritance,<sup>21</sup> to the place where the king's commandment and decree come,<sup>22</sup> to the city full of people<sup>23</sup> where my tent was encamped at the beginning,<sup>24</sup> and even today I am expelled from Eden as a result of the flaming sword which turns every way<sup>25</sup> and devours all.<sup>26</sup> Its hand is still stretched forth.<sup>27</sup> Lay not, I pray you, sins upon me,<sup>28</sup> Prince of our generation and great among the Jews,<sup>29</sup> and forgive, I pray you now, the transgression of your brother and his sin.<sup>30</sup> Why did the wheels of my chariots tarry?<sup>31</sup> Pardon my iniquity, it was done neither in rebellion nor in treachery. As soon as God will relieve us and will again

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- 13 Ps 84:8.  
14 Song 2:8.  
15 Gn 19:17.  
16 Jb 36:16.  
17 Ps 19:15.  
18 Ecc 7:10.  
19 Is 65:1.  
20 Est 3:8.  
21 Dt 12:9.  
22 Est 4:3.  
23 Lam 1:1.  
24 Gn 13:3.  
25 Gn 3:24.  
26 Lam 2:3.  
27 Is 5:25.  
28 Nm 12:11.  
29 Est 10:3.  
30 Gn 50:17.  
31 Jgs 5:28.

לשׁוש עלינו לטוב<sup>44</sup> החיים והשלום וישיבנו איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו<sup>45</sup> יקרב פזורנו מבין הגוים<sup>46</sup>, אז אשובה ארעה צאנך אשמור<sup>47</sup>, אז לא אבוש בהיטי<sup>48</sup> עוברי ארחות ימים<sup>49</sup>. נעשה לפניך את קרבנות חובותינו ומוספין<sup>50</sup> כאשר עם לבבי<sup>51</sup>.  
 כי בא השמועה שועת בת עמי מארץ מרחקים<sup>52</sup> קולה כנחש ילך<sup>53</sup> עד השמים חגיעה, הושלך משמים ארץ<sup>54</sup> כבודה בת מלך פנימה<sup>55</sup> בת נדיב<sup>56</sup> בת שוע<sup>57</sup> המירה כבודה בלא הועיל<sup>58</sup> לא עמד טעמה בה וריחה נמר<sup>59</sup>. נעותי משמוע צרים אחזני<sup>60</sup> על בת עמי השברתי קדרתי שמה <החזקתני מחוק> החזיקתני<sup>61</sup> איכה יועם זהב<sup>62</sup> בת נעורים היוצאת מחלצים טהורים וקדושים הלא לאמונה<sup>63</sup> איכה ואיככה עזבה את ה' ניאצה את קדוש ישראל<sup>64</sup> היושבת בגנים<sup>65</sup> גן נעול<sup>66</sup> גן בעדן מקדם<sup>67</sup> בצל

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- 44 דברים ל, ט.  
 45 מיכה ד, ד.  
 46 תפילת מוסף לראש השנה.  
 47 בראשית ל, לא.  
 48 תהילים קיט, ו.  
 49 שם ח, ט.  
 50 תפילת שחרית ליום השבת.  
 51 יהושע יד, ז.  
 52 ירמיה ח, יט.  
 53 שם מו, כב.  
 54 איכה ב, א.  
 55 תהילים מה, יד.  
 56 שיר השירים ז, ב.  
 57 דברי הימים א ג, ה.  
 58 ירמיה ב, יא.  
 59 שם מח, יא.  
 60 ישעיה כא, ג.  
 61 ירמיה ח, כא.  
 62 איכה ד, א.  
 63 ירמיה ה, ג.  
 64 ישעיה א, ד.  
 65 שיר השירים ח, יג.  
 66 שם ד, יב.  
 67 בראשית ב, ח.

rejoice over us for good,<sup>32</sup> life and peace, and as soon as He will bring us back, each man under his vine and under his fig-tree,<sup>33</sup> and will assemble our dispersed from among the nations,<sup>34</sup> I will once again pasture your flock and tend it,<sup>35</sup> then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon who passes through the paths of the seas.<sup>36</sup> We shall prepare in your honor, our obligatory offerings and additional ones,<sup>37</sup> as I have always intended to do.

Here sounds the cry of the daughter of my people from a land far off,<sup>38</sup> its sound shall be like the serpent's<sup>39</sup> and reach the skies. Cast down from heaven unto earth,<sup>40</sup> the glory of the King's daughter within the palace.<sup>41</sup> The prince's daughter, the noble's daughter, has exchanged her glory [her religion] for that which does not profit.<sup>42</sup> Her taste and her scent have altered. I was writhing at hearing the bad news, and pangs of anguish have taken hold of me.<sup>43</sup> On account of the hurt of the daughter of my people I am distressed. I am black, gripped by desolation.<sup>44</sup> How is the gold become dim?<sup>45</sup> Daughter of youth coming from a waist so pure and so sacred, were you not fashioned for the faith? How have you forsaken God? How have you condemned the Holy One of Israel?<sup>46</sup> You that dwelt in the garden,<sup>47</sup> a protected garden,<sup>48</sup> a garden eastward in Eden,<sup>49</sup> under the guardianship

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32 Dt 30:9.

33 Mic 4:4.

34 Prayer for the New Year, Musaf.

35 Gn 30:31.

36 Ps 8:9.

37 Prayer for Shabbat Musaf.

38 Jer 8:19.

39 Jer 46:22.

40 Lam 2:1.

41 Ps 45:14.

42 Jer 2:11.

43 Isa 21:3.

44 Jer 8:21.

45 Lam 4:1.

46 Is 1:4.

47 Song 8:13.

48 Song 4:12.

49 Gn 2:8.

החכמה בצל הכוסף [הכסף]<sup>68</sup> האמיתי, איך נפלת משמים<sup>69</sup> על כן מלאו מותני חלחלה<sup>70</sup>,  
 מורשי לבבי<sup>71</sup> אך המה יהמיון<sup>72</sup> לתנות לבת יפתח<sup>73</sup> מדוע לא עלתה אדוי ארוכת בת עמי<sup>74</sup>  
 מדוע האיש אשר טהור<sup>75</sup> ובדרך חטאים לא עמד<sup>76</sup> מצאוהו צרות רבות ורעות<sup>77</sup>. זאת  
 אשית [אשיב] אל לבי<sup>78</sup> הנה זאת חקרונה<sup>79</sup> מראש מקדמי ארץ<sup>80</sup> אין צדיק בארץ<sup>81</sup> קנה  
 שם טוב קנה לעצמו<sup>82</sup> העושר והכבוד, אף כי אנשים מבני ישראל יבלו ימיהם בטוב<sup>83</sup> עד  
 עת הקץ<sup>84</sup>, מי הוא נעים זמירות<sup>85</sup> ישמיע בחוץ קולו<sup>86</sup> שיר מעלות ישמח ויגיל<sup>87</sup> כל ימי  
 חייו. כי הנה כנגן המנגן<sup>88</sup> ונחה עליו קול ענות<sup>89</sup> וקול הזמיר הגיע לארץ<sup>90</sup>, ואי זה הוא  
 גבור בארץ<sup>91</sup> גדול ורם ורב<sup>92</sup>, ישתה מין הרקח<sup>93</sup> ויתגל בתוך אהלו<sup>94</sup> מעסים רמונים<sup>95</sup>

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68	קהלת ז, יב.
69	ישעיה יד, יב.
70	שם כא, ג.
71	איוב יז, יא.
72	תהילים לט, ז.
73	שופטים יא, מ.
74	ירמיה ח, כב.
75	במדבר ט, יג.
76	תהילים א, א.
77	שם עא, כ.
78	איכה ג, כא.
79	איוב ה, כז.
80	משלי ח, כג.
81	קהלת ז, כ.
82	אבות ב, ז.
83	איוב כא, יג.
84	דניאל יא, לה.
85	שמואל ב כג, א.
86	ישעיה מב, ב.
87	חבקוק א, טו.
88	מלכים ב ג, טו.
89	שמות לב, יח.
90	שיר השירים ב, יב.
91	תהילים קיב, ב.
92	דברים ב, י.
93	שיר השירים ח, ב.
94	בראשית ט, כא.
95	שיר השירים ח, ב.

of wisdom and money,<sup>50</sup> how have you fallen from heaven?<sup>51</sup> Therefore are my loins filled with convulsion, the thoughts of my heart are in turmoil, lamenting the daughter of Jephthah.<sup>52</sup> Why then, my Lord, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?<sup>53</sup> How is it possible that a man who is pure, a man that did not stand in the way of sinners,<sup>54</sup> has encountered much misery and trouble? This I would answer to my heart,<sup>55</sup> for this we have searched. From the beginning, as the earth ever was, there is not a righteous man upon earth who escapes this rule: he who earned a good name earned for himself only wealth and honor, even if people from Israel spend their days in prosperity to the end of time, who is the sweet singer<sup>56</sup> that makes his voice to be heard in the stree<sup>57</sup> with a song of ascents, and that rejoices and exults all the days of his life? And so, he would play like a minstrel, inspired by the sound of a tune, as if the time of singing is come upon the earth. Who is mighty on earth, great, tall, and important, and would drink spiced wine<sup>58</sup> and enjoy within his tent<sup>59</sup> the juice of a pomegranate<sup>60</sup> in

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50 Ecc 7:12.

51 Is 14:12.

52 Jgs 11:40.

53 Jer 8:22.

54 Ps 1:1.

55 Lam 3:21.

56 2 Sam 23:1.

57 Is 42:2.

58 Song 8:2.

59 Gn 9:21.

60 Song 8:2.



וכלים מכלים שונים וכלי זהב<sup>96</sup>, שגם עליו לא יעבור כוס<sup>97</sup> ולא ישתה יום או יומים<sup>98</sup>, מיד  
 ה' כוס חמתו את קבעת כוס התרעלה<sup>99</sup> מי המרים המאריים<sup>100</sup>, אם כן אפה אל תתמה  
 אל [על] החפץ<sup>101</sup> כי אדם אין לעבוד את האדמה<sup>102</sup> שקוף ודרדר לא יצמח לו<sup>103</sup> בני חיי  
 ומזוני<sup>104</sup> סרבים וסלונים<sup>105</sup> המה אתו עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו<sup>106</sup>, ואת עמלינו<sup>107</sup> אלו  
 הבנים, מה שהיה הוא שיהיה ואין כל חדש תחת השמש<sup>108</sup>, חכם אתה<sup>109</sup> שים נא כבוד  
 להי<sup>110</sup> על הכל יהי שמו מבורך והעבר רעה מבשרך<sup>111</sup>, במופלא ממך אל תדרוש<sup>112</sup> מה זה  
 ועל מה זה<sup>113</sup> כי המשפט לאלקי הוא<sup>114</sup> ואין אתנו יודע עד מה<sup>115</sup>.  
 אבי אבי<sup>116</sup> הספרים אשר שלחתי לפני מעלתך מחוברים איין פרופייט והר' יוסף ו'  
 שם טוב ז"ל אחלה פני<sup>117</sup> כבודך אם כבר נעתקת ואין לך עסק בהם, תנה אותם על ידי

96	אסתר א, ז.
97	איכה ד, כא.
98	שמות כא, כא.
99	ישעיה נא, יז.
100	במדבר ה, יח.
101	קהלת ה, ז.
102	בראשית ב, ה.
103	שם ג, יח.
104	מועד קטן כחא.
105	יחזקאל ב, ו.
106	קהלת ה, יב.
107	דברים כו, ז.
108	קהלת א, ט.
109	יחזקאל כח, ג.
110	יהושע ז, יט.
111	קהלת יא, י.
112	חגיגה יטא.
113	אסתר ד, ה.
114	דברים א, יז.
115	תהילים עד, ט.
116	מלכים ב, יב.
117	משלי יט, ו.

vessels diverse one from another and in gold vessels, that the cup would not pass over unto him also,<sup>61</sup> and that he would not drink a day or two at the hand of God, the cup of His fury,<sup>62</sup> the beaker, the bitter water that brings about the curse?<sup>63</sup> Therefore marvel not at the matter! There is not a man that tills the ground without bringing forth thorns and thistles to himself.<sup>64</sup> Sons, life, and food<sup>65</sup> are rebellious and thorny.<sup>66</sup> They are riches kept by the owner leading to his suffering. Our toil,<sup>67</sup> that is our sons. That which has been is that which shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>68</sup> You are wise, give, I pray you, glory to God. God be blessed for all, put away evil from your flesh.<sup>69</sup> Do not investigate what is beyond your comprehension.<sup>70</sup> Do not ask what this was or why this was, for the judgment is God's<sup>71</sup> and there are no more prophets.<sup>72</sup>

My father, my father,<sup>73</sup> the books that I sent to your Excellency, the writings of Profiat Duran and Rabbi Yosef ibn Shem Tov, may his memory be blessed, I entreat the favor of your Honor,<sup>74</sup> if you already copied them and if you do not have use for them, hand them over to

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61 Lam 4:21.

62 Is 51:17.

63 Nm 8:18.

64 Gen 3:18.

65 Moed Katan 28a.

66 Ez 2:6.

67 Dt 26:7.

68 Ecc 1:12.

69 Ecc 11:10.

70 Hagiga 13a.

71 Dt 1:17.

72 Ps 74:9.

73 2 Kgs 2:12.

74 2 Kgs 2:12.

הדוקטור אנסלו מינדיץ אהובי<sup>118</sup> אשר אתך בארץ ההיא להביאם אלי הביתה לראות בהם דבר בעת מעתות הפנאי כי לא נשארו עמי אחרים מאלה ומפורשי הר' עמנואל אם נמצאו עוד בבית מדרשך על התורה ועל הנביאים, זכור דבר לעבדך<sup>119</sup> ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת<sup>120</sup>. תורה היא וללמוד אנו צריכים<sup>121</sup> ומגלגלין זכות על ידי זכאי<sup>122</sup>. ביצחק יקרא לך זרע<sup>123</sup> ותהי המשרה על שכמו<sup>124</sup> ודוד ואשתו אחי נועם [אחינועם] היוזרעלית<sup>125</sup> וכל יוצאי חלצין המה יבואו אל מקדשך המה יקריבו אליך קרבת אלקים<sup>126</sup> והיית אך שמח<sup>127</sup> בהם ובצאצאיהם אליהם תטה נהר שלומי, ועליהם תבא ברכות טוב<sup>128</sup> חסד ואמת אל יעזבו<sup>129</sup> ברכת ה' תעשיר<sup>130</sup> והא' אשר התהלכו אבותי לפניו<sup>131</sup> יוטיב אחריתך מראשיתך<sup>132</sup> ויוסיף כל אשר לך למשנה<sup>133</sup> ברכה עד בלי די<sup>134</sup>

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- 118 ישעיה מא, ח.  
 119 תהילים קיט, מט.  
 120 בראשית מז, כט.  
 121 ברכות סבא.  
 122 שבת לבא, בבא בתרא קיטוב.  
 123 בראשית כא, יב.  
 124 ישעיה ט, ה.  
 125 שמואל א כז, ג.  
 126 ישעיה נח, ב, תהילים עג, כח.  
 127 דברים טז, טו.  
 128 משלי כד, כה.  
 129 שם ג, ג.  
 130 שם י, כב.  
 131 בראשית מח, טו.  
 132 קהלת ז, ח.  
 133 איוב מב, י.  
 134 מלאכי ג, י.

Doctor Gonsalo Mendes,<sup>75</sup> my friend who is with you in your country, so that he may bring them to me at my home that I may read from them in my free time, because I do not have any copy of them left. And from the commentaries of Rabbi Immanuel, if you have some of them in your library, especially on the Pentateuch and on the Prophets, remember your word to your servant,<sup>76</sup> and so you will deal kindly and truly with me.<sup>77</sup> This is Torah and we are required to learn it<sup>78</sup> and we bring about the reward to a person of merit.<sup>79</sup>

In Isaac shall your seed be called to you<sup>80</sup> and the responsibility will be upon his shoulders. David with his wife, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess,<sup>81</sup> and all the fruits of your loins will come to your sanctuary and they will offer you their sacrifice, the nearness of God,<sup>82</sup> and you shall have nothing but joy with them and with their offspring; to them shall flow the river of peace and a good blessing shall come upon them, kindness and truth shall not forsake you.<sup>83</sup> The blessing of the LORD enriches,<sup>84</sup> and the God before whom my fathers did walk<sup>85</sup> shall make your end better than your beginning<sup>86</sup> and he shall give you twice as much as you have,<sup>87</sup> a blessing which shall be more than

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75 Rau refers to a certain Gonsalo Mendes, Portuguese law student in Siena in the 1470s, who used the services of the bankers Cambini, as did Abravanel. Gonsalo Mendes was the son of Pedro de Coimbra *Sobrejuiz* of the *Casa do Cível* in Lisbon. He was the *moço da câmara* of the Crown Prince João. King Afonso V attributed him, by a letter of March 1469, an annuity of 4356 *reais brancos*. He finished his studies and his sojourn in Italy in 1482 and then began a career as a magistrate. It seems not unreasonable to think that at the time of the letter (1481), he was doctor in law or least considered as such. Although the Hebrew transcription of the name of the doctor, „Anselo Minditz“, does not correspond exactly to his Portuguese name, Gonsalo Mendes is the only person known to me who seems to correspond to the „doctor“ referred in the letter. Rau, „*Italianismo...*“, 200-201, „*Alguns estudantes...*“, 49, 80.

76 Ps 119:49.

77 Gn 47:29.

78 Brakhot 62a.

79 Shabat 32a.

80 Gn 21:12.

81 1 Sam 27:3. Abravanel refers here to the second daughter of Yehiel, Fiore, who married David da Tivoli.

82 Ps 73:28.

83 Prov 3:3.

84 Prov 10:22.

85 Gn 48:15.

86 Ecc 7:8.

87 Jb 42:10.

ואחריתך ישגא מאד<sup>135</sup>, בשמחה ובטוב לבב<sup>136</sup> ולא תזכרנה הראשונות<sup>137</sup> כנפשך העולה למעלה כן יעשה ה' ונפש רעבה<sup>138</sup> לאמרתך צרופה<sup>139</sup> תגיל ב"ה<sup>140</sup> כי יבוא דברך מילדי העברים<sup>141</sup> משרתי ביתך<sup>142</sup> מיוצקי מים על ידי<sup>143</sup> מעלתך.  
 כותב בפרשת רוכב שמים בעזרך [פרשת זאת הברכה, שמחת תורה]<sup>144</sup> עבד אדוי<sup>145</sup> ה'  
 אבי כל יושב אהל העדות<sup>146</sup> אבי עד שר השלום<sup>147</sup> אב לבנים יודיע<sup>148</sup> דעת ויראת ה'<sup>149</sup>  
 הוא אדוי<sup>150</sup>.

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- 135 איוב ח, ז.  
 136 דברים כח, מז.  
 137 ישעיה סה, יז.  
 138 תהילים קז, ט.  
 139 שם קיט, קמ.  
 140 שם לה, ט.  
 141 שמות ב, ו.  
 142 יחזקאל מה, ה.  
 143 מלכים ב, ג, יא.  
 144 דברים לג, כו.  
 145 דניאל י, יז.  
 146 במדבר יז, כג.  
 147 ישעיה ט, ה.  
 148 שם לח, יט.  
 149 שם יא, ב.  
 150 בראשית כד, סה.

sufficient, and your end shall greatly increase<sup>88</sup> with joyfulness and gladness of heart,<sup>89</sup> and the former misfortunes shall not be remembered.<sup>90</sup> The LORD will respond to the wish of your soul ascending to the heights. And my soul, hungry for your pure words, shall be joyful in the LORD when your letter arrives through one of the Hebrews' children,<sup>91</sup> the servants of your house who pours water on the hands of your Excellency.<sup>92</sup>

Written in the *Parasha* "who rides upon the heaven as your help"<sup>93</sup> [September 16-22], by the servant of my Lord,<sup>94</sup> father of all those who sit in the tent of the testimony,<sup>95</sup> eternal father, peaceable ruler,<sup>96</sup> the father to the children shall make known<sup>97</sup> the knowledge and the fear of the LORD,<sup>98</sup> you are my master.<sup>99</sup>

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88 Jb 8:7.

89 Dt 28:47.

90 Is 65:17.

91 Ex 2:6.

92 2 Kgs 3:11.

93 Dt 33:26; it corresponds to the Jewish Holy Days of Sukkot and *Simhat Torah*.

94 Dn 10:17.

95 Nm 17:23.

96 Is 9:5.

97 Is 38:19.

98 Is 11:2.

99 Gn 24:65.



Third Hebrew Letter  
1482



בהאי זה הוא העתק מן הכתב אשר שלח המרוי ונורא כמ"ר  
יצחק יצ"ו אברבנילה העומד אז בממלכת פורטוגלו אל הגאון  
אד' כמוהר"ר יחיאל ור"ם ע"ה מפיסה ליא'.

נגיד ומצוה לאומים<sup>2</sup>, תחכמוני<sup>3</sup> ורב פעלים<sup>4</sup>, ביום עשות ה' אי<sup>5</sup> ארץ<sup>6</sup> חמדה טובה<sup>7</sup> ורחבה<sup>8</sup>  
ארץ עיפתה כמו אופל<sup>9</sup>, והעיר רבתי עם אשר אנכי בקרבה היתה למס<sup>10</sup>, בעברה וזעם<sup>11</sup>  
וינוסו לנשפם<sup>12</sup> העם היושב בה<sup>13</sup>, מפני פחד ה'<sup>14</sup> כי בא לשפוט<sup>15</sup> את<sup>16</sup> הארץ הלזו<sup>17</sup> >בב,  
מחוק< בדבר כבוד מאד<sup>18</sup>. אל אלקים ה' יודע<sup>19</sup> יודע<sup>20</sup>

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- 1 הטקסט מוצג כאן מבוסס על השוואה של שלושה כתבי יד: לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית 1081 (Add. 27129), אוקספורד בודלי 1989, ניו יורק בהמ"ל (JTS) 3921.
  - 2 ישעיה נה, ד.
  - 3 שמואל ב כג, ח.
  - 4 שם ב כג, כ.
  - 5 את, כתב יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989 וכתב יד ניו יורק בהמ"ל 3921.
  - 6 בראשית ב, ד.
  - 7 טובה ורצ>ז', כתב יד ניו יורק בהמ"ל 3921.
  - 8 שמות ג, ח.
  - 9 איוב י, כב.
  - 10 איכה א, א.
  - 11 תהילים עח, מט, בועם ועברה, בכתבי יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989 ומונטיפיורי 488.
  - 12 שם עח, יח.
  - 13 ישעיה לג, כד.
  - 14 שם ב, י, לא נמצא בכתבי יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989 ומונטיפיורי 488.
  - 15 תהילים צו, יג.
  - 16 לא נמצא בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129.
  - 17 יחזקאל לו, לה.
  - 18 שמות ט, ג.
  - 19 לא נמצא בכתבי יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989 וניו יורק בהמ"ל 3921.
  - 20 יהושע כב, כב.

This is a copy of the letter that the sublime and great, our honorable teacher and Rabbi Isaac Abravanel, his Rock and his Redeemer will preserve him, who was at that time in the Kingdom of Portugal, sent to his Excellence our lord and honorable great teacher and Rabbi Yehiel of Pisa, he obtained favor of the LORD, may he rest in Peace, he shall rise at the end [with the resurrection] amen.

Prince and commander of people,<sup>1</sup> Tahchemonite<sup>2</sup> and man of many deeds,<sup>3</sup> in the day that the LORD God made a good, large, and pleasant land thick as darkness itself, and the city that was full of people and in which I lived has become subjugated<sup>4</sup> by wrath and indignation,<sup>5</sup> and the people that dwelt therein fled to save their lives from the terror of the LORD, for He has come to judge <sup>6</sup>the land of Luso<sup>7</sup> with grievous plague. God, God the LORD knows<sup>8</sup>

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1 Is 55: 4.

2 2 Sam 23:8.

3 2 Sam 23:20.

4 Lam 1:1.

5 Ps 78:49.

6 Ps 96:13

7 Play on words with Ez 36:35 to designate Portugal.

8 Jos 22:22.

כי גם בימים ההם<sup>21</sup> בהיותי נע ונד בארץ<sup>22</sup>, אם אבא באהל ביתי<sup>23</sup> אני לדודי ועליו<sup>24</sup>  
 תשוקתו [תשוקתי]<sup>25</sup>, אם אעלה על ערש יצועי<sup>26</sup> במעשה ידיך אשוחח<sup>27</sup>, אם אתן שנה<sup>28</sup>  
 לעיני<sup>29</sup> בחלום חזיון<sup>30</sup> לילה<sup>31</sup> אחזה פניך<sup>32</sup> פני אלקי<sup>33</sup> אשבעה בהקיץ תמונתך<sup>34</sup>, אם  
 אראה איש ממדבר בא מארץ נוראה<sup>35</sup> אחזתיו ולא ארפינו<sup>36</sup> לדעת מה לך ולשלום<sup>37</sup> אהלך.  
 והיום הזה כי באתי משוט בארץ ומהתהלך בה<sup>38</sup> זה שלוש שנים מפוזר ומפורד בין  
 העמים<sup>39</sup>, זכרתי ימים מקדם<sup>40</sup> אשר ינודו בדבר שפתיך<sup>41</sup>, כל עצמותי<sup>42</sup> ירונו וישמחו<sup>43</sup>  
 במענה פיך<sup>44</sup>. רגלי עמדה במישור<sup>45</sup> בנועם אמריך כחי ועוצם ידי<sup>46</sup> כראי מוצק<sup>47</sup>, ואומר זה  
 ינחמנו ממעשינו ומעצבון ידינו<sup>48</sup> ברוח שפתי<sup>49</sup>, והגא<sup>50</sup> [והגה] מפיו

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- 21 נחמיה ו, יז.  
 22 בראשית ד, יד.  
 23 תהילים קלב, ג.  
 24 ואליו, בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129.  
 25 שיר השירים ז, יא.  
 26 תהילים קלב, ג.  
 27 שם קמג, ה.  
 28 שינה, בכתבי יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989.  
 29 שם קלב, ד.  
 30 חזון, בכתבי יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989.  
 31 איוב לג, טו.  
 32 תהילים יז, טו.  
 33 א', בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129, תהילים מב, ג.  
 34 שם יז, טו.  
 35 ישעיה כא, א.  
 36 שיר השירים ג, ד.  
 37 מלכים ב ט, יט.  
 38 איוב א, ז.  
 39 אסתר ג, ח.  
 40 תהילים קמג, ה.  
 41 משלי כג, טו.  
 42 תהילים לה, י.  
 43 שם לה, כז.  
 44 משלי טו, כג.  
 45 תהילים כו, יב.  
 46 דברים ח, יז.  
 47 איוב לו, יח.  
 48 בראשית ה, כט.  
 49 ישעיה יא, ד.  
 50 והנה, כתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129.

that even in these days when I am a fugitive and wanderer in the earth,<sup>9</sup> when I come into the tent of my house,<sup>10</sup> I am my beloved's, and my desire is toward him,<sup>11</sup> when I go up into the bed prepared for me,<sup>12</sup> I muse on the work of your hands.<sup>13</sup> When I give sleep to my eyes, in a dream, in a vision of the night,<sup>14</sup> I behold your face,<sup>15</sup> a divine face.<sup>16</sup> I am satisfied when I awake with your image.<sup>17</sup> When I see someone from the wilderness coming from a dreadful land,<sup>18</sup> I hold him, and do not let him go until I know how you and your family fare. Today I wander about the earth.<sup>19</sup> It has been three years now that I am scattered abroad and dispersed among people.<sup>20</sup> I thought of the days of old<sup>21</sup> that you animated with the words of your lips.<sup>22</sup> All my bones<sup>23</sup> shouted for joy and were glad<sup>24</sup> with your reply. My foot was steadied because of the gracefulness of your words, my power and the might of my hand given the strength of a sword. I was saying at the time; he shall comfort us for our work and the toil of our hands<sup>25</sup> with the breath

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9 Gn 4:14.

10 Ps 132:3.

11 Song 7:11.

12 Ps 132:3.

13 Ps 143:5.

14 Jb 33:15.

15 Ps 17:15.

16 Ps 42:3.

17 Ps 17:15.

18 Is 21:1.

19 Jb 1: 7.

20 Est 3: 8.

21 Ps 143: 5.

22 Prov 23: 16.

23 Ps 35:10.

24 Ps 35:27.

25 Gn 5: 29.

יצא<sup>51</sup> רפא ירפא<sup>52</sup> לב נשבר ונדכא<sup>53</sup> גם כל חולי וכל מכה<sup>54</sup>.  
 וכי שמעתי מפי עוברים בארץ ובערינו מפי עבד אדוני זה<sup>55</sup> אברהם משרתך נאמן וסר  
 אל משמעתך<sup>56</sup> המגיד לכל יבא גבורותיך<sup>57</sup> נפלאותיך ומחשבותיך<sup>58</sup> לשם ה'. שנים המה<sup>59</sup>  
 קורותיך, צרת הבת<sup>60</sup> ומיתת אשתך היקרה הצנועה היא היתה אם<sup>61</sup> כל חי<sup>62</sup>, היא<sup>63</sup> האשה  
 המלאה לה רוח דעת ויראת ה'<sup>64</sup> כרחל וכלאה<sup>65</sup>. צר לי מאד אמרתי<sup>66</sup> איכה אוכל<sup>67</sup>  
 וראיתי<sup>68</sup> את שאהבה נפשי<sup>69</sup> בשמחה ובטוב לבב<sup>70</sup> באבדן<sup>71</sup> עצם מעצמיו ובשר מבשריו<sup>72</sup>.  
 איכה אשא<sup>73</sup> קולי קול רנה<sup>74</sup> כירחי קדם<sup>75</sup> וקול ענות אנכי שומע<sup>76</sup>. אין לבוא אל שער  
 המלך<sup>77</sup> כמוך היום בפסוקי זמרה<sup>78</sup> ושר בשירים<sup>79</sup> כי אם לנחם אותך ולדבר על לבך  
 דברים טובים דברים נוחמים<sup>80</sup> ולמען<sup>81</sup> הקים אותך מערש דוי<sup>82</sup> ולמען

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| 51 | איוב לו, ב.   |
| 52 | שמות כא, יט.  |
| 53 | ונדכה, בכתב יד ניו יורק בהמ"ל 3921, תהילים נא, יט.                                  |
| 54 | דברים כח, סא.   |
| 55 | דניאל י, יז.  |
| 56 | שמואל א כב, יד.   |
| 57 | תהילים קמה, ד.  |
| 58 | שם מ, ו.  |
| 59 | הנה, בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129.                                     |
| 60 | יבמות טווא.   |
| 61 | אמת, בכתב יד ניו יורק בהמ"ל 3921.   |
| 62 | בראשית ג, כ.  |
| 63 | כי, בכתבי יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989.   |
| 64 | ישעיה יא, ב.  |
| 65 | רות ד, יא.  |
| 66 | שמואל א כח, טו.   |
| 67 | לא נמצא בכתב יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989.  |
| 68 | אסתר ח, ו.  |
| 69 | שיר השירים ג, ג.  |
| 70 | דברים כח, מז.   |
| 71 | אסתר ח, ו.  |
| 72 | בראשית ב, כג.   |
| 73 | דברים א, יב.  |
| 74 | תהילים קיח, טו.   |
| 75 | איוב כט, ב.   |
| 76 | שמות לב, יח.  |
| 77 | אסתר ד, ב.  |
| 78 | זמרה, בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129; זמרה, בכתב יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989. |
| 79 | משלי כה, כ.   |
| 80 | זכריה א, יג.  |
| 81 | סוף כתב יד ניו יורק בהמ"ל 3921.   |
| 82 | תהילים מא, ד.   |

of his lips,<sup>26</sup> and his words<sup>27</sup> will thoroughly heal<sup>28</sup> a broken and contrite heart,<sup>29</sup> as well as every sickness and every plague.<sup>30</sup>

I heard from the mouth of travelers traveling through the country, and in our city from the mouth of Abraham,<sup>31</sup> a trusted servant of my Lord, obedient to your bidding, who tells everyone of your mighty acts,<sup>32</sup> your wonderful works and your thoughts<sup>33</sup> in the name of the LORD. Two terrible events happened to you, the calamity with your daughter and the death of your beloved and modest wife, she was the mother of all living.<sup>34</sup> This woman was full of the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD,<sup>35</sup> like Rachel and like Leah.<sup>36</sup> And I answered: I am so very sorry. How could I endure to see the destruction of whom my soul loved with so much joy and gladness of heart, bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh?<sup>37</sup> How could I raise my voice, a voice of rejoicing, as in the months of old, when I hear the sound of a cry? One cannot come today before the gate of a king<sup>38</sup> like you with psalms and singing songs,<sup>39</sup> but only to console you and offer your heart good and comforting words,<sup>40</sup> to raise you from the bed of

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26 Is 11: 4.

27 Jb 37: 2.

28 Ex 21: 19.

29 Ps 51: 19.

30 Dt 28:61.

31 Most likely Don Isaac is referring to Abraham Hayun. See the introduction for more details on Abraham Hayun.

32 Ps 145:4.

33 Ps 40:6.

34 Gn 3:20.

35 Is 11:2.

36 Ru 4:11.

37 Gn 2:23.

38 Est 4:2.

39 Prov 25:20.

40 Zec 1:13.

עשה לב חדש ורוח חדשה<sup>83</sup> בקרבך קדוש<sup>84</sup> כאשר הייתה בטרם <לת, מחוק> לדת יום<sup>85</sup> פרץ על פני<sup>86</sup> פרץ<sup>87</sup>, ובטרם תצמחנה<sup>88</sup> תלאות מהומות וכדשא תפרחנה<sup>89</sup> שואות גדולות ונוראות<sup>90</sup>.

איש אלוקים<sup>91</sup> למה ירע לבבך<sup>92</sup> ולמה פניך רעים<sup>93</sup> הלא כל הארץ לפניך<sup>94</sup> מלאה אנשים ונשים עזבו את<sup>95</sup> ה'י<sup>96</sup> וימירו את כבודם<sup>97</sup> באלקי חדשים, הלא גם בנו<sup>98</sup> רבו כמו רבו<sup>99</sup> בני אדם גם בני איש<sup>100</sup> חלפו חוק<sup>101</sup> ואין אומר השב<sup>102</sup>. ולמי יחפוץ המלך<sup>103</sup> ה' צבאות לעשות יקר וגדולה<sup>104</sup> יתירה בקחתו ואיננה [ואיננו] ולמען לא תקחו עוד<sup>105</sup> אתה ורעך<sup>106</sup> חרפת<sup>107</sup> רעה בגוים<sup>108</sup>. גבר הוקס על<sup>109</sup> אודות האשה<sup>110</sup> כגפן פוריה<sup>111</sup> אשר לקחת יגון ואנחה<sup>112</sup> ערבה כל שמחה גלה משוש לבך<sup>113</sup>. מה יתאונן אדם חי<sup>114</sup> רב פעלים<sup>115</sup> כמוך. הלנצח יחיה האדם ימלט נפשו

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| 83  | יחזקאל יח, לא.                                     |
| 84  | הושע יא, ט.  |
| 85  | צפניה ב, ב.  |
| 86  | לא נמצא בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129. |
| 87  | איוב טז, יד.                                       |
| 88  | ישעיה מב, ט.                                       |
| 89  | שם סו, יד.   |
| 90  | שמואל ב ז, כג.                                     |
| 91  | שם א ב, כז.  |
| 92  | שם א א, ח.   |
| 93  | נחמיה ב, ב.  |
| 94  | בראשית יג, ט.                                      |
| 95  | לא נמצא בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129. |
| 96  | ישעיה א, ד.  |
| 97  | תהילים קו, כ.                                      |
| 98  | במדבר יב, ב.                                       |
| 99  | זכריה י, ח.  |
| 100 | תהילים מט, ג.                                      |
| 101 | ישעיה כד, ה.                                       |
| 102 | שם מב, כב.   |
| 103 | אסתר ו, ו.   |
| 104 | שם ו, ג.   |
| 105 | יחזקאל לו, ל.                                      |
| 106 | זכריה ג, ח.  |
| 107 | חרפה, בכתב יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989.                 |
| 108 | יחזקאל לו, ל.                                      |
| 109 | שמואל ב כג, א.                                     |
| 110 | במדבר יב, א.                                       |
| 111 | תהילים קכח, ג.                                     |
| 112 | ישעיה לה, י.                                       |
| 113 | שם כד, יא.   |
| 114 | איכה ג, לט.  |
| 115 | שמואל ב כג, כ.                                     |

illness<sup>41</sup> and create a new heart and a new spirit<sup>42</sup> within you, holy man, as you were before this day brought forth breach upon breach,<sup>43</sup> before sprang forth troubles and calamities and before great and terrible catastrophes flourished like young grass.<sup>44</sup>

Man of God<sup>45</sup> why is your heart grieved?<sup>46</sup> Why is your countenance sad?<sup>47</sup> Is not the whole land before you full of men and women that have forsaken the LORD<sup>48</sup> and exchanged their glory<sup>49</sup> for new gods? And also among us did they not increase as they have increased, these men of all estates who have transgressed the laws and none says: Restore?<sup>50</sup> Whom would the King, the LORD of hosts delight to give the supreme honor and dignity of death, so that you and your fellows may receive no more the disgrace of any evil among the nations.<sup>51</sup> Man is raised on high,<sup>52</sup> and because of your wife, the fruitful vine<sup>53</sup> which you have taken, sorrow and sighing came, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone!<sup>54</sup> Why does a living man,<sup>55</sup> a man who has done mighty deeds<sup>56</sup> like you, lament? Is man made to live forever? Can man deliver his soul from

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41 Ps 41: 4.

42 Ez 18:31.

43 Jb 16:14.

44 Is 66:14.

45 1 Sam 2:27.

46 1 Sam 1:8.

47 Neh 2:2.

48 Is 1:4.

49 Ps 106:20.

50 Is 42:22.

51 Ez 36:30.

52 2 Sam 23:1.

53 Ps 128:3.

54 Is 24:11.

55 Lam 3: 29.

56 2 Sam 23:20.



מיד שאול סלה<sup>116</sup>. הלעולמים עשה אלקים את האדם פדה נפשו מרדת שחת<sup>117</sup>. הנה אנחנו  
 באים לארץ לכלה ולחרץ אם בהמה אם איש לא יחיה<sup>118</sup>. בעת<sup>119</sup> פקודתם יכשלו<sup>120</sup>. והיה  
 כעם ככה<sup>121</sup> תורה אחת להם<sup>122</sup> מות ירעם<sup>123</sup> בקטן כגדול<sup>124</sup> עש יאכלום<sup>125</sup> קמוש  
 יירשם<sup>126</sup>. מי ימלל<sup>127</sup> לאדוי כל התלאה אשר מצאתנו<sup>128</sup> זה שלש שנים שנות ראינו רעה<sup>129</sup>  
 הוה על הוה<sup>130</sup> מחוץ תשכל חרב המלאך הממית ומחרדים אימה<sup>131</sup>. החל הנגף בעם<sup>132</sup>  
 ותחי המגפה בעדת ה'<sup>133</sup> רבה וגדולה להאביד ולהרוס<sup>134</sup> הקטנים עם הגדולים<sup>135</sup> לא ישא  
 פנים לזקן ונער לא יחון<sup>136</sup>. אם כן איפה אל אדוי איש א'<sup>137</sup> אל תערוץ ואל תחת<sup>138</sup> בעמל  
 אנוש<sup>139</sup> תחזקנה ידך<sup>140</sup> והיה לבן חיל<sup>141</sup> וביום רעה<sup>142</sup> העבר רעה מבשרך<sup>143</sup> וחזקת והיית

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- 116 תהילים פט, מט.  
 117 איוב לג, כח.  
 118 שמות יט, יג.  
 119 עת, בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129.  
 120 ירמיה ו, טו.  
 121 ישעיה כד, ב.  
 122 לא נמצא בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129, ויקרא ז, ז.  
 123 תהילים מט, טו.  
 124 דברים א, יז.  
 125 ישעיה נ, ט.  
 126 ירשם, בכתב יד לונדון-הספרייה הבריטית Add. 27129, הושע ט, ו. סוף כתב יד אוקספורד בודלי 1989.  
 127 תהילים קו, ב.  
 128 במדבר כ, יד.  
 129 תהילים צ, טו.  
 130 יחזקאל ז, כו.  
 131 דברים לב, כה.  
 132 במדבר יז, יב.  
 133 שם לא, טז.  
 134 ירמיה לא, כז.  
 135 תהילים קטו, יג.  
 136 דברים כח, נ.  
 137 שופטים יג, ח.  
 138 יהושע א, ט.  
 139 תהילים עג, ה.  
 140 יחזקאל כב, יד.  
 141 מלכים א א, נב.  
 142 תהילים מא, ב.  
 143 קהלת יא, י.

the hands of death?<sup>57</sup> Did God make man to love forever? Did He redeem his soul from entering into the pit?<sup>58</sup> We enter the world only to disappear thereafter completely, whether it be beast or man, it shall not live.<sup>59</sup> At the time of their punishment they shall stumble.<sup>60</sup> It shall be for the people as for the priests,<sup>61</sup> one Torah,<sup>62</sup> death shall be their shepherd,<sup>63</sup> the small and the great alike.<sup>64</sup> The moth shall eat them up, nettles shall possess them.<sup>65</sup> Who can express to my Lord all the travail that has befallen us<sup>66</sup> these last three years in which we have seen evil, calamity upon calamity?<sup>67</sup> Outside the sword of the angel of death has bereaved, and within the chambers there is terror.<sup>68</sup> The plague has begun among the people,<sup>69</sup> and so the plague was among the numerous and great congregation of the LORD,<sup>70</sup> overthrowing and destroying both the little and the great,<sup>71</sup> it did not regard the old person, nor bestow favor on the young.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, my Lord, man of God,<sup>73</sup> be not afraid, nor dismayed by the trouble of man;<sup>74</sup> may your hands be strong<sup>75</sup> and be a valiant man.<sup>76</sup> In the day of evil,<sup>77</sup> put away evil from your flesh,<sup>78</sup> be strong and show yourself to be

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57 Ps 89:49.

58 Jb 33:28.

59 Ex 19:13.

60 Jer 6:15.

61 Is 24: 2.

62 Lv 7: 7.

63 Ps 49: 15.

64 Dt 1:17.

65 Hos 9:6.

66 Nm 20:14.

67 Ez 7:26.

68 Dt 32:25.

69 Nm 17:12.

70 Nm 31:16.

71 Ps 115:13.

72 Dt 28:50.

73 Jdg 13:8.

74 Ps 73:5.

75 Ez 22:14.

76 1 Kgs 1:52.

77 Ps 41:2.

78 Ecc 11:10.

לאיש<sup>144</sup> כי חנם מזורה הרשת<sup>145</sup> ובית מועד לכל חי<sup>146</sup> ואין כל חדש תחת השמש<sup>147</sup>.  
 שר וגדול<sup>148</sup> אף לזאת פקח עיניך וראה<sup>149</sup> כי למן היום חרבה עירנו ושמים מקדשנו<sup>150</sup>  
 ויגל יהודה מעל אדמתו<sup>151</sup> לא שלנו ולא שקטנו ולא נחנו<sup>152</sup>, להתגולל עלינו<sup>153</sup> תמיד כל  
 היום<sup>154</sup> ילכו במועצותיהם<sup>155</sup> אדום וישמעאלים מואב והגרים<sup>156</sup>, ואם יום או יומים נעמוד  
 בשובה ונחת<sup>157</sup> קול פחדים באזנינו<sup>158</sup> ושמעות יבהלונו ממזרח וממערב ומצפון<sup>159</sup> ומים  
 [עמים] אשר אכלו שארית ישראל ועורם מעליהם הפשיטו<sup>160</sup>. מי הוא זה ואי זה הוא<sup>161</sup>  
 יבעתוהו צר ומצוקה<sup>162</sup> בצאתו מרחם אמו<sup>163</sup> וגם עד זקנה ושיבה<sup>164</sup>. בשרו עליו יכאב<sup>165</sup>  
 אל הלך<sup>166</sup> רוחו ונשמתו<sup>167</sup> לאשר נתנה וישוב העפר אל הארץ כשהיה<sup>168</sup>, ובני ציון  
 היקרים המסולאים בפי [בפז]<sup>169</sup> הרואים את כבודם<sup>170</sup> בעלות

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144	מלכים א ב, ב.
145	משלי א, יז.
146	איוב ל, כג.
147	קהלת א, ט.
148	שמואל ב ג, לח.
149	דניאל ט, יח.
150	ויקרא כו, לא.
151	מלכים ב כה, כא.
152	איוב ג, כו.
153	בראשית מג, יח.
154	ישעיה נא, יג.
155	תהילים פא, יג.
156	שם פג, ז.
157	ישעיה ל, טו.
158	איוב טו, כא.
159	דניאל יא, מד.
160	מיכה ג, ג.
161	אסתר ז, ה.
162	איוב טו, כד.
163	במדבר יב, יב.
164	תהילים עא, יח.
165	איוב יד, כב.
166	שמואל א ד, יט.
167	איוב לד, יד.
168	קהלת יב, ז.
169	איכה ד, ב.
170	במדבר יד, כב.

a man,<sup>79</sup> for apparently in vain is the net of death spread,<sup>80</sup> and the house appointed for all living<sup>81</sup> is death and there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>82</sup>

Prince and great man,<sup>83</sup> open your eyes and behold this too, because from the day our city was destroyed and our temple became desolate,<sup>84</sup> from the day Yehuda was carried out of his land,<sup>85</sup> we have had no respite, nor rest.<sup>86</sup> Continually against us, they follow their own counsel;<sup>87</sup> Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites.<sup>88</sup> And even if we remain one or two days sitting still and at rest, a sound of terror is in our ears<sup>89</sup> and tidings from the east, west and north frighten us,<sup>90</sup> we as [people] who ate the remnant of Israel, and flay their skin.<sup>91</sup> Whoever he is, and wherever he is, distress and anguish overwhelm him<sup>92</sup> from the time he comes out of his mother's womb,<sup>93</sup> and even unto old age and white hairs.<sup>94</sup> His flesh grieves for him<sup>95</sup> until his spirit and his breath will be taken to the One who gave it, and the dust returns to the earth as it was.<sup>96</sup> The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold<sup>97</sup> that have seen their glory, because of this

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79 1 Kgs 2:2.

80 Prov 1:17.

81 Jb 30:23.

82 Ecc 1:9.

83 2 Sam 3: 38.

84 Lv 26:31.

85 2 Kgs 25:21.

86 Jb 3:26.

87 Ps 81:13.

88 Ps 83:7.

89 Jb 15:21.

90 Dn 11:44.

91 Mic 3:3.

92 Jb 15:24.

93 Nm 12:12.

94 Ps 71:18.

95 Jb 14:22.

96 Ecc 12:7.

97 Lam 4:2.

הרע הזה כמבזה ונמס<sup>171</sup>, איכה יחשבו חייהם חיי צער ולא ישישו כי ימצאו קבר<sup>172</sup> ינוחו על משכבותם<sup>173</sup> משאות הזמן ומהמון גליו<sup>174</sup>. אל תבכו למת מבני<sup>175</sup> ישראל ואל תנודו לו בכו להולך<sup>176</sup> מדחי אל דחי ויסך אלקי בעדו<sup>177</sup>, כי היום גלה כבוד מישראל<sup>178</sup> ומי יתן נמותה הפעם ולא נהיה עוד למשל ולשנינה<sup>179</sup> נבזים ושפלים<sup>180</sup>.  
 יגדל נא כח אדוני<sup>181</sup> למחזיק למעוז לו<sup>182</sup>, נדמה לך אל הקדושים המה הגיבורים<sup>183</sup> האיתנים מוסדי ארץ<sup>184</sup>. והשבות אל לבבך<sup>185</sup> כי כאשר ייסר איש את בנו<sup>186</sup> בייסורין של אהבה<sup>187</sup> ה' א' מייסרך<sup>188</sup>. הנותן עוז ותעצומות לעם<sup>189</sup> יתן לך כלבבך<sup>190</sup> אורך ימים ושנות חיים ושלו<sup>191</sup>. הנותן מטר על פני ארץ<sup>192</sup> משקה הרים מעליותיו<sup>193</sup>, ישקך מיין הרקח<sup>194</sup> המשומר כוס של ברכה כוס של תנחומין, השם נפשינו בחיים<sup>195</sup> הנצחיים יתן חלקך בין העומדים ממעל לכוכבי אל<sup>196</sup>, אחר היותך שבע ימים<sup>197</sup>

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- 171 שמואל א טו, ט.  
 172 איוב ג, כב.  
 173 ישעיה נ, ב.  
 174 ירמיה נא, מב.  
 175 נוסף כתיקון בשוליים.  
 176 ירמיה כב, י.  
 177 איוב ג, כג.  
 178 שמואל א ד, כא.  
 179 דברים כח, לו.  
 180 מלאכי ב, ט.  
 181 במדבר יד, יו.  
 182 דניאל יא, א.  
 183 בראשית ו, ד.  
 184 תהילים פב, ה.  
 185 דברים ד, לו.  
 186 שם ח, ה.  
 187 ברכות הא.  
 188 דברים ח, ה.  
 189 תהילים סח, לו.  
 190 שם כ, ה.  
 191 משלי ג, ב.  
 192 איוב ה, י.  
 193 תהילים קד, יג.  
 194 שיר השירים ח, ב.  
 195 תהילים סו, ט.  
 196 ישעיה יד, יג.  
 197 בראשית לה, כט.

growing evil, despised and feeble, why would they not consider their life as a life of sorrow and why would they not be glad when they can find a grave,<sup>98</sup> when they will rest on their last bed<sup>99</sup> from the burdens of time and from the multitude of its waves?<sup>100</sup> Weep not for the dead among the sons of Israel, neither bemoan him but weep for him that goes<sup>101</sup> from bad to worse and for whom God has enclosed us, because today the glory has departed from Israel<sup>102</sup> and who will give us the opportunity to die this time so that we shall be no more a proverb and a byword,<sup>103</sup> despicable and vile?<sup>104</sup>

I pray you, let the power of my Lord be great<sup>105</sup> to strengthen and fortify yourself,<sup>106</sup> be like the holy ones that are the mighty men,<sup>107</sup> the strong ones that are the foundations of the earth.<sup>108</sup> Lay it upon your heart that, as a man chastens his son with admonitions of love,<sup>109</sup> so the LORD your God chastens you.<sup>110</sup> The One who gives strength and power unto the people<sup>111</sup> will grant you according to your desire length of days, and years of life, and peace. <sup>112</sup> The One who gives rain upon the earth,<sup>113</sup> who waters the mountains from His upper chambers,<sup>114</sup> will give you to drink of the spiced and cellared wine<sup>115</sup> a cup of blessing and a cup of consolation. The One who preserves our soul in an eternal life<sup>116</sup> will give you a place among the selected who stand beyond the stars of God.<sup>117</sup> After being old and full of days,

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98 Jb 3:22.

99 Is 57:2.

100 Jer 51:42.

101 Jer 22:10.

102 1 Sam 4:21.

103 Dt 28:37.

104 Mal 2:9.

105 Nm 14:17.

106 Dn 11:1.

107 Gn 6:4.

108 Ps 82:5.

109 Brakhot 5a.

110 Dt 8:5.

111 Ps 68:36.

112 Prov 3:2.

113 Jb 5:10.

114 Ps 104:13.

115 Song 8:2.

116 Ps 66:9.

117 Is 14: 13.

ושבע רצון<sup>198</sup> בעושר וכבוד ובנים תשיתמו לשרים<sup>199</sup> ונטעך תחזינה בהזקין בארץ שרשם ועשו פרי למעלה<sup>200</sup>, כרצונך וכרצון האיש שמח ונעלו ביום שמחת לבך<sup>201</sup> ונפשו עליו תאבל<sup>202</sup> בעת צרתך<sup>203</sup>. בעא ומתחנן קדם אלקי"ק<sup>204</sup> ערב ובוקר וצהריים<sup>205</sup> ישלם ניחומין יוסיף אומץ ורוח גדולה וחזק<sup>206</sup> וכל המתאבלים עליה<sup>207</sup>. ולאדון יצחק בנו היקיר בחיר ה' <sup>208</sup> העומד היום על כסאך<sup>209</sup> לתהלה ולשם ולתפארת<sup>210</sup> תפקדני<sup>211</sup> פעמים רבות. ואל שדי יגדיל כבודו וכבוד ביתו כאשר עם לבבו<sup>212</sup> אמי אני הצעיר המשתחוה מרחוק נכח פניך<sup>213</sup>.

עתה ביום הושענא רבה שנת ה' אורי וישעי [רמ"ג]<sup>214</sup>.  
פועל ה' יביט<sup>215</sup> ללכת בדרכיו<sup>216</sup> ועיניו על רובי איש לחחיות רוח שפלים<sup>217</sup>.

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- 198 דברים לג, כג.  
199 תהילים מה, יז.  
200 ישעיה לו, לא.  
201 שיר השירים ג, יא.  
202 איוב יד, כב.  
203 תהילים פו, ו.  
204 דניאל ו, יב.  
205 תהילים נה, יח.  
206 מלכים א יט, יא.  
207 ישעיה סו, י.  
208 שמואל ב כא, ו.  
209 מלכים א ה, יט.  
210 דברים כו, יט.  
211 שמואל א כ, ו.  
212 יהושע יד, ז.  
213 ירמיהו יז, טז.  
214 תהילים כז, א.  
215 ישעיה ה, יב.  
216 דברים ל, טז.  
217 ישעיה נז, טו.

after being sated with favor, wealth and honor, you shall make princes out of your sons,<sup>118</sup> you will watch in your old days as your descendants, in their lands of origin, make wonderful fruits<sup>119</sup> as you wished and as wished the man that is glad and rejoices in the day of the gladness of your heart<sup>120</sup> and whose soul mourns in the time of your trouble. Make petition and supplication before God<sup>121</sup> evening, and morning, and at noon,<sup>122</sup> He will reward you with consolations and will add and give courage and great and strong spirit<sup>123</sup> to all the mourners. To my Lord Isaac your beloved son, the chosen of the LORD<sup>124</sup> who is sitting today upon your throne<sup>125</sup> in praise, and in name, and in glory,<sup>126</sup> please remember me to him<sup>127</sup> many times. God Almighty shall increase his honor and the honor of his house as it is in his heart.<sup>128</sup>

Written by me, the young one that prostrated himself from far away before you,<sup>129</sup> today the day of Hoshanah Rabah [13<sup>th</sup> of October] the year "The LORD is my light and my salvation"<sup>130</sup> [1482]. Regard the work of the LORD<sup>131</sup> to walk in His ways,<sup>132</sup> and your eyes upon most of the people to revive the spirit of the humble.<sup>133</sup>

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118 Ps 45:17.

119 Is 37:31.

120 Song 3:11.

121 Dn 6:12.

122 Ps 55:18.

123 1 Kgs 19:11.

124 2 Sam 21:6.

125 1 Kgs 5:19.

126 Dt 26:19.

127 1 Sam 20:6.

128 Jos 14:7.

129 Jer 17:16.

130 Ps 27:1.

131 Is 5:12.

132 Ps 30:16.

133 Is 57:15.





## Appendices



# I

## Resposta do concelho de Santarem à consulta régia das Camaras, contendo a carta de Castellam judeu com as verbas dabraunell a ElRey affonso o quinto<sup>1</sup>.

1. ElRey dom denis começou de reynar na era de cesar de 1317 anos, e reynou 46 anos e viveo 64 anos; e em vivendo este Rey dom denis se corriam nestes Reynos dineiros velhos, que 12 delles valliam hum soldo e 20 destes soldos faziam hũa liura.

2. ElRey dom affonso o quarto seu filhos começou de reinar na era de cesar de 1363 anos e finou-se na era de 1395 anos, e asi viveo 66 anos e reynou 32; em este tempo foram feitos per elle dinheiros novos, a que chamauam alfonsiys e nove delles valiam hum soldo; e 20 destes soldos valliam hũa livra, e estes dinheiros eram de ley de hum dinheiro ao marco, e 34 soldos destes dinheiros alfonsiys pesauam hum marco e no dito marco avia hum dinheiro de prata, e asy avia em 10<sup>2</sup> libras 14 soldos hum marco de prata de ley de 11 dinheiros.

3. ElRey dom fernando, começou de reynar na era de cesar de 1395 anos no mês de mayo e finou-se no mês de Janeyro da era de 1405 anos, e asy reynou 9 anos e 8 meses e no tempo deste Rey se correrom sempre os dictos alfonsiys porque nom fez moeda.

4. ElRey dom fernando, começou de reynar na era de cesar de 1405 anos e finou-se no mez de oytubro de era de 1421 anos e asy reynou 17 annos. E no tempo deste Rey, em começo do seu reynado se corriam os dictos dinheiros alfonsiys e logo a pouco tempo pella guerra que ouue com elRey dom enrique de castella porque matara seu irmão delRey dom fernando o dicto Rey dom fernando mandou laurar moedas muitas segundo se ao diante contem: primeiramente mandou laurar reaes de prata de ley 11 dinheiros em os quaees avia em 64 delles um marco de prata, e vallia cada hũa peça 10 soldos da dicta moeda antiga: e em este tempo vallia hum Reall de prata de Castella 8 soldos, que era de mais alta prata, a saber, era de ley 11 dinheiros e seis grãos e ambos erom de hum peso e esto que asy mais vallia o Reall de

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1 Augusto Carlos Teixeira de Aragão, *Descrição Geral e Histórica das Moedas Cunhadas em Nome dos Reis, Regentes e Governadores de Portugal* (Porto, 1964), 374-379.

2 deve ser 18.

portugall era per mandado delRey e nom por seer melhor. E ainda mandou laurar outra moeda a que chamauam graues, dos quaees cada hũa peça delles valia 15 soldos daquella moeda. E ainda mandou laurar outra moeda a que chamauam graves, dos quaees cada hũa peça delles vallia 15 soldos daquella moeda. E mandou ainda laurar dinheiros a que chamauam pillartes dos quaees cada hũa peça vallia 7 soldos = Mandou ainda laurar dobras douro a que chamavam dobras de pee terra, das quaes cada hũa peça vallia 6 libras daquella moeda antigoa. E mandou laurar gentiys d ouro estes erom de duas maneyras e mandou que os primeiros vallessem 4 libras hum, e os segundos vallessem 4 libras dous.

5. E depois d esto a pouco tempo o dicto Rey dom fernando fez Cortes em Guimarães<sup>3</sup> e foy ordenado e mandado que cada hũa barbuda vallese 2 soldos e 4 dinheiros e os graues cada hũa peça vallese 14 dinheiros, e os pillartes cada hũa peça vallese 7 dinheiros: e quando este abayxamento foi feito as pessoas que tinham dineiros alfonsiys que he moeda antigoa, os quaees se por entam nom corriam compravam e vendiam por elles, e andauam mistiquamente com os graues e barbudas sem o abayxamento que asi fora feito nas dictas moedas e nom se fazia antre ellas nenhũa deferença e recebiam se reallmente e sem nenhũa contradiçam em conpras e vendas que as gentes faziam comũamente per toda a terra d este Reyno. E andando estas moedas todas 4 correndo a saver dinheiros meudos em 18 libras e 14 soldos. E em 24 libras as barbudas e graues e pillartes, hum marco de prata juntando valor de uma moeda com as outras: E em estas moedas andaua em 90 libras e 14 soldos d ellas 4 marcos de prata E partindo estas 90 libras e 14 soldos per 4 marcos de prata, vem cada hum marco de prata a 22 libras e 13 soldos e 1/2 d'aquellas moedas: E porque em correndose asy as ditas moedas sem nenhũa contradiçam, fizerom se muitos aforamentos e emprazamentos dizendo que pagariam moeda antigoa e avendo se de pagar per estes reaes de 10 reaes peça vem por liura segundo ho lauramento dos reaes 1400 libras, que som de reaes brancos dos que ora correm 40 reaes brancos. E porem declarando estes reaes de 10 reaes peça, sabede' que sam dos de 10 reaes pretos em os quaes 10 d elles ha hum reall' branco: E contando em cada hum d'estes reaes pretos 3 libras e 1/2 por cada hũa peça d elles, seriam em o reall branco 35 libras porque no real branco som 10 reaes destes pretos. E per esta regra montariam em 40 reaes brancos de liuras 1400 das 3 liuras e 1/2 por cada hum Reall preto e 35 libras por reall branco E marauydiys velhos dos dinheiros alfonsiys se costumauam em este

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3 Santarem?

reyno na estramadura em dar e pagar em contratos 15 soldos por marauydy dos alfonsiys e sendo contado a respeito de como he levada a moeda antiga, montaria em hum marauydy de 15 soldos – 1050 libras desta moeda de reaes de 35 libras peça os quaes som dictos reaes brancos. E antre doyro e minho se contaum e trataum 27 soldos por marauydy: E sendo leuado ao repeuto sobredicto da moeda antiga montaria no dito marauydy d esta 1890 [1945?] libras, que sam em reaes brancos d'esta moeda que ore corre de 35 libras a peça – 54 reaes.

6. E por quanto os mercadores estrangeiros que vendiam no Reyno suas mercadorias recebiam muita da dita moeda, e enten(den)do<sup>4</sup> o gram proueito que em ella avia leuarem as ditas moedas pera fora do Reyno porque aviam dellas mays proueyto que de as leuarem empregadas em mercadorias. E per esta rezam foram leuadas a genoa e a aragam e ha outras partes muitas das dictas moedas per mar e per terra onde lhas bem comprauam de que aviam gram proveyto e en este comeos se veo a finar o dicto rey dom fernando.

7. Depois que elRey dom Joam seu irmão noso senhor cuja alma deus aja veo a tomar o regimento e defensam deste Reyno, achou as dictas moedas que se cursauam nos sobredictos vallores. E pello gram mester e despesa da guerra que tinha com elRey de Castella e com grande parte de portugall foy lhe forçado de laurar moedas, E a primeira moeda que fez foram reaes de prata que valliam 10 soldos a peça e erom de ley de 9 dinheiros.

8. Em este tempo valliam em este Reyno hũa dobra Castellãa – 5 libras a peça. E dobra mourisqua vallia 24<sup>5</sup> libras e 1/2 a peça. E o franco de frança valia 4 libras a peça. E o nobre de Ingraterra vallia 8 libras a peça. E pella grande guerra que durou muito tempo, e pella grande despesa que pera ella avia mester laurar outras moedas, a saber, mandou laurar reaes de ley de vj dinheiros e depois de ley de 4 dinheiros e depois de ley de 3 dinheiros, e depois de ley de hum dinheiro e meo, e depois de ley de hum dinheiro, e depois de ley de meo dinheiro. E cada hum dos ditos dinheiros vallia 10 soldos. E depois mandou laurar reaes de tres libras 1/2 cada hũa peça. E cada hum d elles era de ley de tres dinheiros, e depois de dinheiro e meo e vallia cada hum 3 libras e mea: E segundo os tempos em que elle mandou laurar estas moedas mandou entam que se pagasesem os aforamentos e arrendamento que erom feitos per moeda antiga a 5 libras por hũa, E depois a 15 por hũa, e depois a 50 per hũa, e depois a 250 por hũa, E depois mandou que pagassem a 500 libras por hũa

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4 Sic.

5 È erro deve ser 4.

segundo se agora pagam o que todo esto mais compridamente he conteudo nas ordenações que o dicto senhor mandou sobre ello fazer pella guisa que aviam de pagar e de quaes tempos segun adaiante vay escrito E estas cousas som escriptas pella guisa que se pasaron segundo dicto he.

9. E quanto he a este presente tempo em que somos d esta era presente do nascimento de nosso senhor Jhū xpõ de 1435 se correm reaes de 10 reaes peça dos quaes som os de mais delles de ley de hum dinheiro E em 836 delles ha hum marco de prata de ley de 11 dinheiros estes sobredictos reaes de 10 em peça som reaes brancos dos de 35 libras E em cada hum destes reaes brancos ha 10 reaes pretos que som de 3 *libras mea* cada hũa peça delles. Em este medes tempo se lauram nas moedas de castella brancas que deuem de seer de ley de hum dinheiro se falsas nom som e ha no marco das dictas brancas 120 peças, E asy averia em hum marco de prata de ley de 11 dinheiros 1320 brancas, E porem h edicto que no dicto Reyno de Castella que ha nuitas brancas falsas, que nom chegam a ley de hum dinheiro E porem nom se pode dizer certamente que liga sam, porque cada hum falsa a moeda a sua guisa.

10. E por tanto he gram perigoo a moeda deste Reino de se aver de leuar como de feito se leua pera o Reino de Castella pois em ella podem ganhar por seer de mais alta liga e talha que a moeda de Castella E seria grande dano do Reyno com mui pouca della: A quall moeda elRey dom Joham ajuntou por muitas partes, porem a meu entender senhor conuem que se laure moeda em vosso Reyno desta que ora corre de 35 libras peça em tal talha e liga que se nom leue pera Castella nem pera outras partes nenhũas E ainda que se em ello siga algũa despesa no lauramento della a meu parecer he mais voso seruiço e bem da terra que nom se laurar e leyxalla hir fora do Reyno, E em rezam dos reaes pretos de 3 libras mea que se ora lauram que sam sem nenhuma liga de prata e 10 delles vallem hum reall branco, he muito grande torvaçam ao Reyno porque as pessoas que tem os reaes brancos guardam nos e nom nos querem trazer a uso comum, porque segundo o vallor do cobre de que elles sam feitos 30 delles deviam de valler hum Reall branco e mais nam e esto porque nom tem liga nenhuma de prata ca sam de cobre: E se algũa pessoa diser asi se lauram em outras terras moedas febres, diram verdade mas eu digo segundo o meu entender que a dita moeda he logo tam pouca quanto necesareo he pera uso comum, a saber pera esmolla e pera compra de cousas miudas que se nom podem comprar per moeda grossa, e nom tamanha soma della nem cantidade como esta que se ora senhor lauram destes reaes pretos de 3 libras mea cada hũa pesa. E quanto he senhor ao aleuamentamento das cousas pellas mudanças

das moedas, a esto podeys corregger mui bem asy nas moedas como em as cousas das mercadorias da terra e de fora, asy nas cousas grosas em valor como em as miudas de uso comum que se aleuantam sem ordenança fora de bo regra, E esto per estas 3 maneiras a saber. a primeira he que non mandeis dar ho escudo douro menos do que a dobra nom fazendo mudança em estas moedas. a saber. em escudo e meos escudos os quaes se laurem a avondo. E reaes de prata d estes que sam chamados leaes. E reaes brancos e reaes pretos, dos brancos laurando-se já agora poucos e dos pretos pera uso comum e cousas miudas mays poucos e isto pello grande avondo que já hi delles ha: E defesa com todo esto que se nom leuem do Reyno per nenhum estrajeyro por algum prouejito que nella senta E o que a levar quiser asy per mar como per terra que a perqua e que aja gram pena de justiça bem eyxecutada: E defesa a todollos de vosso Reino que nom vendam ouro nem prata em obra ou moeda a nenhum estrangeiro, nem naturall de nosso Reyno esto posa comprar pera o estrangeiro: E o que contrayro fizer que perqua o que asy comprar e que o estrangeyro que o perca e o naturall que pera elle comprar que perca outro tanto e que aja pena de justiça pela segunda vez que fôr achado que o fizer E per aquy senhor o vosso ouro e prata e moeda nom sera levada pera fora do voso Reyno por gaanho que nenhum estranjeyro ou naturall deste Reyno em ella possa achar tall pena sendo dada asy ha huum como ha outro que asy contra vosa defesa o contrayro fizer. E a segunda maneyra seja senhor esta que nenhum jenões<sup>6</sup> nem italiano nam traute em esta terra sendo estante nem posa levar em moeda por nom saber os segredos della e por outros muitos inconuenientes evitar, nem teer caymbo pella dita rezam porque sam cousas oudiosas ao voso seruiço e gram danifícamento de voso leall e muito amigo pouvo e estroymento de voso avondado e muito viçoso Reyno.

11. E a terceyra he que nenhum ourivez estrangeyro nom posa vsar de seu officio em voso Reyno, nem nenhuuns outros officiaes estrangeyros de officios escusados asy como sedeyros sirgueyros borzeguieyros e outros semelhantes de taees officios que se podem escusar porque sam causas e começos de se aleuantarem cousas per maos vusos e prouocam os omeens a desgouerno e a despesas nom onestas bem escusadas: poendo se per voso mandado baixa nas cousas todas que os omeens mester am que nom fique nenhũa daquellas que corregimento mester ouuerem, que toda franqueza he chamada gouernança e regimento de boa justiça a quall he dar a cada hũa cousa seu merecer e dar ao omem o que he pera os omens uiuerem em regra

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6 Genovês.



de grande fartura e riqueza fora de toda mingoa e pobreza que he catiueyro contra franqueza: E asy todos sendo avondados he força senhor vos serdes riquo: E se alguum vos diser que perdeis de vosas rendas a mim parece que errara por toruaçam de alguum rogador dé maa parte mays que por ho nam entender porque todollos çercãos avos ao tall dizer com ousadia a querença dar vosa merçee deue de certo entendo que seja rogado qua seguundo meu entender vos senhor temprando vosas tenças e moradias com iguall justiça perder nam podees e ainda tolhereys muitos ouciosos de vos que danifiquam a terra por se vinrem a vosa terra andar em vyda ouciosa suas eranças deyxando perder porque os nobres muito fizeram nos tempos antigos aporueytando E asy de seu todos iguallmente tendo os pasados Reis em suas rendas perder nam podiam, porque a verdade senhor he que asy como se vosas rendas abayxam pelo abaixamento das cousas em que vos fallo em boa ordenança todas e cada hũa per sy soldo aa liura vos perder nom podeys: Enxenpro vos aveis ponho caso de vosas rendas agora 1000 dobras e pelo abayxamento das cousas ja nom aveys senom 500 dobras E se vos por estas 500 dobras que aveys agora cobraees todas aquellas cousas que por as 1000 dobras que ante avieys dizeyme senhor que perdeys de vosas rendas, ou que gaanhaes no padecimento dos pobres pellas cousas fora de boa ordenança serem caras a elles como nom sejam caras a vós: enxenpro quando hi ha grande fame nom morrem de fome o Rey nem o principe mas o pobre que chegar nom pode ao vallor grande do trigo quando hé caro em preço do que ell abranger nom pode: e porem senhor eu muito amando a saluaçam de vosa alma e fama boa de vosa obra em todas virtudes fundada com amor grande de voso pouvo, e isto vos digo em vosas rendas porem nom perdendo mas ante por certo senhor gaanhaes principallmente naquellas cousas que aristotelles dizia a alexandre seu senhor que dizia senhor se queres aveer todas as riquezas de teus pouveros trabalha por aver seus carações e logo averas seu tisouros, e aquy senhor faço fim.

12. Dos contratos que som feitos per moedas antigas que se am de pagar a reaes segundo respeito das libras: primeiramente he de saber que era de cesar anda sobre a de Christo nosso saluador 38 annos E depois que todo contrato que for feito per moeda antiga até primeiro dia de Janeiro da era de Cesar 1434 annos que andaua o nascimento de christo em 1396 anos pague 700 por hũa, que sam de reaes brancos 20 reaes; e em cada hum destes reaes brancos ha 35 libras e cada hum destes reaes brancos vall 10 pretos. E em cada hum reall preto destes ha de vallor 3 libras e mea. E asy per esta regra averia em 20 reaes

brancos 200 reaes pretos E por esta guisa seria em a libra 700 libras asi em 20 reaes brancos como em 200 reaes pretos &.

E todo contrato que nom nomear moeada antiga e fôr feito atee primeiro dia de Janeiro de era de Cesar de mil quatrocentos vinte e quatro annos que andava o nascimento de Christo em 1385 pague 500 por hũa, que som pella dita regra 14 reaes brancos e 2 pretos  $\frac{6}{7}$  de hum preto. a saber fazendo de hum preto 7 partes contamos as 6 das 7 a que dizemos seys setenos e asy seriam de reaes pretos 182 pretos e seis setenos de hum preto. a saber de sete partes as vj.

E todo contrato que for feito atee primeiro dia de Janeiro da era de cesar de 1425 que andauaa era do nascimento de christo nosso salvador em 1387 pague 100 por hũa que som pella dita regra 2 reaes brancos e 8 pretos e  $\frac{1}{2}$  e setento de preto e de reaes pretos som  $28\frac{1}{2}$  e hum ceteno.

13. E des o dicto dia atee Janeiro de 1430 pague 70 por hũa que sam 2 reaes brancos e de reaes pretos 20 pretos.

E des o dito dia tee Janeiro de 1436 pague 40 por hũa que som 11 pretos e  $\frac{1}{2}$  a saber hum reall branco em que ha de vallor 10 pretos, e mais hum preto e  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

14. E des o dito dia tee Janeiro de 1453 page 10 por hũa que som 3 pretos de 10 que ha no reall branco e fica de sobejo de 3 pretos hum seteno de preto.

E des o dito dia de Janeiro de 1453 page hũa por hũa, que onde diz hũa por hũa, entende-se libra por um reall preto. E esto he por esta rezam hum reall preto vall 3 libras e  $\frac{1}{2}$ . E porque nom ha hi mays bayxa moeda do que he hum reall preto portanto se mandou dar hum reall preto por hũa libra, como quer que o reall preto valha tres libras e  $\frac{1}{2}$  visto a pequena cantidade da perda em se dar hum reall preto que vall  $3\frac{1}{2}$  por hũa soo libra.

Hu falla em soldos em alguum contrato entende-se soldo por reall branco porque tanto he ordenado que valha hum real branco como valia hum soldo.

15. As eras posemos em os parrafos asy como vem em ordenança como quer que hũas vão no contar das libras primeiro que as outras. E esto fizemos por vinr demenoydo as libras da mayor cantydade pera a mays pequena em ordem asy como vem a saber 700 primeiro e depois 500 e 100 e 70 e 40 e 10 e 1 por 1 e soldo por soldo.

16. E hum reall branco som 35 libras.

E cada hum reall branco vall 10 reaes pretos e cada hum destes reaes pretos vall 3 libras e  $\frac{1}{2}$ . E por esta regra em cem (dez) reaes brancos som 350 libras e de reaes pretos som 100 pretos.

E asy em 100 reaes brancos som 3500 libras e seriam de reaes preto 1000 pretos.

E em 200 reaes brancos sam 7000 libras e de reaes pretos sam 2000 pretos.

E em 400 reaes brancos sam 14000 libras, e de reaes pretos sam 4000 pretos.

E em 800 reaes brancos sam 28000 libras e de reaes pretos sam 8000 pretos.

E em 1000 reaes brancos sam 35000 libras e de reaes pretos sam 10000 pretos.

E em 2000 reaes brancos sam 70000 libras e de reaes pretos som 20000 pretos.

E em 4000 reaes brancos sam 140000 libras e de reaes pretos sam 40000 pretos.

E em 8000 reaes brancos sam 280000 libras e de reaes pretos som 80000 pretos.

E em 10000 reaes brancos sam 350000 libras e de reaes pretos som 100000 pretos.

E em 20000 reaes brancos sam 700000 libras e de reaes pretos som 200000 pretos.

E em 40000 reaes brancos sam 140000 libras e de reaes pretos sam 400000 pretos.

E em 80000 reaes brancos sam 280000 libras e de reaes pretos som 800000 pretos.

E em 100000 reaes brancos sam 350000 libras e de reaes pretos som 1000000 pretos<sup>7</sup>.

17. Senhor satisfazendo a vosa pergunta per vosa carta digo que em tempo delRey dom denis foram feitos dinheiros de ley de huum dinheiro e em 14 libras d'elles pouco mais ou menos por que nom saluauam a moeda, avia huum marco de prata de ley 11 dinheiros.

18. E a este respeito em ha libra delles avia tanto como agora ha em 69 reaes brancos e 2 pretos que som da dicta ley. E 12 dinheiros delles faziam soldo.

19. E depois em tempo delRey dom Affonso foram feitos outros dinheiros da dita ley e talha e mandou que 9 delles que chamavam novos vallesem tanto como 12 dos velhos que erom 2 soldos.. E em 18 libras da dicta moeda pouco mais ou menos pella dicta rezam avia huum marco de prata de ley de 11 dinheiros, e a este respeito em hũa libra delles avia tanto como agora ha em 46 reaes brancos e  $\frac{1}{2}$  destes que agora correm.

20. Em tempo delRey dom pedro nom se lavrou moeda alguma.

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7 Não copiámos o resto desta tabela que chega até 1000000 de reaes brancos; mas sempre com o mesmo erro na redução dos reais brancos para os pretos; isto é, uma cifra mais, que nós tirámos para evitar confusões.

E em tempo delRey dom fernando foram feitas barbudas e graves e fortes e meos fortes de ley de 3 dinheiros, e pillartes de ley de 2 dinheiros. E tambem barbudas e graves e pillartes de desuayradas maneyras: todas vinham ha hũa conqrusam pouco mais ou menos que em 24 libras de dicta moeda avya huum marco de prata de ley de 11 dinheiros E a este respeito avia tanta ley em hũa liura de dicta moeda como agora ha em 35 libras e  $\frac{1}{2}$  senhor atee quy foi a carta de castellam com as verbas de dabruanell a elRey D. Affonso o quinto.



## II

Archivio di Stato di Firenze,  
Notarile Antecosimiano, n. 16471 (già P 221 (1473-  
1474), ser Giuliano del Pattiere), ins. I, cc. 39v-41r.

Strenuus<sup>1</sup> et Magnificus miles et utriusque juris doctor dominus Johannes condam Ludovici domini Johannis Tessorii de Portugallia, orator sive ambaxiator illustrissimi domini domini Regis Regni Portugallie etc., ut dixit, ad presens Pisis moram trahens, per hanc cartam publicam et omni iure etc. pure, libere, simpliciter et inrevocabiliter inter vivos, ita quod presens donatio nulla ingratitudinis causa revocari possit, donavit et titulo donationis // dedit et concessit Davit Dattari [e]breo, genero infrascripti Vitalis, et michi Juliano notario suprascripto, ut et tanquam persone publice, presentibus et recipientibus pro Vitale olim Isahac ebreo commorante in civitate Pisarum et suis heredibus, sclavam unam nigram nomine Biccina de Ghinea da [sic] Terra Nova, etatis annorum otto vel novem, nondum baptizzata [sic], ut dixit dittus dominus Johannes, cum omni iure, actione, ratione, pertinentiis et adiacentiis suis.

Insuper suprascriptus dominus Johannes donavit, dedit, cessit, concessit atque mandavit suprascripto Davit et mihi notario, agentibus ut supra pro dicto Vitale, omnia iura et rationes [?] omnesque actiones et rationes eidem domino Johanni competentia in ditta sclava quatenus [?] suprascriptis Vitale et suis heredibus et successoribus et cui et quibus eam dederint vel vendiderint vel habere concesserint inde [?] agant [?] experiendum [?] contra omnem personam et locum.

Quam quidem donationem et omnia et singula suprascripta supradittus dominus Johannes promisit et convenit suprascripto Davit et mihi notario, agentibus ut supra, semper et omni tempore habere et tenere firmam, ratam, etc., et contra in aliquo non facere etc., sed eam sibi defendere et disbrigare etc., et suscipiendi ius [?] etc., et personaliter prosequi litem et iudicium si et quotienscumque etc., et eam et id [?] tractare et exequi usque ad finem, dando fideiussore ydoneos de iudicio Sixti.

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1 In the manuscript one can read "h" (two times) and "f", probably for "habita" and "firmata", which means that the document was either reproduced on parchment or copied two times according to the demand of the clients.

Si vero predicta omnia et singula sic non fecerit etc., penam dupli  
extimationis suprascripte sclave et dannum et dispendium totum etc.;  
se suosque heredes et bona sua omnia etc.; et renuntiavit omni iuri etc.  
// et taliter me etc.

Actum Pisis in hospitio del Cappello, posito in cappella Sancte  
Cristine Kintice, presentibus Johanne olim Luce Cey de Florentia,  
hospitatore et Francisco olim Bartholomei de Cremona prozeneta,  
testibus, anno Dominice Incarnationis MCCCC<sup>o</sup>LXXIII, indictione  
quinta, die vero quinto mensis junii.

### III

Archivo dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti di Firenze,  
Estranei, 235, c. 60r.

Chopia d'uno chonto di libri mandamo a Lisboa a  
Ixac Abravanello e Mastro Latone ebrei.

Apresso vi diren conto di chosto e spese di VII volumi di libri di legie di Bartolo, fatti  
chonprare a Vinegia e poi fatti fornire e leghare qui, e' quali consegniamo per voi e  
mandamoli a Siena a Gonsalvo Menendy.

I° Bartolo sopra la seconda del Chodicho chostò in Vinegia.... d.<sup>1</sup> 3

I° Bartolo sopra la seconda del Digiesto..... d. 4½

I° Bartolo sopra la seconda del Rinforzato..... d. 4      Somma di tutto

II Bartoli sopra tota del Digiesto Vecchio chostorono..... d. 7      d. 27 di Vinegia,

I° di tratati di questione di Bartolo..... d. 3½      vaglione f.<sup>2</sup> 27½

larghi ... f. 27.10 larghi

I° di Bartolo sopra la prima parte del Digiesto Nuovo..... d. 4

E per spese di trarli di Vinegia e porto fino qui in tutto..... d. 1

Per legatura de la seconda parte del Chodicho e per lettere 1455 e parafi 3110 ..... £.<sup>3</sup>  
10.17

Per leghatura de la seconda parte del Digiesto Vecchio £. 4 e per lettere 1000e parafi  
5250..... £. 10.2

Per leghatura del Rinforzato £. 4½ e per lettere 1140 e per parafi 7812 di colore.....  
£. 11.18

Per leghatura del Digiesto Nuovo e per lettere 850 e 1050 parafi di colore .....  
£. 7.8

Per leghatura del Digiesto Vecchio e per lettere 1325 e parafi di colore ..... £.  
11.6

Per leghatura del Digiesto Nuovo e per lette 1310 e parafi 7200 di colore ..... £.  
12.6

Per leghatura di più tratati di Bartolo e per lettere 500 e parafi 3000 in tutto ..... £.  
9.10

Per gabella de l'uscita di qui e involtura in tutto..... £.  
2.5

<sup>1</sup> d = ducato veneziano.

<sup>2</sup> f = fiorino.

<sup>3</sup> £ = lira picciola fiorentina.



Somma le spese chome si vede di leghatura e fornitura £. 75 s. 12 piccoli, vagliono a £. 5s.  
12 per f. larghi.... f. 13.10 larghi

Somma chosto e spese f. quarantuno larghi e di tanti v'abiano debitore, chosì achon[i]ate  
voi e trovandolo stare giusto

c'avisate..... f. 41-  
larghi

Francesco e Bernardo Chanbini compagni in Firenze

a dì x di marzo 1476 [1477]

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