

Conflict between Jews and Converts in Aragon Following the Persecution of 1391

New Testimonies from the Formulary of Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah of Montalbán*

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Study and edition of a letter written in rhymed prose contained in the epistolographic formulary by Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah, scribe to the Jewish community of Montalbán, in the Kingdom of Aragon. Written a few years after 1391 by the scribe on behalf of the local *aljama*, the letter was sent to the trustees of the Jewish community of Daroca, and its purpose was to collect money from Yosef Caro, a Jewish smith who had fled from Montalbán to there, following a dispute with another elderly smith who was an apostate. A reading of the Hebrew text shows that the conflict goes beyond a simple dispute between craftsmen, and involves a clash between Jews and their former brethren. This new phenomenon of mass conversion is also corroborated by a Hebrew poem of the Montalbán's Jewish scribe that is edited and translated in addition. The analysis of the text reflects the tension between Jews and converts in the aftermath of the 1391 riots.

KEYWORDS: History of the Jews; 1391 Riots; Aragon; Daroca; Social Conflict; Converts; Hebrew Rhymed Prose.

CONFLICTO ENTRE JUDÍOS Y CONVERSOS EN ARAGÓN TRAS LOS TUMULTOS DE 1391: NUEVOS TESTIMONIOS EXTRAÍDOS DE LA COLECCIÓN EPISTOLAR DE YOM TOB BEN ḤANNÁ, DE MONTALBÁN.— Poco después de los tumultos de 1391, los responsables de la aljama aragonesa de Montalbán remitían a los de la de Daroca una carta escrita por el escriba local e incluida en la colección epistolar de Yom Tob Ben Ḥanná. El propósito de esa carta era solicitar dinero de Yosef Caro, artesano judío de Montalbán, que había huido a Daroca a consecuencia de una disputa con otro artesano judío apóstata. El análisis del texto hebreo que aquí se edita muestra que el conflicto trasciende la simple disputa profesional, y debe entenderse en el marco de disputas entre judíos y sus antiguos correligionarios, ahora

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cristianos. La tensión entre judíos y conversos aparece corroborada por un poema hebreo de este escriba judío de Montalbán, que también se edita y traduce.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Historia de los judíos; tumultos de 1391; Aragón; Daroca; conflicto social; conversos; prosa rimada hebrea.

The epistolographic formulary of Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah (Abenhanya), scribe to the Jewish community of Montalbán, in the Kingdom of Aragon, is partially preserved in a single manuscript (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, Neubauer 1984). The formulary was edited by the author's son, Yosef, who prefaced each of the fourteen letters with a brief explanation of the circumstances in which it was written. I recently addressed the ties between Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah and an important group of Jewish courtiers in Saragossa, including Ḥasdai Crescas, Don Yosef Almali and his sons, Don Moses Alazar and members of the Ben Lavi (de la Cavalleria) family –notably Yehudah (Jahuda) de la Cavalleria (known as “the lion”), son of Don Vidal and Doña Orovida and brother of Tolosana, wife of the powerful courtier Benvenist de la Cavalleria.¹

Alongside the letters in Ben Ḥannah's formulary, we find rhymed poems, by the author. Most of the letters and poems are not dated, although the dates of two of the letters are known and two more can be dated with a high degree of certainty. The oldest letter that can be dated was written in 1389, as a letter of condolence to Don Yosef Almali, on the death of his brother-in-law, the prominent Saragossan courtier Alazar Golluf.² Another letter was written in 1391, or 1393 at the latest, and is a letter of recommendation on behalf of a convert who sought to return to his

¹ See R. BEN-SHALOM, “The Courtier as the *Scepter of Judah*: The Letters and Panegyrics to Courtiers of Yomtov Ben Hana, Scribe of the Jewish Community of Montalbán” (heb.), in *Ot Letova: Essays in Honor of Professor Tova Rosen*, eds. E. YASSIF, H. ISHAY and U. KFIR [= *El Prezente. Studies in Sephardic Culture* 6] (Beer-Sheva, 2012), 196-224. Judah and his sons Solomon and Vidal remained Jews, even after most of the family had converted to Christianity, in 1414-1415, in the wake of the Tortosa Disputation. See F. VENDRELL GALLOSTRA, “Aportaciones documentales para el estudio de la familia Caballería,” *Sefarad* 3 (1943), 115-154; A. BLASCO MARTÍNEZ, “The Expulsion of the Jews from the Lands of the Nobility: The Estates of Cavallería and Eleazar and the Order of the Hospitallers” (heb.), in *Jews and Conversos at the Time of the Expulsion*, eds. Y. T. ASSIS and Y. KAPLAN (Jerusalem, 1999), 155-175: 164.

² See BEN-SHALOM, “The Courtier as the *Scepter of Judah*,” 197.

home, following the persecution of 1391.³ The letter for the redemption of captives from the city of Pamiers in Languedoc (to which I will devote a separate study) was, in my opinion, written in 1394/5, and the letter to Ḥasdai Crescas was written in 1396.⁴ One of the poems in the formulary (a *Baqašah*) was written in 1401. Part of the formulary would appear to have been arranged in chronological order, although there are certainly deviations from strict chronological order, possibly to group together letters sharing a common theme, such as letters written to members of the Almali family. Most of the letters were written after the persecution of 1391 and in close proximity to it. The formulary thus sheds light on the new reality experienced by the Aragonese communities in general and the community of Montalbán in particular, following the events of that year –including the reconstruction of the communities of Aragon under the leadership of Ḥasdai Crescas, conversions, relations with conversos and with Christians, interaction between rich and poor, internal conflict and requests for assistance from other communities.⁵

1. THE PERSECUTION OF 1391 AND THEIR AFTERMATH IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF MONTALBÁN

This article will examine the relations between Jews and conversos in the community of Montalbán in the period immediately following the persecution of 1391, relying primarily on one of the letters in Ben Ḥannah's formulary and one of the author's poems, in which he explicitly addresses this issue. Before analysing these new testimonies, I will provide a brief overview of the persecution of 1391, and the state of the Jewish community of Montalbán in its aftermath.

On 4 June 1391, a mob, incited by the archdeacon Ferran Martinez, began to attack the Jews of Seville. Many of the Jews were slaughtered, some of the women and children were sold to Muslims as slaves, and many

³ R. BEN-SHALOM, "The Innocent Converso: Identity and Rhetoric in the *Iggeret Orhit* Genre Following the Persecution of 1391," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* (forthcoming).

⁴ R. BEN-SHALOM, "Hasdai Crescas: Portrait of a Leader at a Time of Crisis," in *The Jew in Medieval Iberia*, ed. J. RAY (Boston, 2012), 309-351: 318-319.

⁵ I will expand further on Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah and his collection of letters in a future study, to include a critical edition of the formulary.

converted to Christianity in order to save their lives. The synagogues were made into churches, and the homes of the Jews were given to Christians. From Seville, the violence quickly spread throughout the Kingdom of Castile, and from there to the Crown of Aragon. Dozens of Jewish communities were affected by the riots, which lasted about a year, dying down only in October 1391, but flaring up again in Aragon in early 1392 and, as late as April 1392, a priest who was a relative of Ferran Martinez sought to incite the people of Saragossa against the Jews. The Jews of Aragon fared better than their Castilian co-religionists, as the actions taken by King John I (1387-1396) against the riots –contrary to the impotence of the regency in Castile– served to encourage elements within Aragonese Christian society to defend the Jews to some extent. A look at the map of Jewish settlement after the persecution reveals that the communities in the Kingdom of Aragon (in the king's immediate environment) were not that severely harmed, compared to the devastation experienced by the Jews of Catalonia and Valencia. This was certainly due to the authority of the king of Aragon and his ability to afford some protection to the Jews in the vicinity of Saragossa. These efforts were complemented by the actions of Hasdai Crescas who was, at that time, in close contact with the king and queen. During the course of the persecution, tens of thousands of Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. Many Jews chose martyrdom, killing themselves with knives and swords, jumping from towers and even going out to the streets to die at the hands of the mob (probably while fighting). Immediately following the persecution, there began to arise in Spain, a large group of conversos or New Christians. This group included some who remained loyal to the Jewish faith and others who sought to sever ties with their Jewish roots and assimilate into Christian society.⁶

In August 1391, the violence struck the Jewish community of Montalbán and the homes of the Jews were looted. In an edict promulgated by King

⁶ See Y. F. BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II (Philadelphia, 1966), 95-169; R. BEN-SHALOM, "On the Jewish Martyrology in Spain in the Year 1391" (heb.), *Tarbiz* 70 (2001), 227-282; IDEM, "Jewish Martyrdom and Conversion in Sepharad and Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages: An Assessment of the Reassessment" (heb.), *Tarbiz* 71 (2001), 279-300; E. MITRE FERNÁNDEZ, *Los Judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III. El pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid, 1994), 50-54; J. RIERA SANS, "Judíos y conversos en los reinos de la Corona de Aragón durante el siglo xv," in *La expulsión de los Judíos de España*, ed. R. IZQUIERDO BENITO (Toledo, 1993), 71-91; IDEM, "Los tumultos contra las juderías de la Corona de Aragón en 1391," *Cuadernos de Historia* 8 (1977), 213-225.

John I on 30 August 1391, the officers of the Crown in Montalbán and the Christian residents of the town were ordered to protect the Jews and to restore the property that had been stolen from them.⁷ In 1398, the Jews of Montalbán suffered a second attack, at the hands of itinerant crusaders en route to fight the Muslims overseas. In July 1398, King Martin ordered the municipal magistrates to protect the Jews.⁸

The description in a dowry Hebrew letter written in Saragossa in 1410, for Yehudah ben Yosef of Montalbán, may refer to the bearer's ordeal during the persecution, twelve years earlier:

The intruder rose up, a band [of thieves] raided inside and outside. They broke forth and passed through Mont Alban, mountain desirable for dwelling, and they destroyed his home, and all that was within they took captive and looted. By morning light, [by] the light of the sun and not by the light of the moon [*levanah*], they did not leave him half-brick [*levenah*] upon brick, brick upon half-brick.⁹

According to the letter, the incident involved looting and the complete destruction of the house. If this is indeed a reference to the violence of 1398, it may be seen as an example of the destruction wrought by the rioters in the homes of other Jews, as it is unlikely that only a single home would have been affected in this way. Bonastruc Desmaestre's Hebrew account of the Tortosa Disputation (1413-1414), preserved in Šelomoh Ibn Verga's *Švet Yehudah*, lists a representative of the community of Montalbán by the name of "Abu Ganda" [*sic*], among the representatives

⁷ R. SAINZ DE LA MAZA, "La aljama judía de Montalbán (1307-91)," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 14 (1984), 345-391; M. Á. MOTIS DOLADER, *La Comunidad judía y conversa de Montalbán (siglos XIII-XV)* (Zaragoza, 2006), 36, 41-45.

⁸ See *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. Part II: 1328-1493* [= *Sources for the History of the Jews in Spain*, 5], comp. G. ESCRIBÀ (Jerusalem, 1995), doc. 1256, p. 263; M. Á. MOTIS DOLADER, "Actividad judicial del Santo Oficio en Montalbán (Teruel): ritos de la comunidad conversa a fines de la Edad Media," *Studium* 5 (1998), 141-188: 143, n. 13.

⁹ H. BEINART, "A Fifteenth-Century Hebrew Formulary from Spain" (heb.), *Sefunot* 5 (1961) 77-134: 97 (letter 12). The expressions "brick upon brick" and "brick upon half-brick" are borrowed from the laws pertaining to the transcription of Scripture—specifically the methods of spacing used to write certain poetic passages (see, e.g., b*Megillah* 16b).

of the communities of Aragon.¹⁰ As early as 1412, Church officials in Aragon –influenced by Vicente Ferrer– began to seek the isolation of the Jews in separate quarters, in the spirit of the laws enacted at Valladolid in Castile (January 1412) and revised at Cifuentes (July 1412).¹¹ In light of this tendency, the Crown of Aragon, now under King Ferdinand I, ordered, in October 1412, the separation of the Jews of Montalbán from the Christians, in response to a petition to that effect by the municipal authorities. In this vein, the rector of the church of Alloza, Juan Eiximen de Huguet, ordered Christians residing near the Jewish quarter to leave their homes within ten days. In December 1412, however, the king came to the defence of the Christian householders and rescinded the rector's order.¹² During this period, the Crown repeatedly intervened in matters concerning the Jewish community of Montalbán, which was subject to attacks by local Christians, apparently fomented by the reports arriving from Tortosa. In January 1413, Ferdinand I ordered the municipal magistrates to protect the Jews against violence and to inform him immediately of any future outbreaks, that they might be dealt with.¹³

Both during and after the Tortosa Disputation and the preaching of Vicente Ferrer in Aragon (1412-1416), as in most Aragonese Jewish communities, many of the Jews of Montalbán converted to Christianity. These conversions often split families, and financial disputes over matters of inheritance arose between the Jewish and the converted sides. Over the course of 1415, the king promulgated a number of decrees for the protection of the Jews of the city. In July, the king was informed that the municipal authorities were seeking to seize the property still in the hands of the few remaining Jews in the city. He instructed the royal bailiff of

¹⁰ See Šelomoh Ibn Verga, *Ševeṭ Yehudah*, eds. A. SHOHAT & Y. BAER (Jerusalem, 1947), 95. On the reliability of Desmaestre's account, see J. COHEN, "Tortosa in Retrospect: The Account of the Disputation in Solomon Ibn Verga's *Ševeṭ Yehudah*" (heb.), *Zion* 76 (2011), 417-452.

¹¹ BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 169; RIERA SANS, "Judíos y conversos," 71-72; Y. T. ASSIS, "Introduction: The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Their History as Reflected in the Royal Archives. Part II: From Decline to Destruction," in *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales*, XXI.

¹² *The Tortosa Disputation. Regesta of Documents from the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. Fernando I 1412-1416* [= *Sources for the History of the Jews in Spain*, 6], comp. G. ESCRIBÀ (Jerusalem, 1998), 16 (doc. 57).

¹³ *The Tortosa Disputation. Regesta of Documents*, 20 (doc. 71).

Montalbán to safeguard his rights over Jewish property. In August 1415, Ferdinand I ordered the governor of Aragon to use all means at his disposal to protect the Jews of Montalbán against their attackers. In the winter of that year, however, the king granted permission to a number of Jews to leave the city and to reside wherever they wished. The reason given in the royal order for their desire to leave was harassment by conversos and Christians alike. In 1416, the Jewish community of Montalbán ceased to exist –suffering the fate of other communities in Aragon, including Daroca, Alcañiz, Tortosa, Besalu and Castello d’Empuries. The Jews of Montalbán settled in nearby towns, such as Oliete and Teruel. Communal property, including the synagogue and other real estate, reverted to the Crown, over the course of 1416-1417.¹⁴ I have found no testimony regarding the fate of Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah during the period of the community’s extinction or in the days leading up to it. He may no longer have been alive at the time. His son, Jucef Abenhanya, on the other hand, who edited his formulary, was among those Jews who converted to Christianity, adopting the Christian name Gabriel de Santa Ana.¹⁵

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN JEWS AND CONVERSOS ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONY OF YOM TOV BEN ḤANNAH

One of the letters in the formulary was sent to the Jewish community of Daroca, in Aragon, in an attempt to locate a Jew from Montalbán who had moved there. This letter may have been written around 1395,

¹⁴ Y. T. ASSIS, “Introduction: The Jews in the Crown of Aragon Under Fernando I,” in *The Tortosa Disputation. Regesta of Documents*, IX, XII, XXXIV, MOTIS DOLADER, “Actividad judicial,” 144-149; IDEM, *La comunidad judía y conversa de Montalbán*, 56-57; *The Tortosa Disputation. Regesta of Documents*, 10 (doc. 33), 15 (doc. 53), 16 (doc. 57), 171-172 (doc. 596), 176 (doc. 612), and 192 (doc. 669). See also E. BENITO RUANO, “La judería de Montalbán (Teruel),” *Medievalia* 10 (1992), 55-63. According to the *Cortes de Maella*, there were in 1404, 564 households in Montalbán (including Jews), see MOTIS DOLADER, *La comunidad judía y conversa de Montalbán*, 26.

¹⁵ It is worth noting that Jucef/Gabriel managed to preserve his family name, by changing Ḥannah to Ana. See *The Tortosa Disputation. Regesta of Documents*, 178 (doc. 619): “Gabriel de Santa Ana, antes llamado Jucef Abenhanya.” This family name was not very common among the Jewish converts. A. BLASCO MARTÍNEZ, “Hagionomástica en judeoconversos aragoneses,” *Memoria Ecclesiae* 24 (2004), 121-144: 130, mentions only one convert from Saragossa who also took Santa Ana as his new family name.

since it is located in the formulary, between a letter from 1394/5 and the letter to Ḥasdai Crescas from 1396. Based on the explanatory preface by the author's son, and the content of the letter, the subject of the communication was a smith by the name of Yosef Caro, who had fled to Daroca, following a dispute with another smith, who was an apostate:

A further letter he [wrote] to the community of Daroca, [requesting] aid and assistance for Ḥayyim Moreno who had been falsely accused in a dispute between the smith [*ṣoref*] Yosef Caro and an elderly apostate smith, and the aforementioned Ḥayyim had been fined for this over two hundred dinars.¹⁶

The letter was written by the communal scribe, on behalf of the trustees of the community of Montalbán, and was sent to the trustees of the community of Daroca nearly a year after the dispute it describes.¹⁷ The purpose of the letter was to collect money from Yosef Caro, to compensate Ḥayyim Moreno, who had been arrested immediately after the dispute with the apostate, and was forced to pay over two hundred dinars for his release from prison. Such incidents were not uncommon in Aragon, whether between Jews or between Jews and Christians. Caro managed to flee to Daroca unpunished, after having found refuge in the home of the bailiff of Montalbán:

And when Pharaoh sent his prison warden to imprison Yosef and to execute upon him a written judgement, he fled from him and escaped to the home of our *gizbar* [i.e. bailiff], and after a few days left there whole in body and in property, blessed be He who exempted him from such a great punishment.¹⁸

¹⁶ עו'ד] לו כתב לקהל דרוקה, להיות לעזר ולהועיל לחיים מורינו, על אשר העלילו עליו על דברי ריבות היו בין יוסף קארו, צורף, ובין זקן אחד מומר, צורף, וחיים הנז'כר] נענש על זה יותר ממאתים דינרין (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155 [formerly 809], Neubauer 1984 [IMHM 19146], fol. 269r). See the complete Hebrew text in App. A, *infra*.

¹⁷ The incident occurred during the week preceding the "Sabbath of Comfort" (July-August), and the letter was written during the week in which the Torah portion "[And Moses spoke to] the heads of the tribes" was read (two-three weeks prior to the "Sabbath of Comfort," and thus nearly a year later).

¹⁸ יהי בשלח פרעה שר בית הסוהר לאסור את יוסף, ולעשות בו משפט כתוב, ברח מפניו ונמלט (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 269v).

The bailiff in question is the Christian bailiff (*baile, baiulus*)¹⁹ charged with carrying out the sentences of the Jewish court, whose role and standing enabled Caro to escape punishment.

Such appeals to respected and powerful Christians are known from similar cases in Aragon.²⁰ One passage in the letter, however, sheds light on the particular circumstances in Montalbán at the turn of the fifteenth century:

And outside the Israelite camp, they found a rebellious old man, an enemy and a miscreant, who was a Jew, a hater of Israel, and especially those of his [own] craft, including the aforementioned Yosef, whom he wickedly libelled and defamed with accusations that do not bear repeating.²¹

The passage describes a situation of constant conflict between the apostate Jew and Yosef Caro. The old apostate is portrayed as a “hater of Israel,” although an element of professional rivalry is also noted, and he is said to quarrel with other smiths in particular.

Was this an ordinary conflict between craftsmen,²² or was it already marked by the social tension that developed between some Jews of the community and some New Christians after 1391? The letter continues, offering further insight into the circumstances surrounding the dispute:

¹⁹ On the use of the word *gizbar* for bailiff among the Jews of Aragon, see the contemporary Isaac b. Šešet (Ribaš) [Perfet], *Responsa* (Jerusalem, 1975), 126, *responsum* § 508, p. 126 (cited BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 82-83); § 52, p. 22; § 249, p. 130; § 351, p. 194; § 395, p. 246; § 510, p. 160 concerns an appeal to Perfet by “the honoured gentleman who is the *gizbar* appointed over the Jews in Montalbán,” regarding a legal dispute between two of the town’s Jews. The Christian bailiff asked Perfet to sign verdict according to Jewish Law.

²⁰ Y. T. ASSIS, “Crime and Violence in Jewish Society in Spain (13th-14th Centuries)” (heb.), *Zion* 50 (1985), 221-240: 231-234.

²¹ ומחוץ למחנה ישראל מצאו זקן ממרה, צורר ומורה, איש יהודי היה שונא ישראל, ובפרט בני אומנותו, ובתוכם יוסף הנזכר, אשר עולל לו עלילות ברשע והוציא עליו שמות רעים, אין ראוי לזכרם (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 269r).

²² On Violence in Jewish communities in Aragon, see Y. T. ASSIS, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry: Community and Society in the Crown of Aragon, 1213-1327* (London and Portland, Or., 1997), 288-296; IDEM, “Crime and Violence.”

And said sinful old man quarrelled, as was his wont, with Yosef, and as they were arguing, in his anger he [the old man] tore the cloak that he [Yosef] was wearing in twelve pieces. And the aforementioned Yosef, when he saw that his clothes were torn and his head bare, struck him [the old man] on the cheek, striking and injuring him, [drawing] blood, wounding him in the head.²³

Between the lines of this account of social conflict between two smiths we are given a glimpse of the tensions entailed in the passage from Judaism to Christianity. The tearing of Yosef's cloak into 12 pieces would seem to imply ritualised violence, associated with the crossing of the lines between the faiths, since in so doing the apostate sought to imitate the action of the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite (1 Kings 11:30), who tore the garment of Jeroboam into twelve pieces as a symbol of the division of the kingdom of Solomon into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Even if we presume that the expression "twelve pieces" is merely a rhetorical flourish as opposed to a faithful description of reality, the story can, in any event, be placed within the context of discourse concerning conversion and crossing the boundaries between the faiths, as perceived by the scribe Ben Hannah, representing the leadership of the community.

The tension surrounding the crossing of religious lines in the incident recounted by Ben Ḥannah, however, need not necessarily be understood as a reflection of the new reality that developed in the wake of 1391. Indeed, the few years that had passed since the persecution may not yet have given rise to significant conflict between Jews and converts, as a group. The incident described in the letter would thus have been a product of the “old kind” of tension between Jews and apostates (converts for religious or social reasons) –who often harboured feelings of antagonism toward their former co-religionists and actively persecuted them–.²⁴

The phenomenon of apostate “haters of Israel” was not new. We know primarily of those apostates who took part in religious disputations, such as Pablo Christiani (c. 1263) who also engaged in missionary

²³ והזקן הפושע הזכר רב את ריבו כמנהגו עם יוסף הזכר וממהדרי מילי דברי ריבות, בחרון אפו
קרע לשנים עשר קרעים גלימה דאכתפיה. (ויסף הנז'כר] בראותו מלבושו קרוע וראשו פרוע הכהו על
(Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 269v). הלחי, הכה ופצוע, דמו בראשו נגעו

²⁴ See P. TARTAKOFF, *Between Christian and Jew Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250-1391* (Philadelphia, 2012).

activity after the Disputation of Barcelona. This was the context of missionary efforts by Jewish converts who preached to the Jews in their synagogues during the fourteenth century, formally licensed to do so by the Crown of Aragon. Worth noting for the purposes of this article are two brothers from Navarre –Pedro and Jimeno Perez de Tudela– who presented themselves to the Infant Peter in Montalbán in 1333, to request preaching licences.²⁵ Late-thirteenth and fourteenth-century *responsa* literature from Aragon also attests to the constant friction between Jews and apostates.²⁶ Such aggressive activity on the part of converts forced the Jews in various communities to appeal the Crown for privileges and edicts in order to minimize the converts' missionary efforts and to prevent them from entering the Jewish districts (*Calls*).²⁷ Nevertheless, primarily in light of a complaint poem (*Telunah*) by Yom Tov Ben Hannah that I will analyse below, I believe we can determine that the apostate smith described in this letter was in fact one of the converts baptised four years earlier.

It should be noted that the large wave of conversions of Spanish Jews in 1391 comprised, for the most part, forced conversions –contrary to events in Aragon during the Tortosa Disputation (1413-14) and particularly during the mission of Vicente Ferrer in Castile (beginning in 1411) and in Aragon (1412-16), which included voluntary conversions and conversions resulting from spiritual and legislative (Valladolid, 1412) pressure that limited the possibilities of Jewish existence.

Although the Crown disapproved of such coerced conversions, in August 1391, King John I ordered the converts of Majorca to cease associating with Jews, due to the dangers and ills that might arise from such contact. In September 1391, the Crown issued a decree prohibiting conversos from carrying arms or sailing to Muslim lands –both for economic reasons and in order to prevent them from returning to Judaism. According to Canon law, the conversos were considered Christians, and those who returned to their old ways (i.e. to their original faith) were considered heretics. In 1393,

²⁵ J. RIERA I SANS, “Les llicències reials per predicar als jueus i als sarraïns (segles XIII-XIV),” *Calls* 2 (1987), 113-143: 122.

²⁶ See e.g. Šelomoh ben Abraham Ibn Adret (RaŠBA), *Responsa*, ed. H. Z. DIMITROVSKY (Jerusalem, 1990), I: 1091, III: 352, I: 315.

²⁷ RIERA I SANS, “Les llicències reials per predicar,” 124-125.

King John I issued a number of decrees designed to segregate conversos from Jews (e.g. in Barcelona, Girona and Tortosa), stipulating separate habitations and prohibiting the sharing of meals, as well as sexual relations between Jewish men and Christian women. Having been informed that the Jews of Morvedre dress exactly like their converso brethren, the king wrote to the bailiff and magistrates of the city, instructing them to require Jews to wear a long outer cloak (*túnica larga*) and a round, red badge, in order to distinguish between them and the conversos. Converts were also prohibited from using their former, Hebrew names, and were required –on threat of punishment– to take new, Christian names. In January 1394, the king forbade conversos from leaving the realm, on pain of expropriation of all their property. In 1400, King Martin prohibited conversos from practising Jewish customs, such as observing the Sabbath and fast days, and celebrating religious holidays with Jews. The conversos were also placed under strict ecclesiastical supervision. Although there were few inquisitorial proceedings in this formative period, there were a number of trials initiated by the king's representatives against conversos who had tried to flee Aragon or to observe the Mosaic precepts in secret, as well as of Jews who had helped conversos.²⁸ The conversos continued to live in the neighbourhoods where they had formerly resided as Jews. They were precluded from contact with their Jewish brethren and each group had to shape its attitude towards the other while, at the same time, re-examining its own boundaries and collective identity. As a consequence, a new dynamic was born in this inter-social/religious borderland and a new grammar for conversion had to be developed.²⁹

On the subject of relations between Jews and conversos, Yitzhak Baer clearly distinguished between the different kinds of conversos that began

²⁸ BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 102, 124-126 and 471-472 (n. 21), on the *Auto* in Majorca, in 1407, of a converso who had twice attempted to return to Judaism; RIERA SANS, "Judíos y conversos," 83; D. NIRENBERG, "Spanish 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in an Age of Mass Conversion," in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, eds. J. COHEN and M. ROSMAN (London, 2008), 152-153; H. BEINART, "The 'Jewish Badge' in Spain and the Enforcement of the 'Decree of the Badge' under the Catholic Monarchs" (heb.), repr. in his *Chapters in Judeo-Spanish History*, vol. I, 74; RIBaŠ, *Responso*, § 43, p. 10: "for the Crown demands that an apostate not be called by a Jewish name but by a gentile name, and it is a punishable [offence]."

²⁹ R. BEN-SHALOM, "The Social Context of Apostasy among Fifteenth-Century Spanish Jewry," in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, 173-198: 191-198.

to emerge soon after the persecution of 1391, describing the relations that developed between Jews and conversos as follows:

Many of the conversos went over to the enemy camp immediately after they were baptized, though the outbreaks were still continuing, and tried to demonstrate their zeal for their new faith. Such people forced their families and friends to change their religion and became the chief instigators against the local Jews. Others wavered for many years after their baptism, and some of these even practiced a few of the Jewish rites in secret.³⁰

In light of this reality, it would be reasonable to attribute the dispute between the smiths in Montalbán to the new historical context of a certain group of conversos who had embraced Christianity and began to confront their old brethren and their own past immediately after 1391. It is interesting to note that the old smith is only identified explicitly as an apostate in the subsequent explanatory note added to the formulary by Yosef ben Yom Tov, and not by his father, the communal scribe. In his letter to the community of Daroca, Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah does not mention the old smith's conversion, but hints at the fact, referring to him as "a rebellious old man,"³¹ "a sinful old man," "an enemy and a miscreant"³² and "a Jew,"³³ a hater of Israel," even placing the violent incident "outside the Israelite camp." The author's use of such ambiguous terms was not coincidental. Similarly vague expressions appear in Ben Ḥannah's complaint (*Telunah*) poem in the formulary, which, according to the introductory note, was addressed to the wealthy members of the community, rather than to apostates or conversos. Closer examination of the text, however, reveals a more complex picture; that the poem was in fact aimed at the wealthy conversos.

³⁰ BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 133.

³¹ Following Mishnah, *Sanh.* 11:2.

³² Following Deut. 21:18, replacing *sorer* (wayward) with *šorer* (enemy; used in reference to Haman, in Esther 3:10). Note that Ben Ḥannah associates the old smith both with the "rebellious elder" (*zaqen mamre*) and with the "rebellious son" (*ben sorer u-moreh*).

³³ Used in reference to Mordecai, in Esther 2:5. Note that Ben Ḥannah associates the old smith both with Haman and with Mordecai.

3. YOM TOV BEN HANNAH'S COMPLAINT POEM: AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY³⁴

For I have seen, in this generation, the rich people of the land³⁵ [are] very evil and sinful against the Lord,³⁶ and despise their brethren the children of Israel. While the children of strangers that join themselves³⁷ to them, they love. They have turned to the arrogant [*rehavim*].³⁸ Alvan,³⁹ Hemdan⁴⁰ and men of Sheba.⁴¹ This is their way,⁴² straight before them.⁴³ In their [own] eyes they are wise⁴⁴ and righteous in their deeds. They see no fault in themselves. To spill innocent and righteous blood,⁴⁵ they gush⁴⁶ daily in counsels and knowledge.⁴⁷ But condemn⁴⁸ [their] soul in secret⁴⁹ and in public. They do not sleep if they have done no evil.⁵⁰

And their faces⁵¹ are welcoming and they appear as friends. To those who curse their ways and evil doings.⁵² They bring them near,⁵³ setting them above their chief joy,⁵⁴ at the head of the guests.⁵⁵ And they shun those who fear God, remaining silent when they are in distress,⁵⁶ [as if] deprived of speech.⁵⁷ And those who reprove them they answer impudently,⁵⁸ afflicting their legs with shackles⁵⁹ and bringing down prophets with bonds.⁶⁰ For this my soul moans⁶¹ and my eyes weep.⁶² And my heart is faint⁶³ and bitter. And I shall take up my homily and say:⁶⁴

Man of wickedness and of blood.⁶⁵ His hands filled with snares and nets.⁶⁶
To capture the sages.⁶⁷ Heads of thousands of Israel.⁶⁸

³⁴ See the Hebrew text in App. B, below. ³⁵ Following 2 Kings 24:14. ³⁶ Gen. 13:13. ³⁷ Isa. 56:6. ³⁸ Following Ps. 40:5. ³⁹ Gen. 36:23. ⁴⁰ Gen. 36:26. ⁴¹ Joel 4:8. ⁴² Ps. 49:14. ⁴³ See Prov. 14:12; 16:25. ⁴⁴ Jer. 4:22: "wise to do evil"; Isa. 5:21. ⁴⁵ Following Ps. 106:38; Deut. 19:10; Isa. 59:7. ⁴⁶ Ps. 94:4: "They gush arrogance, speak it, all the wrongdoers boast." See also Ps. 19:3. ⁴⁷ Prov. 22:20; see Jer. 7:24. ⁴⁸ Following Ps. 94:21. ⁴⁹ Following Deut. 13:7: "a companion who is like your own soul incite you in secret, saying 'Let us go and worship other gods' that you did not know." ⁵⁰ Prov. 4:16. ⁵¹ In what would appear to be a copyist's error, the word "*u-fnehem*" ('and their faces') appears twice in the manuscript, at the end of one page and the beginning of the next. ⁵² Jer. 23:22; Hos. 9:15. ⁵³ Following Num. 16:9. ⁵⁴ Following Ps. 137:6. ⁵⁵ Following 1 Sam. 9:22. ⁵⁶ For example, Ps. 107:6. ⁵⁷ Jer. 5:13. ⁵⁸ Following Prov. 18:23. ⁵⁹ Ps. 105:18. ⁶⁰ See 1 Sam. 10:5. ⁶¹ Ps. 42:6, 12; 43:5. ⁶² Following Lam. 1:16. ⁶³ Following Lam. 5:17. ⁶⁴ See Num. 23:7; 23:18. ⁶⁵ Following 2 Sam. 16:7. ⁶⁶ Following Eccles. 7:26. ⁶⁷ Following Job 5:13; Jer. 8:9. ⁶⁸ For example, Num. 1:16.

In his pride [and] highness of heart.⁶⁹ With his abundance of silver and gold.⁷⁰ Fearing neither the Lord and His goodness.⁷¹ Nor the elect of the children of Israel.⁷²

A lion cub lurking.⁷³ He kills the innocent⁷⁴ with false accusations.⁷⁵ His ways are set⁷⁶ with liars⁷⁷ and sinners of Israel.

He places grumbling words⁷⁸ in his heart.⁷⁹ Like the law of God within him.⁸⁰ And babes rule over him.⁸¹ The youth of the children of Israel.⁸²

One who walks blameless and does justice⁸³ is like stings in his eyes⁸⁴ and brier.⁸⁵ And like thorns in his side any who uphold the maintenance.⁸⁶ Of the House of Israel.

And he loves and brings close the enemies of the Lord. Gebal and Ammon⁸⁷ and Oreb.⁸⁸ [Pleasant] to his own kind,⁸⁹ and a bear lying in wait.⁹⁰ For the scattered sheep of Israel.⁹¹

Arrogant [and] brazen in his anger⁹² kept forever⁹³ for the people of his inheritance.⁹⁴ The sceptre of his fear and terror⁹⁵ will not depart from the tribes of Israel.⁹⁶

A sinner and inciter to sin⁹⁷ to accomplish his will.⁹⁸ Sated to do ill to the law of his Maker. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity.⁹⁹ Before the eyes of all Israel.¹⁰⁰

He presents himself [as] pure, and his hooves are like a pig's.¹⁰¹ As he

⁶⁹ Deut. 17:20; following Jer. 48:29. ⁷⁰ See Deut. 17:17. ⁷¹ Following Hos. 3:5. ⁷² Exod. 24:11. ⁷³ Lam. 3:10. ⁷⁴ Ps. 10:8. ⁷⁵ Deut. 22:14. ⁷⁶ Following 2 Chron. 27:6; Deut. 19:3. ⁷⁷ Following Ps. 101:7. ⁷⁸ Prov. 18:8. ⁷⁹ Dan. 1:8. ⁸⁰ Following 1 Kings 3:28. ⁸¹ Following Isa. 3:4. ⁸² Exod. 24:5. ⁸³ Ps. 15:2. ⁸⁴ Num. 33:55. ⁸⁵ Prov. 15:19; Mic. 7:4. ⁸⁶ For example, 2 Kings 12:8. ⁸⁷ Ps. 83:8. ⁸⁸ Judg. 7:25. ⁸⁹ Following Lev. 11:15; Deut. 14:14: "every raven [*orev*] according to its kind." There is a double play on words here: Oreb/ '*orev*, and '*orev*-raven/ '*orev*-pleasant – the final word of one line (Oreb) leading into the next line ("to his own kind"), just as "lying in wait" leads into "For the scattered sheep of Israel." The word *le-mino* ('to his own kind') offers a further play on words, as the word *min* may also mean 'apostate.' ⁹⁰ Lam. 3:10. ⁹¹ Jer. 50:17. ⁹² Following Prov. 21:24. ⁹³ Amos 1:11. ⁹⁴ Following, for example, Ps. 94:14. ⁹⁵ Following Exod. 15:16. ⁹⁶ Gen. 49:10. ⁹⁷ b*Sanhedrin* 107b. ⁹⁸ Following Prov. 11:1. ⁹⁹ Job 20:27. ¹⁰⁰ Deut. 34:12. ¹⁰¹ See *Genesis Rabbah* 65:1: "Why does he compare it [Rome] to a pig? Just as a pig, when it lies down, shows its [split] hooves, as if to say 'I am pure', so this wicked kingdom [Rome] that robs and despoils, pretends to execute justice." Ben Ḥannah's use of this particular metaphor is probably not a coincidence, as Rabbinic tradition clearly

wraps himself in interwoven contempt.¹⁰² Can one who drinks to intoxication be called a Nazirite? One who is uncircumcised by the name Israel?

He appoints overseers¹⁰³ over his [own] people. Born in his household, who eat his bread.¹⁰⁴ To destroy with his anger and rage.¹⁰⁵ And deceit, the House of Israel.¹⁰⁶

The glory of his riches and the multitude of his children.¹⁰⁷ To crush under foot the poor.¹⁰⁸ The abject and the humble.¹⁰⁹ And the sojourner [*hager*] who sojourns in Israel.¹¹⁰

He denies [*kofer*] the tenets of the Law. Darkens God's pure command.¹¹¹ Speaks with imperiousness. To every man of Israel.¹¹²

To the Jews, to destroy them with hatred. He banishes them from his land, [which] he makes desolate.¹¹³ And decides their judgement (*yeheraš din*). Dog,¹¹⁴ thief and informer. These are the names. Of the children of Israel.¹¹⁵

He believes every iniquitous thing. And strikes with a wicked fist.¹¹⁶ His children are distant from rescue.¹¹⁷ And the Lord will rescue Israel.¹¹⁸

He takes honour in the shame of his fellow.¹¹⁹ He wears the disgrace of his neighbour [as] a royal raiment. And the spilling of the blood of the humble [as] his cloak¹²⁰ and kingdom. Is Israel a slave?¹²¹

All who are learned¹²² are despised in his eyes.¹²³ His rebuke comes down on any who understand¹²⁴ goodly words.¹²⁵ Yet he does not know the difference between Ephah and Ephraim.¹²⁶ And between the children of Israel.

identifies Rome with Christendom.¹⁰² See Exod. 28:6. The word *buz* ('contempt') is reminiscent of the word *būš* ('linen'; see e.g. 1 Chron. 15:27), giving rise to the image of "interwoven contempt."¹⁰³ Gen. 41:34.¹⁰⁴ Lev. 22:11.¹⁰⁵ Following Ps. 78:49.¹⁰⁶ Hos. 12:1.¹⁰⁷ Esther 5:11.¹⁰⁸ Lam. 3:34.¹⁰⁹ See Prov. 16:19.¹¹⁰ Lev. 20:2.¹¹¹ See Ps. 19:9.¹¹² For example, Deut. 27:14.¹¹³ Ps. 46:9.¹¹⁴ The word *yeheraš* in the expression *yeheraš din* ('decide judgement') also appears in the expression *yeheraš lešono* in Exod. 11:7, where it refers to the snarling of a dog.¹¹⁵ Exod. 1:1; Gen. 46:8.¹¹⁶ Following Isa. 58:4.¹¹⁷ Job 5:4.¹¹⁸ Following Exod. 14:30.¹¹⁹ See Hab. 2:16.¹²⁰ Following Gen. 49:11, replacing 'anavim ('grapes') with the homophone 'anawim ('the humble').¹²¹ Following Jer. 2:14.¹²² See Isa. 29:11.¹²³ Ps. 15:4.¹²⁴ Prov. 17:10.¹²⁵ Gen. 49:21.¹²⁶ Gen. 25:4

His soul is of little worth in his eyes. And the greater part of his wealth and possessions. Is dedicated to his wood and stone.¹²⁷ To cast at Israel.

His heart is staunch¹²⁸ with the worshippers of Asherah. And their abominations are pure in his eyes. And he calls unclean unclean.¹²⁹ All that is pure in Israel.

He acts in arrogant anger.¹³⁰ Fomenting strife.¹³¹ With a man of strife.¹³² He mocks the clatter and the javelin.¹³³ For the disputation of the children of Israel.¹³⁴

He casts off the yoke of the Kingdom from his neck. And loads and places [it] on [the neck] of his fellow. In the blackness of night his lamp will expire.¹³⁵ And there will be light for the children of Israel.¹³⁶

[His] mouth speaks obscenities.¹³⁷ [Calling] the most upright of women whore and degraded one.¹³⁸ May angels of destruction strike him.¹³⁹ And peace be upon Israel.¹⁴⁰

He who executed the Lord's righteousness.¹⁴¹ His eye did not pity [him].¹⁴² He gave to plunder. Jacob and Israel.¹⁴³

Enemy of the Jews,¹⁴⁴ and his faith. [From which] he has departed, changing his religion. And he and that for which he is changed¹⁴⁵ [stand]. Opposite all Israel.¹⁴⁶

He speaks in the streets. Slanders¹⁴⁷ and condemns innocent blood.¹⁴⁸ He informs men. That Israel has sinned.¹⁴⁹

First of nations was Amalek.¹⁵⁰ To pursue the people of my sainted ones.¹⁵¹ Like him, this one too opposes. And fights against Israel.

The joy of our heart is ceased.¹⁵² Since our exile at the hand of our captors. And now our destroyers and devastators.¹⁵³ And also the Eternal of Israel.¹⁵⁴

¹²⁷ Following e.g. Deut. 29:16. ¹²⁸ Ps. 112:8. ¹²⁹ Lev. 13:45. ¹³⁰ Prov. 21:24. ¹³¹ Prov. 6:19. ¹³² Jer. 15:10. ¹³³ Following Job 41:21. ¹³⁴ Exod. 17:7. ¹³⁵ Following Prov. 20:20; 7:9. ¹³⁶ Following Exod. 10:23. ¹³⁷ Isa. 19:16. ¹³⁸ Lev. 21:7. ¹³⁹ Following Gen. 32:2. ¹⁴⁰ Ps. 125:5; 128:6. ¹⁴¹ Deut. 33:21. ¹⁴² Following Ezek. 16:5. ¹⁴³ Isa. 42:24. ¹⁴⁴ Esther 3:10. ¹⁴⁵ Lev. 27:33: "He shall not look out for good or bad, and he shall not change it. And if in fact he exchanges it, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy, it shall not be redeemed." ¹⁴⁶ Deut. 31:11; 2 Sam. 12:12. ¹⁴⁷ Prov. 10:18. ¹⁴⁸ Following Ps. 94:21. ¹⁴⁹ Josh. 7:11. ¹⁵⁰ Num. 24:20. ¹⁵¹ Following Dan. 8:24. ¹⁵² Lam. 5:15. ¹⁵³ Following Isa. 49:17. ¹⁵⁴ 1 Sam. 15:29.

Let my song of prayer come before you, O Lord.¹⁵⁵ Deliver me from the evil man.¹⁵⁶ And may all of my adversaries be like straw before the wind, and before my eyes.¹⁵⁷ Wreak the vengeance of the children of Israel.¹⁵⁸
 Give me strength, O Rock of my refuge.¹⁵⁹ Give me joy on the day of my sadness. When the righteous man rules¹⁶⁰ my heart will rejoice.¹⁶¹ Jacob will exult and Israel will be glad.¹⁶²

A good sign by the number of the children of Israel¹⁶³ / which are twenty-eight strophes full of all good things.¹⁶⁴

In the letters of the holy tongue and its accents. / My poem reveals to his people.

The actions of a man who loathes his soul.¹⁶⁵ / For he himself attested to his defect.

When he put his trust in his strength, all the days of his vain life.¹⁶⁶ / And placed his faith in his abundance of fat and blood.¹⁶⁷

And when he exchanged his faith for his wealth. / And declared the power¹⁶⁸ of his works to his people.¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁵ Ps. 119:169. ¹⁵⁶ Ps. 140:2. ¹⁵⁷ Ps. 83:14. ¹⁵⁸ Num. 31:2. ¹⁵⁹ Following e.g. 2 Sam. 22:3. ¹⁶⁰ Following Prov. 29:2. ¹⁶¹ Following Ps. 28:7. ¹⁶² Ps. 14:7. ¹⁶³ Deut. 32:8. ¹⁶⁴ Deut. 6:11, playing on the dual meaning of the word *bayit*, 'house/strophe.' The number 28 is a good omen (sign) in Hebrew numerology ("the number of the children of Israel"), equivalent to the word *koah*, which means 'power, strength.' Furthermore, the numerical value (73) of the words *hem koah* ('are 28' or 'are strength') is the same as that of the author's name, Yom Tov.¹⁶⁵ Following Num. 21:5, ¹⁶⁶ Following Eccles. 6:12. ¹⁶⁷ See Lev. 3:17. ¹⁶⁸ The numerical value of the word *koah* ('power') is 28 – a further reference to the poem's 28 strophes. ¹⁶⁹ Ps. 111:6.

The rhymed text comprises an introduction and the body of the poem, the twenty-eight strophes of which correspond to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, including the five final forms (*kaf, mem, nun, sade, peh*) and a closing line. In the separate rhymed and metered stanza that follows the body of the poem, the poet describes its structure and content. According to this stanza, the poem exposes the actions of the man who “exchanged his faith for his wealth.” In other words, the conversion in question was not to another religion or faith in another god, but a passage from belief in the spirit to belief in wealth and material goods. The introduction evokes a similar image: “For I have seen, in this generation, the rich people of the land [are] very evil and sinful against the Lord, and despise their brethren the children of Israel. While the children of strangers that join themselves to them, they love.” The complaint would thus be aimed at the wealthy members of the community who despise their Jewish “brethren” and love the Christian “children of strangers” –that is to say that they have not yet crossed over–.

The next line: “They have turned to the arrogant. ‘Alvan, Hemdan and men of Sheba” –following Ps. 40:5, “and has not turned to the arrogant, nor to such as fall away treacherously”– may indicate abandoning the Jewish faith, as the word *rehavim* (‘the arrogant’) was used at the time to denote conversion from Judaism to Christianity,¹⁷⁰ or it may (as in David Kimḥi’s commentary on the verse in Psalms) simply be a reference to the gravitation of the wealthy to the powerful,¹⁷¹ as the expression is indeed used in another letter in the formulary.¹⁷²

The body of the poem, however, evokes a different image. Alongside the central, recurring theme of the persecution by the wealthy of their Jewish brethren, we find a number of expressions that explicitly place the wealthy in a different category, even ascribing a different faith to them and the crossing of religious boundaries. Although this group bears affinity to the Jewish community, it is distinct from it and its members are

¹⁷⁰ See e.g. R. BEN-SHALOM, “The Disputation of Tortosa, Vicente Ferrer and the Problem of the Conversos According to the Testimony of Isaac Nathan” (heb.), *Zion* 56 (1991), 21-54: 45.

¹⁷¹ See Kimḥi’s commentary on Ps. 40:5.

¹⁷² Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 262r: “in the haughtiness of their hearts they turn to the arrogant” (*rehavim*).

not called Jews, but “the rich people of the land.” Their attitude toward the Jews is said to include the intention “to destroy them with hatred” and to expel them (“He banishes them from his land, [which] he makes desolate”). This group is thus not merely a heretical current within the communal collective, but rather external to the community.

The wealthy man is described as “one who is uncircumcised [called] by the name Israel” and “denies the tenets of the Law.” “His heart is staunch with the worshippers of Asherah [i.e. Christians],” and “their abominations [i.e. the Church and its ritual objects, such as images of Jesus and the saints] are pure in his eyes.” Although these expressions could be interpreted as metaphors for religious heresy falling short of actual conversion, the words “Enemy of the Jews, and his faith. [From which] he has departed, changing his religion. And he and that for which he is changed [stand]. Opposite all Israel” leave no room for doubt, as they explicitly refer to a crossing of religious lines.

Ben Ḥannah’s complaint poem describes the hybrid situation of Jewish society in the first decade after 1391. In the communal consciousness (and apparently among the wealthy conversos themselves), the conversos existed in the liminal space between Judaism and Christianity. Their identity is ambiguous –neither entirely outside the Jewish camp nor fully part of the Christian camp. The poem thus places them squarely among the enemies of Israel, but also finds it hard to define their precise social standing. They are still brothers, from whom more is expected than from Christians. Rather than seeking the company of Jews, however, they try to find favour in the eyes of the Christians –despite the fact that the Christians themselves do not trust them and object strongly to their ways: “And their faces are welcoming and they appear as friends. To those who curse their ways and evil doings” –alluding, perhaps, to Christian criticism of converso “judaising” that, as noted above, began soon after the persecutions. Converso ways also elicited criticism from within the Jewish community, although those who admonished them on the community’s behalf encountered fierce personal opposition from the conversos, who would inform on and bring about the incarceration of Jews: “And those who reprove them they answer impudently, afflicting their legs with shackles and bringing down prophets with bonds.” The Jews had expected them to support the rabbis, but they actually persecuted them and set traps “to

capture the sages.” They had hoped that the wealthy conversos would support the community’s institutions, but the latter could not stand “any who uphold the maintenance.” Yet, the figure represented in the poem still tries to appear pure, presenting his “hooves ... like a pig’s.”¹⁷³ In other words, in his own mind, he still retains one foot in the Jewish community.

The poem gives particular attention to socio-economic tensions. The wealthy conversos appear to continue to conduct much of the community’s affairs. This phenomenon, during the years immediately following the mass conversions, should not come as a surprise. Years later, even in the second generation, the Jews of Majorca, for example, would approach important conversos and involve them in various internal affairs of the Jewish community. This custom led Šim’on ben Šemaḥ Duran (1361-1444) to issue a demand (sometime before 1435) that converso dignitaries should not be brought into the Jewish community’s social disputes. He even demanded that this prohibition be instituted as a special ordinance bearing the penalty of excommunication.¹⁷⁴ His remarks in this instance are revealing of the extensive involvement of the conversos in community life and of the desire on the part of the Jews to turn to them for assistance during moments of crisis.

The religious aspect of conversion is raised in the poem, but would appear to be a marginal issue (perhaps due to the coercive nature of the conversions). Ben Ḥannah’s primary orientation is ethnic-tribal: religious conversion is irrelevant to the question of identity, following the Talmudic principle that “although he has sinned, he remains a Jew.”¹⁷⁵ In the eyes of Ben Ḥannah, the conversos still bore responsibility toward the

¹⁷³ That is attempting to convey the appearance of purity, based on *Genesis Rabbah* 65:1.

¹⁷⁴ Šim’on b. Šemaḥ Duran, *Responsa*, vol. III (Lemberg, 1851), § 227, pp. 36a-b: “What is this confidence you have in pointless hatred amongst you, because of which your words are heard by the notables among the conversos (*anusim*) ... Create a boundary here by means of excommunication and a ban so that no one will involve one of these conversos in his interpersonal disputes.” Duran sought to establish social and political boundaries between the two communities at a time when such boundaries seemed to be losing their importance in Majorca.

¹⁷⁵ b*Sanhedrin* 44a. See J. KATZ, “Though He Has Sinned He Remains a Jew” (heb.), *Tarbiz* 7 (1958), 204-217.

community, and he perceived their turning their backs on it as a betrayal, for which he expected them to suffer divine retribution.

Regarding an ostensibly similar group of Jews baptised at Valencia and Barcelona in 1391, Isaac Perfet –a rabbi and halakhist who resided at Algiers at the time (after having being forcibly baptised himself in 1391, in Valencia)– wrote the following:

[...] Since they converted, even if initially by force, they later cast off the yoke of Heaven, and severed the bonds of the Torah from them, and of their own will follow the laws of idolaters and transgress all of the precepts of the Torah, and what is more persecute the unfortunate Jews among them, to accuse them falsely and eradicate them as a people, that the name Israel shall be remembered no more.¹⁷⁶

The image of the converso evoked by Perfet is very similar to that of the wealthy men in Ben Ḥannah's poem. Four common themes appear in both sources: casting off Jewish Law ("He denies the tenets of the Law. Casts aspersions on the God-made precepts"; willingly embracing Christianity ("His heart is staunch with the worshippers of Asherah. And their abominations are pure in his eyes"); persecuting Jews ("To destroy with his anger and rage. And deceit, the House of Israel"; "To crush under foot the poor. The abject and the humble. And the sojourners who sojourn in Israel"; "Like him, this one too opposes. And fights against Israel"); and making false accusations against Jews in order to eradicate the Jewish presence in Spain ("He kills the innocent with false accusations"; "Slanders and condemns innocent blood"; "To destroy with his anger and rage. And deceit, the House of Israel"; To the Jews, to destroy them with hatred. He banishes them from his land, [which] he makes desolate).

Ben Ḥannah's poem contains far richer imagery than Perfet's halakhic *responsum*. It also includes further characteristics, such as: the persecution of rabbis ("His hands filled with snares and nets. To capture

¹⁷⁶ Ribaš, *Responsa*, § 10, p. 5. The *responsum* answers a question posed to Perfet by R. Amram Efrati b. Marwam, regarding the validity of testimony given by conversos. On Perfet's forced conversion, see J. RIERA I SANS, "On the Fate of R. Isaac bar Sheshet (Ribash) During the Persecutions of 1391" (heb.), *Sefunot* [NS] 2 (17) (1983), 11-20. See also Ribaš, *Responsa*, § 43, p. 10: "And due to our sins, there are many apostates there, including denouncers and 'night crows' [i.e. informers; see b*Eruvin* 53b and Raši, s.v. *Megide be-'alatah*] who slander Jews."

the sages”; “All who are learned are despised in his eyes”); opposition to the Jewish religion –possibly hinting at religious polemics– (“Sworn to do ill to the law of his Maker”); abuse of wealth (“In his pride [and] highness of heart. With his abundance of silver and gold. Fearing neither the Lord and His goodness”; “The glory of his riches and the multitude of his children. To crush under foot the poor”; “And the greater part of his wealth and possessions. Is dedicated to his wood and stone. To cast at Israel”); collaborating with criminals within the community (“His ways are set with liars and sinners of Israel”); juridical cruelty (“And decides their judgement. Dog, thief and informer. These are the names. Of the children of Israel”; “He believes every iniquitous thing. And strikes with a wicked fist”); intellectual ignorance (“All who are learned are despised in his eyes. His rebuke comes down on any who understand goodly words. Yet he does not know the difference between Ephah and Ephraim [sons of Midian]. And the children of Israel”); failure to pay communal taxes (“He casts off the yoke of the Kingdom from his neck. And loads and places [it] on [the neck] of his fellow”); moral depravity (“[His] mouth speaks obscenities. [Calling] the most upright of women whore and degraded one”); and informing (“He informs men. That Israel has sinned”).

In the same responsum, Perfet describes another group of conversos:

[...] And there are others, who would wholeheartedly and gladly abandon apostasy, but are unable to do so [...] And perhaps they might extricate themselves but fear that if they leave the members of their household among the idolaters they will intermingle with them and learn from their deeds and will never depart, and they choose to tarry there in order to bring the members of their household within the restraining bonds of the Torah and its precepts, until Heaven may have mercy on them [...] And in the meanwhile they are careful not to defile themselves with the pollution of transgressions, except in time and place of danger.¹⁷⁷

This example, from the *responsa* of Perfet, of the existence of different kinds of conversos –ranging from those who persecute Jews to those who risk their lives to observe the precepts and preserve their Jew-

¹⁷⁷ Ribaš, *Responsa*, § 10, pp. 5-6.

ish identity— is neither unique nor unusual. Similar descriptions can be found in the *responsa* literature and other Jewish sources. In his study of conversos, Benzion Netanyahu analyses the *responsa* of the Aragonese rabbis who had emigrated to Northern Africa following the violent persecution of 1391. He focuses on those halakhic rulings that pertain to the conversos and which were formulated in *response* to issues raised by the Jews. He finds for instance that Isaac Perfet gave expression to a growing recognition of the non-Jewish character of the conversos. In addition, according to Netanyahu, members of the Duran family, who succeeded Isaac Perfet as the leading rabbinic authorities in Northern Africa in the fifteenth century, exhibited a similar attitude. According to this reading, each important rabbinical figure initially demonstrated an open, tolerant position towards the conversos in his halakhic rulings. This liberality then underwent a transformation, ultimately evolving into a severe denunciation of the conversos once the actual extent of their Christian identity had become apparent.¹⁷⁸

In contrast to Netanyahu's interpretation of the *responsa*, which rests on his clustering all rabbinical opinions regarding the identity of the conversos into a single corpus, I propose that we read these documents in a different way. Instead of focusing on the formal position delineated by halakhic rulings, we should first attempt to reconstruct the nature of the social relations that actually prevailed between Jews and conversos, relations that were clearly reflected in the queries presented to the rabbis for consideration. This approach will be much more effective if we want to understand popular opinion within Jewish society in relation to

¹⁷⁸ See e.g. B. NETANYAHU, *The Marranos of Spain, From the Late Fourteenth to the Early Sixteenth Century According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources* (Ithaca and London, 1999³), 5-76 (and the review article by G. D. COHEN, *Jewish Social Studies* 29 [1967], 178-184); A. A. SICROFF, "The Marranos: Forced Converts or Apostates?" *Midstream* XII/8 (1966), 71-75; 74; B. NETANYAHU, "On the Historical Meaning of the Hebrew Sources Related to the Marranos," in *Hispania Judaica*, eds. J. M. SOLA-SOLÉ, S. G. ARMISTEAD & J. H. SILVERMAN, vol. I (Barcelona, 1980), 79-102; Y. H. YERUSHALMI, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (Seattle, 1981), 21-42; E. GUTWIRTH, "Elementos étnicos e históricos en las relaciones judeo-conversas en Segovia," in *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition*, ed. Y. KAPLAN (Jerusalem, 1985), 83-102; M. ORFALI LEVÍ, *Los conversos españoles en la literatura rabínica: problemas jurídicos y opiniones legales durante los siglos XII-XVI* (Salamanca, 1982).

the conversos. Only then can we properly interpret the efforts of Jewish communities and rabbinical authorities to sort these complications out.

The same *responsa* that seem to anchor Netanyahu's thesis lead us to rather different conclusions, among them the impression that Jewish life in fifteenth-century Spain exhibited a wide range of opinions regarding the conversos –opinions that largely diverge from those described by Netanyahu. Rather than finding only a growing Jewish recognition of the conversos as Christians, we find a widespread sense of mutuality, familiarity, and ongoing dialogue between the two populations. The queries raised by the Jewish community with the rabbis about the first generation of converts clearly show that social intercourse between Jews and conversos had not ceased. The behavioural partition some conversos observed between a public Christianity and a private Judaism was accepted by Jews as entirely natural given the circumstances. Thus, for instance, it was said of two conversos who had served as witnesses in divorce proceedings that they “were considered valid by the people of God, and the opposite by the *goyim* [here, ‘Christians’].”¹⁷⁹ That is to say, while the Christians considered them to be Christian, the Jews had no doubts about their Judaism. Even the growing number of halakhic rulings during this period pertaining to the permissibility of converso wine point, in my opinion, to the generally prevailing belief among the Jews who sent these questions to their rabbis regarding the conversos' Jewish credentials.¹⁸⁰

Contemporary documents from the archives of the Crown of Aragon also reveal a lack of clear boundaries between the Jewish and converso communities, as they appear in Ben Ḥannah's complaint poem. In 1417, for example, the city councillors of Girona petitioned the king, inter alia, to create a physical separation between Jews and conversos who lived together in the same quarter, and to compel unconverted wives of conversos to leave their husbands and New Christians to baptise their minor children or relinquish them.¹⁸¹ In Saragossa as well, conversos lived in the Jewish quarter, and in that same year, they joined Christians in the city in demanding

¹⁷⁹ Ribaš, *Responsa*, § 11, p. 5.

¹⁸⁰ I have addressed this topic at greater length, through specific examples, in BEN-SHALOM, “The Social Context of Apostasy,” 176-184.

¹⁸¹ *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales*, 291 (doc. 1336).

that the area of the Jewish quarter be reduced, so that the homes of the conversos might be excluded from the quarter. The coexistence reflected in the historical documents thus included the sharing of public and even private physical space –in families in which the husband had converted, while his wife and often his children had remained Jews. In one case, for example, despite the separation rules he had ordered, King Ferdinand I allowed the converso Joan de Sant Feliu (ol. Samuel Legem) of Murviedro, to continue to live with his wife and children, on condition that he strive to convert them.¹⁸² The lack of clear boundaries between the communities resulted in tensions that often required the intervention of the Crown, to protect the Jews and to punish their converso attackers. In Montalbán, in 1415 (one year before the community's extinction), Ferdinand I allowed Jews to leave the city for any destination within the realm, in light of the violent attacks they had suffered at the hands of conversos and Old Christians.

In his complaint poem, Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah relates to the first group of conversos who persecuted the Jews and whom he identifies with the wealthy members of the community. The poem reflects the rupture within the community in the aftermath of 1391 and the conversion of the Jewish upper class. Clear boundaries had not yet been drawn, and the author is unable to determine whether these wealthy individuals are a part of the community or external to it. The text thus contains ambiguities and internal contradictions. The wealthy are sometimes portrayed as Jews and sometimes as non-Jews. They appear, on the one hand, to have completely abandoned the Jewish group of their own volition and to actively seek its destruction. On the other hand, they still consider themselves Jews ("uncircumcised [called] by the name Israel"), and are expected to act as Jews.

Ben Ḥannah viewed the second group of conversos –who considered themselves bound by Torah and halakhah– part of the Jewish community. There is no criticism of them whatsoever in the complaint poem or any of the other texts in the formulary. On the contrary, another of his letters –a recommendation on behalf of the teacher Ḥayyim Caro– demonstrates a positive attitude toward this group.¹⁸³ The boundaries that would emerge over the course of the following years, even between this group of con-

¹⁸² ASSIS, "Introduction," in *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales*, XXIII-XXV.

¹⁸³ See BEN-SHALOM, "The Innocent Converso."

versos and the Jewish community, were as yet unknown, which is probably why the complaint poem refers specifically to the wealthy rather than to *conversos* in general.

Ben Ḥannah's text shows that in the first years after 1391 –a period in which Profayt Duran (a convert, himself) considered conversos and Jews a single, united people¹⁸⁴ – relations between the two groups were plagued by bitter social tensions, that would accompany Spanish Jewish society throughout the fifteenth century. The importance of Ben Ḥannah's testimony lies primarily in its proximity to the events of 1391, shedding light on the bitterness felt by Jews who had survived the persecution, toward the converso upper class. On the other hand, his sharp criticism also reflects the idea of a destiny common to both Jews and conversos, expressed by Profayt Duran at the time, and by Isaac Abravanel at the end of the fifteenth century, and which Baer described as a common ideological perception of Jewish destiny and future redemption.¹⁸⁵ In Ben Ḥannah's poem, we find that it was this very commonality that gave rise to the sense of bitter disappointment with the wealthy conversos.

This complaint poem is the harshest known attack on conversos from the turn of the fifteenth century. Even the criticism levelled at certain converso circles by later, post-expulsion authors such as Isaac Arama and Isaac Abravanel, is not nearly as strident.¹⁸⁶ Ben Ḥannah was not alone in his view, however. The Inquisition persecuted other Jews, at the time, for insulting conversos.¹⁸⁷ This can perhaps be explained by the proxim-

¹⁸⁴ See H. H. BEN-SASSON "The Generation of Spanish Exiles on Itself" (heb.), repr. in his *Continuity and Change: Studies in Medieval and Modern Jewish History* (heb.), ed. J. HACKER (Tel Aviv, 1984), 209. See also BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 150-158; M. N. KOZODOY, *A Study of the Life and Works of Profiat Duran* (PhD Dissert., JTSA, New York, 2006), 97-120.

¹⁸⁵ R. BEN-SHALOM, "The Converso as Subversive: Jewish Traditions or Christian Libel?," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1999), 259-283; Y. BAER, "The Messianic Movement in Spain during the Inquisition" (heb.), *Zion* 5 (1934), 71.

¹⁸⁶ See BEN-SASSON, "The Generation of Spanish Exiles," 208-220; NETANYAHU, *The Marranos of Spain*, 135-201; S. REGEV, "The Attitude Towards the Conversos in 15th-16th Century Jewish Thought," *REJ* 156 (1997), 121-128; BEN-SHALOM, "The Converso as Subversive."

¹⁸⁷ ASSIS, "Introduction," in *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales*, XXV.

ity to the events of 1391. The rift between Jews and conversos was still fresh and often ambiguous. On the part of the Jews, there was still the expectation that the two groups would continue to follow the same path, as a single, coherent unit. From an economic perspective, the generation of 1391 may have felt that the wealthy among the New Christians should continue to bear their share of responsibility for the community's expenses, taxes and subsidies. This expectation was not entirely without basis, as the Crown itself, at that time, addressed various fiscal demands to the Jewish and converso communities together. Conversos and Jews appeared on the same orders and, in some of the documents, the terms are used interchangeably.¹⁸⁸ As great as the expectations of the wealthy conversos were, so was the disappointment when they refused to pay, thereby eliciting sharp criticism. Some of the expectations would also appear to have been unreasonable, in light of the laws of separation and supervision of converso society. Later generations, like those of Arama and Abravanel, were far more practical, and had learned to distinguish between the various types of wealthy conversos. Their expectations were also considerably lower than those of their predecessors.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ ASSIS, "Introduction," *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales*, XXVIII-XIX, XXII. The treatment of Jews and conversos as a single group was particularly evident until the death of King John I, in 1395. In 1412, under Ferdinand I, this policy changed completely, and the Crown began reserve separate treatment for the Jewish and converso communities.

¹⁸⁹ See R. BEN SHALOM, "The Typology of the Converso in Isaac Abravanel's Biblical Exegesis," *Jewish History* 23 (2009), 281-292.

APPENDIXES

A) BEN ḤANNAH'S HEBREW LETTER

(Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, 269r-v)

עו'ד] לו כתב לקהל דרוקה, להיות לעזר ולהועיל לחיים מורינו, על אשר העלילו עליו על דברי ריבות היו בין יוסף קארו, צורף, ובין זקן אחד מומר, צורף, וחיים הנז' [כר] נענש על זה יותר ממאתים דינרין. וכה אמר:

שרי צבאות ישראל¹ אנשי שם² ומעלה. חיים וחסד יעש יי' עמכם,³ ומכל עיני משחית יצילכם, ומיד אויביכם יושיעכם, ויבטל עצת שנאיכם מנדיכם,⁴ כנפשכם ונפש בעלי בריתכם אחיכם, נאמני קהל מונטאלב'ין, חתומי מטה, יודעים עדות ברורה את אשר קרה לאיש הזה שמו חיי'ים מורינו, חיינו אינם חיים,⁵ חשך תארו משחור⁶ שחר שבת נחמו,⁷ מאנה הנחם נפשו,⁸ בצאתו מבית הכנסת עם יוסף קארו, צורף מתגורר ביניכם עתה. ומחוץ למחנה ישראל⁹ מצאו זקן ממרה,¹⁰ צורר ומורה,¹¹ איש יהודי היה¹² שונא ישראל,¹³ ובפרט בני אומנותו,¹⁴ ובתוכם יוסף הנז' [כר], אשר עולל לו עלילות ברשע¹⁵ והוציא עליו שמות רעים, אין ראוי לזכרם.¹⁶ והזקן הפושע הנזכר רב את ריבו כמנהגו עם יוסף הנזכר, וממהדרי מילי דברי ריבות,¹⁷ בחרון אפו¹⁸ קרע לשנים עשר קרעים¹⁹ גלימה דאכתפיה.²⁰ ויוסף הנז' [כר] בראותו מלבשו קרוע

¹ מלכים א, ב, ה. ² במדבר, טז, ב. ³ על-פי איוב, י, יב. ⁴ ישעיהו, סו, ה. ⁵ עיינו: בבלי, ביצה, לב ע"ב. ⁶ על-פי איכה, ד, ח. ⁷ ישעיהו, מ, א. השבת שלאחר תשעה באב, שבה נקראת בבית-הכנסת פרשת ואתחנן, הנקראת על שם ההפטרה שבת נחמו. ⁸ על-פי תהלים, עז, ג. ⁹ יהושע, ו, כג. ¹⁰ בבלי, סוטה, מה ע"א: "מצאו זקן ממרה". ¹¹ עיינו דברים כא, יח: "סורר ומורה". ¹² אסתר, ב, ה. ¹³ עיינו בבלי, פסחים, קיג ע"ב: "שונא ישראל, ולא שונא מכרי". ¹⁴ עיינו: תנחומא (ורשה), בראשית, ח; מדרש תהלים (בובר), יא, ו; פירוש רש"י לבראשית, ג, ה: "כל אומן שונא בני אומנתו". ¹⁵ תהלים, קמא, ד. ¹⁶ עיינו: הרמב"ם, ספר מורה הנבוכים, בתרגומו של שמואל ב"ר יהודה אבן תיבון, חלק ג, ח, ירושלים תשמ"ז, עמ' שצב: "שאלה הדברים אין ראוי לזכרם שיושם להם שמות, אבל הם ענינים שצריך לשתוק מהם". ¹⁷ דברים, יז, ח. ¹⁸ נחום, א, ו. ¹⁹ מלכים א, יא, ל. ²⁰ למשל בבלי, בבא בתרא, מד ע"ב; בבא קמא יא ע"ב:

וראשו פרוע²¹ הכהו על הלחי²², הכה ופצוע²³, דמו בראשו²⁴ נגעו²⁵, ויהי בשלח פרעה²⁶ שר בית הסוהר²⁷ לאסור את יוסף, ולעשות בו משפט כתוב²⁸, ברח מפניו ונמלט בית גזברנו. ובקרב ימים אחדים יצא משם שלם בגופו ובממונו, ברוך שפטרנו מענש גדול ורב כמו שנאמר²⁹. בכל זאת לא חטא³⁰ חיים הנזכר. ואויבי יי מצאו פתח³¹ אסור³² כנגדו כי נשתדל להציל את יוסף מיד מכהו³³, ויוסיפו עוד שנוא אותו³⁴, בראותם כי אזלת יד³⁵ המכה, חשבו לקצותה³⁶, העלילו על חיים כי הוא עשה, ותחת יד המכה ידיו אסורות ורגליו בנחשתיים³⁷, רעב ללחם וצמא למים³⁸, עד אשר פדה נפשו ביותר מהנמצא אותו כפלי כפלים, ולהפיק רצון האדון דמים לו³⁹, ולהשקית תלונות הצורר, לא הספיקו לו יותר ממאתים דנרין.

לכן אתם ראשי עם קדש⁴⁰, דעו וראו כדת מה לעשות לאיש⁴¹ אשר בעדו ובסבתו, חברו נזוק בנפשו וברכושו, ומן הנמצא בידו ישלם לרעהו פי שנים, רוכב שמים⁴², יראנו בנחמת ציון וירושלם, כרצונכם ורצון דורשי שלומכם וטובתכם, החותמים בפרשת ראשי המטות⁴³, מבקשים מכם תשובה מעליא, אחיכם פלוי ופלוי.

על הכתב:

להתיר אגודות מוטות⁴⁴ הרודים בעם⁴⁵ במקל תפארה⁴⁶ ומוטות⁴⁷. עומדים בפר' [שנת] דרכי⁴⁸ ראשי המטות. נאמני קהל הקדש שבדרוקה יצ"ו.

²¹ עיינו: ויקרא, יג, מה: "והצרוע [...] וראשו יהיה פרוע". ²² מיכה, ד, יד. ²³ מלכים א, כ, לו. ²⁴ יהושע ב, יט; יחזקאל, לג, ד. ²⁵ ויקרא, יג, מד: "איש-צרוע [...] בראשו נגעו". ²⁶ שמות, יג, יז. ²⁷ בראשית, לט, כא-כג. ²⁸ תהלים, קמט, ח-ט: "לאסור מלכיהם בזקים [...] לעשות בהם משפט כתוב". ²⁹ על פי הברכה "ברוך שפטרנו מעונשו של זה", שאומר האב כשבנו מגיע לגיל בר המצווה (י"ג שנים); דברים ב, י: עם גדול ורב. ³⁰ בבלי, בבא בתרא, טז ע"א: "בכל זאת לא חטא איוב". ³¹ ראו ירושלמי, מועד קטן, ג, א: "ולא מצאו פתח לנדרו". ³² מלשון מאסר ורמו לאסור נדר. ³³ דברים, כה, יא: "להציל את אישה מיד מכהו". ³⁴ בראשית, לו, ה. ³⁵ ראו: בבלי, סנהדרין, צז ע"א. ³⁶ על-פי מלכים י, לב: "בימים ההם החל ה' לקצות בישראל". ³⁷ ראו למשל: שופטים, טז, כא; מלכים ב, כה, ז. ³⁸ ראו: עמוס ח, יא. ³⁹ שמות כב, ב: "דמים לו שלם ישלם". ⁴⁰ ראו: בבלי, סנהדרין, ז ע"ב. ⁴¹ עיינו: אסתר, ו, ט. ⁴² דברים, לג, כו. ⁴³ במדבר, ל, ב. פרשת פנחס. המכתב נשלח כאחד עשר חודשים לאחר הריב עם המומר, שהתרחש בשבת פרשת נחמו. ⁴⁴ על-פי ישעיהו, נח, ו. ⁴⁵ למשל מלכים א, ה, לו. ⁴⁶ ירמיהו, מח, יז. ⁴⁷ ירמיהו, כז, ב. ⁴⁸ אולי צ"ל דרכי[ם], רמז לפרשת דרכים.

B) BEN HANNAH'S HEBREW POEM

(Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, 272r-274v)

בְּאֶשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה עֹשִׂי עִם הָאָרֶץ כְּעִים וְחֹטְאִים לִי מֵאֵד וְלֹאֲחִיהֶם
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוֹנְאִים. וְלִבִּי הִנָּכַר הַנְּלוּיִם אֲלֵיהֶם אוֹהֲבִים. פָּנוּ אֶל רְהֻבִים. עֲלוֹן
 חֲמֻדִּין וְשִׁבְאִיִּים. זֶה דְּרָכָם יֵשֶׁר לִפְנֵיהֶם. חֲכָמִים הֵמָּה בְּעֵינֵיהֶם וְצַדִּיקִים
 בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם. חוֹבָה לַעֲצָמָם אֵינָם רוֹאִים. לִשְׁפוֹד דִּ"ם נָקִי וְצַדִּיק בְּמוֹעֲצוֹת וְדַעַת
 5 יוֹם יוֹם יִבְעֶה. וְנִפְשׁוּ בְּסִתֵּר וּבִגְלוֹי יִרְשִׁיעוּ. לֹא יִשְׁנוּ אִם לֹא יָרְעוּ.
 וּפְנִיָּהֶם מִסְבִּירִים וְכֹאֲהֲבִים נִרְאִים. לְמַקְלָלִים דְּרָכֵיהֶם וְרוֹעַ מַעֲלָלֵיהֶם.
 יִקְרִיבוּם אֲלֵיהֶם יַעֲמִידוּם עַל רֹאשׁ שְׂמֹחֲתָם בְּרָאשֵׁי הַקְּרוּאִים. וְלִירָאֵי יִי יִרְחִיקוּ
 מֵהֶם יִחְרִישׁוּ בְּצַר לָהֶם וְהַדָּבָר אֵין בָּהֶם. וְלִמְוֹכִיחִים עֲזוֹת יַעֲנוּ, וְכִגְלִיָּהֶם עֲנוּ
 בְּכָבֵל וְיֹרִידוֹ בְּחָבֵל נְבִיאִים. עַל זֶה נִפְשִׁי הוֹמְיָה. וְעֵינֵי בּוֹכִיָּה. וְלִבִּי דָּוָה נֹמֵר.
 נֶאֱשָׂא מְשָׁלִי נֹאמֵר:

1 וחטאים [...] מאד : בראשית יג, יג. 2 ולבני [...] הנלוים : ישעיהו, נו, ו; פנו [...] רהבים : על פי תהלים, מ, ח; עלון : בראשית, לו, כג. 3 חמדן : בראשית, לו, כו. סימון הגרשיים מחליף כאן ובהמשך השיר ציון שתי נקודות מעל האות. המחבר מכוון לדו-משמעות בכל המילים הללו; ושבאים : יואל, ד, ח; זה דרכם : תהלים, מט, יד; דרכם [...] לפנייהם : ראו : משלי, יד, יב; טז, כה; חכמים [...] בעיניהם : ירמיהו, ד, כב; חכמים המה להרע; ישעיהו, ח, כא : הוי חכמים בעיניהם. 4 ד"ם נקי : על-פי תהלים, קו, לח; דברים, יט, י; ראו גם שמות כג, ז; במועצות ודעת : משלי כב, כ; וראו גם ירמיהו, ז, כד. 5 יום [...] יביעו : תהלים, צד, ד : "יביעו וידברו עתק ותאמרו כל פעלי און"; תהלים, יט, ג; יום ליום יביע; ונפשו בסתר : על-פי דברים, יג, ז : "אשר כנפשו בסתר לאמור נלכה ונעבדה אלהים אחרים אשר לא ידעת אתה ונאבתיד"; בסתר ובגלוי : רמז לפסקה מתפילת השחר, לפני פסוקי דזמרא : "לעולם יהא אדם ירא שמים בסתר ובגלוי"; ירשיעו : תהלים, צד, כא; לא [...] ירעו : משלי, ד, טז. 6 ופנייהם : המעתיק טעה וכתב את המילה "ופנייהם" פעמיים, בסוף עמוד ובתחילת עמוד חדש. 7 יקריבוים אליהם : על-פי במדבר, טז, ט; על [...] שמחתם : על-פי תהלים, קלו, ו; בראשי הקרואים : על-פי שמואל א, ט, כב. 8 בצר להם : למשל תהלים, קז, ו; והדבר [...] בהם : ירמיהו, ח, יג; עזות יענו : על-פי משלי, יח, כג; ענו בכבל : תהלים, קה, יח. 9 בחבל נביאים : ראו : שמואל א, י, ה; ועיני בוכיה : על-פי איכה, א, טז; ולבי דוה : על-פי איכה, ח, יז.

- אִישׁ הַבִּלְעֵל וְהַדְּמִים. מָלְאוּ יָדָיו מִצֹּדוֹת וְחֻרְמִים. לִלְכֹּד בָּהֶם חֻכְמִים. רָאִשִׁי
אֶלְפִי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- בְּגִאָתוֹ בְּרוֹם לָבָו. בְּרֹב כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב. לֹא פָחַד אֶל יְיָ וְאֶל טוֹבוֹ. וְאֶל אֲצִילִי בְּנִי
יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- גּוֹר אֲרִיָּה בְּמִסְתָּרִים. יִהְיוּ נָקִי בַּעֲלִילוֹת דְּבָרִים. יִכּוֹנוּ דְּרָכָיו עִם דּוֹבְרֵי שְׁקָרִים.
וּפּוֹשְׁעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- דְּבָרֵי נִרְגָן יָשִׁים עַל לִבּוֹ. כְּתוּרַת אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבּוֹ. וְתַעֲלוּלִים יִמְשְׁלוּ בּוֹ. נַעֲרֵי בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- 5 הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִיד וּפּוֹעֵל צֶדֶק. לִסְכִּים בְּעֵינָיו וּלְחָדֵק. וְלִצְנִינִים בָּצֵדוֹ כֹּל מַחְזִיק בְּדָק.
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- וְאוֹיְבֵי יְיָ אוֹהֵב וּמִקְרָב. גָּבֵל וְעִמּוֹן וְעוֹרֵב. לְמִינוֹ וְדוֹב אוֹרֵב. לְשָׁה פְּזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל.
זָד יִהְיֶה בְּעִבְרָתוֹ. שְׁמֶרָה נֶצַח לָעַם נִחְלָתוֹ. לֹא יִסּוּר שִׁבְט פָּחַדוֹ וְאִימָתוֹ. מַעַל שִׁבְטֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- חוֹטָא וּמַחְטִיא לְהַשְׁלִים רָצוֹנוֹ. וְשִׁבַּע לְהִרְעֵעַ עַל דַּת קוֹנוֹ. יִגְלוּ שְׁמִים עֲזוֹנוֹ. לְעֵינֵי
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- טְהוֹר מִרְאָה עֲצָמוֹ וּטְלָפִיו כְּחֹזֵר. בְּהִתְעַטְפוֹ בְּבוֹז שְׁזִיר. הַמְשַׁתְּכֵר הִיקְרָא נְזִיר.
וְעָרַל בִּשְׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- 10 יִפְקֹד פְּקִידִים עַל עַמּוֹ. יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ וְאוֹכֵל לַחֲמוֹ. לְהֹרֹס בְּעִבְרָתוֹ וְנֹעֲמֹ. וּבְמִרְמָה
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.

1 איש [...] והדמים: על פי שמואל ב, טז, ז; מצודות וחרמים: על-פי קהלת, ז, כו; ישעיהו א, טו;
ללכד [...] חכמים: על-פי איוב, ה, יג; ראשי [...] ישראל: למשל במדבר, א, טז. 2 ברום לבבו: דברים,
יז, כ; לא פחד [...] ואל טובו: על-פי הושע, ג, ה; ואל [...] ישראל: שמות, כד, יא. 3 אריה במסתרים:
איכה, ג, י; יהרוג נקי: תהלים, י, ח; בעלילות דברים: דברים, כב, יד; יכוננו דרכיו: על-פי דברי הימים,
ב, כז, ו; תהלים קיט, ה; יכוננו [...] דוברי שקרים: בהיפוך הכוונה של תהלים קא, ז: "דוברי שקרים
לא יכון לנגד עיני". 4 דברי נרגן: משלי, יח, כו; כב, ישים [...] לבו: ראו: דניאל, א, ח; כתורת [...] דברים:
על-פי מלכים א, ג, ח; ובעלילות [...] בו: על-פי ישעיהו, ג, ד; נערי [...] ישראל: שמות, כד,
ה. 5 הולך [...] צדק: תהלים, טו, ב; לסכים בעיניו: במדבר, לג, נה; לשכים בעיניכם: ולחזק: לפי
משלי, טו, יט; ולצנינים בצדו: על-פי במדבר, לג, נה; ולצנינים בצדיכם: מחזיק בדק: למשל מלכים ב,
יב, ח. 6 גבל ועמון: תהלים, פג, ח; ועורב: שופטים, ז, כה; למינו: ויקרא, יא, טו; דברים, יד, יד; ודוב
אורב: איכה, ג, י; לשה [...] ישראל: ירמיהו, נ, יז. 7 זד [...] בעברתו: על-פי משלי, כא, כד; שמרה
נצח: עמוס, א, יא; לעם נחלתו: על-פי תהלים, צד, יד; לא [...] שבט: בראשית, מט, י; פחדו ואימתו:
על-פי שמות, טו, טז. 8 חוטא ומחטיא: בבלי, סנהדרין, קז ע"ב; יגלו [...] עונו: איוב, כ, כז; לעיני
[...] ישראל: דברים, לד, יב. 9 טהור [...] כחזיר: ראו: בראשית רבה סח, א, מהד' תיאודור-אלבק עמ'
713; ויקרא רבה יג, ה, מהד' מרגליות עמ' רצא; מדרש תהלים פ, ו, מהד' בובר עמ' קפב; שזיר: ראו
למשל: שמות, כח, ו. 10 יפקד: [...] על: בראשית, מא, לד; ואוכל לחמו: על-פי ויקרא, כב, יא. כנראה
שצ"ל כאן: ואוכל לחמו; בעברתו ועמו: על-פי תהלים, עח, מט; ובמרמה [...] ישראל: הושע, יב, א.

כבוד עשרו ורוב בניו. לדכא תחת רגליו אביוניו. ושפל רוח וענו. והגר הגר
בישראל.
כופר בעקרי התורה. מחשיך מצות יי ברה. משמיץ קול בשכרה. אל כל איש
ישראל.
ליהודים לאבדם במשטמות. וגרשם מארצו שם שמות. ובלשונו יחרץ דין. כלב
גנב ומלשין. אלה שמות. בני ישראל.
מאמין לכל דבר פשע. ומכה באגרוף רשע. ירחקו בניו מישע. ויושע יי את ישראל.
15 מתכבד בקלון זולתו. לובש לבוש מלכות בחרפת עמיתו. ובשפיות דם ענוים
סותו ומלכותו. אם עבד ישראל.
נבזה בעיניו כל יודע ספר. תחת גערתו במבין אמרי שפר. והוא לא ידע מה בין
עיפה ועפר. ובין בני ישראל.
נפשו פחותה בעיניו. ורוב הונו וקניניו. נכון לעציו ואבניו. להשליך על ישראל.
סמוך לבו עם עובדי אשרה. וסקוציהם בעיניו טהרה. וטמא טמא יקרא. כל
טהור בישראל.
עושה בעברת זדון. משלח מדנים עם איש מדון. ישחק לרעש ולכידון. על ריב בני
ישראל.
20 פורק עול מלכות מעל צנארו. ועומס ונותן על חברו. באישון לילה ידעך גרו. והיה
אור לבני ישראל.

11 כבוד [...] בניו : אסתר, ה, יא; לדכא [...] רגליו : איכה, ג, לד; ושפל [...] ועניו : ראו : משלי, טז, יט;
הגר [...] בישראל : ויקרא, כ, ב. 12 כופר [...] ישראל : משפט זה הוסף בשוליים; מצות [...] ברה :
תהלים, יט, ט; אל [...] ישראל : דברים, כז, יד. 13 ליהודים לאבדם : על-פי אסתר, ט, כד; יגרשם
מארצו : שמות ו, א; שם שמות : תהלים, מו, ט; ובלשונו [...] כלב : על-פי שמות יא, ז: "לא יחרץ-כלב
לשנו"; אלה [...] ישראל : שמות, א, א; בראשית, מו, ח. 14 ומכה [...] רשע : על-פי ישעיהו, נח, ד;
ירחקו [...] מישע : איוב, ה, ד; ויושע [...] ישראל : על-פי שמות, יד, ל. 15 מתכבד [...] זולתו : ראו:
חבקוק, ב, טז; דם [...] סותו : לפי בראשית, מט, יא. ושם "ובדם ענבים סותה"; אם [...] ישראל :
על-פי ירמיהו, ב, יד. 16 נבזה בעיניו : תהלים, טו, ד; יודע ספר : ראו : ישעיהו, כט, יא; תחת גערתו :
על-פי משלי, יז, י. ושם תחת : אמרי שפר : בראשית, מט, כא; עיפה ועפר : בראשית, כה, ד; ובין
[...] ישראל : שמות לא, יז; ויקרא כו, מו. 17 לעציו ואבניו : ראו דברים, כט, טז. 18 סמוך לבו :
תהלים, קיב, ח; וטמא [...] יקרא : ויקרא, יג, מה. 19 עושה [...] זדון : משלי, כא, כד; משלח מדנים :
משלי, ו, יט; איש מדון : ירמיהו, טו, י; ישחק [...] ולכידון : על-פי איוב, מא, כא; על [...] ישראל :
שמות, יז, ז. 20 באישון [...] נרו : על-פי משלי, כ, ז; ט; והיה [...] ישראל : על-פי שמות, יג, כג.

פֶּה דּוֹבֵר נִבְלָה. לְכַשְׁרָה שְׂבֻנָּשִׁים זֹנָה וְחִלְלָה. יִפְגְּעוּ בּוֹ מַלְאָכֵי חֲבָלָה. וְשָׁלוֹם עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

צִדְקַת יְיָ עֲשֶׂה. עֵינָיו עָלָיו לֹא חֶסֶה. נָתַן לְמִשְׁשָׁה. יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. צוֹרֵר הִיְהוּדִים וְאַמּוֹנִתּוֹ. עוֹזֵב וּמִמִּיר דָּתוֹ. וְהָיָה הוּא וּתְמוֹרָתוֹ. נֶגֶד כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. קוֹלוֹ בְּרָחוּבוֹת מִשְׁמִיעַ. מוֹצִיא דָּבָה וְדָם נָקִי יִרְשִׁיעַ. לִבְנֵי הָאָדָם מוֹדִיעַ. חֲטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל.

25 רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עֲמֶלֶק. אַחֲרֵי עִם קְדוֹשֵׁי דוֹלֶק. גַּם זֶה כְּמוֹהוּ חוֹלֶק. וְנִלְחַם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. שֶׁבֶת מִשׁוֹשׁ לִבְנוֹ. מֵאֵז גָּלִינוּ בְּיַד שׁוֹבֵינוּ. וְעַתָּה מְהַרְסִינוּ וּמַחְרִיבִינוּ. וְגַם נֶצַח יִשְׂרָאֵל.

תִּקְרַב רִנָּתִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ. חֲלַצְנִי מֵאָדָם רָע וְכָל שׁוֹטְנִי. יִהְיוּ כָקֵשׁ לְפָנֶי רֹחַם וּלְעֵינַי. נָקוֹם נִקְמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

חִזְקֵנִי צוֹר מִשְׁגָּבִי. שְׁמַחְנִי בַּיּוֹם עֲצָבִי. בְּמִשׁוֹל צָדִיק יַעֲלוּז לִבִּי. יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל.

תם

21 פה [...] נבלה: ישעיהו, ט, טז; זונה וחללה: ויקרא, כא, ז; יפגעו [...] מלאכי: בראשית, לב, ב; ושלום [...] ישראל: תהלים, קכה, ה; קכח, ו. 22 צדקת [...] עשה: דברים, לג, כא; עינו [...] חסה: על-פי יחזקאל, טז, ה; נתן [...] וישראל: ישעיהו, מב, כד. 23 צורר היהודים: אסתר, ג, י; והיה [...] ותמורתו: ויקרא, כז, לג; "לא יבקר בין טוב לרע ולא ימירנו ואם המיר ימירנו והיה הוא ותמורתו יהיה קדש לא ינאל"; נגד [...] ישראל: דברים, לא, יא; שמואל ב, יב, יב. 24 מוציא דבה: משלי, י, יח; ודם [...] ירשיע: על-פי תהלים, צד, כא; לבני [...] מודיע: על-פי תהלים קמה, יב; "להודיע לבני האדם גבורתו"; חטא ישראל: יחושע, ז, יא. 25 ראשית [...] עמלק: במדבר, כד, כ. 26 שבת [...] לבנו: איכה, ה, טו; מהרסינו ומחריבינו: על-פי ישעיהו, מט, יז; וגם [...] ישראל: שמואל א, טו, כט. 27 תקרב [...] יי': תהלים, קיט, קסט; חלצני [...] רע: על-פי תהלים, קמ, ב; כקש [...] רוח: תהלים, פג, יד; נקום [...] ישראל: במדבר, לא, ב. 28 צור משגבי: על-פי שמואל ב, כב, ג; יעלוז לבי: תהלים, כח, ז; ועל-פי משלי, כט, ב; יגל [...] ישראל: תהלים, יד, ז.

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|---|---|---|
| שְׁהֵם כ"ח בְּתִים מְלֵאִים כָּל טוֹב. | סִימָן טוֹב לְמִסְפָּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל | |
| זְמִיר שִׁירֵי מִגְלָה אֶל לְאֻמוֹ. | בְּאוֹתִיּוֹת לְשׁוֹן קִדְשׁ וְטַעֲמוֹ. | |
| וְהוּא עֲצָמוֹ הִלֵּא הָעִיד בְּמוֹמוֹ. | פְּעוֹלוֹת אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר קִצָּה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ. | |
| וְשֵׁת כִּסְלוֹ בְּרַב חֲלָבוֹ וְדַמ"ו. | בְּבִטְחוֹ כָּל יָמֵי הִבְלוֹ בְּחִילוֹ. | |
| וְכ"ח מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לַעֲמוֹ. | וְעַתָּה הִמִּיר אֶמּוֹנָתוֹ בְּעֲשָׂרוֹ. | 5 |

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1 למספר [...] ישראל: דברים, לב, ח; בתים [...] טוב: דברים, ו, יא. 3 קצה בנפשו: על-פי במדבר, כא, ה; העיד במומו: ראו: בבלי, קידושין, ע ע"א: "במומו פוסל". 4 ימי הבלו: על-פי קהלת, ו, יב; חלבו ודמ"ו: ראו: ויקרא, ג, יז; איוב, טו, כז. 5 וכ"ח [...] לעמו: תהלים, קיא, ו.