

A STUDY OF THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION
OF RABBI JACOB SASPORTAS

LAURENCE L. EDWARDS

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
New York, N. Y.

April 1975

Advisor: Professor Martin A. Cohen

LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mention must be made here of Isaiah Tishby's critical edition of Sefer Sisath Nobel Sevi, and of Gershom Scholem's Sabbatai Sevi (translated into English by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky). These two works were indispensable to this thesis, as the footnotes make clear.

A number of individuals helped me along, and deserve to be named. Dr. Martin A. Cohen, as my advisor, offered compassionate guidance and much needed discipline of method. Prof. Abraham Aaroni and Dr. Arthur Lesley gave generously of their time and expertise in Hebrew to assist me over some rough spots in the translations. Rabbi Michael Chernick also interpreted some talmudic phrases.

The entire library staff of the New York school cheerfully donated work, of both brain and leg: Dr. I. Edward Kiev, Phillip Miller, Catherine A. Markush, Susan Tabor, Israel Disenhouse, and Lester Freeman.

Betty and Sara were stoically patient.

Strength came only from God.

CONTENTS

Part I: The Man

Chapter

I	Sasportas' Life	1
II	Evaluation of Sasportas' Role during the Messianic Awakening	22
	Personality	22
	The Kabbalah: Scholem's Analysis	24
	<u>Sefer Sisath Nobel Sevi</u>	29

Part II: The Writings

III	The Preface to <u>Toledot Ya'akov</u>	37
	Introduction	37
	The Translation	40
IV	First Letter to the Rabbis of Amsterdam	50
	Introduction	50
	The Translation	54
V	Second Letter to the Rabbis of Amsterdam	64
	Introduction	64
	The Translation	67

PART I: THE MAN

CHAPTER I

SASPORTAS' LIFE

Early Years in North Africa and Morocco

The seventeenth century was a period of great instability in North Africa, and especially in Morocco. Following the death of al-Mansūr in 1603, disputes among the Sa'dī princes led to the rapid decline of the dynasty. Order was not restored until the rise of the 'Alawīs, beginning in 1689.¹ Jews played a prominent role throughout the period, however. Zidah (1603-28), a Sa'dī sultan, as well as his successors (1628-59), all had Jewish counsellors.² The prince Benbakur (fl. c. 1649) was known to hate Jews, but could nevertheless be very friendly to them when necessary. His reign was one of hardship for the Jews of Fez, whom he taxed heavily in order to combat frequent rebellions.³ The fact that the Jews could be heavily taxed, however, may be taken as an indication that the community had achieved a fair degree of prosperity.

Jacob ben Aaron Sasportas was born about 1610, and educated in Oran, North Africa. The Sasportas and Toledano families were the two most aristocratic Jewish families in Morocco.⁴ Sasportas himself points out⁵ that he was a descendant of Nahmanides (1194-c. 1270). In Christian documents, Nahmanides' family name appears as da Porta or Saporta.⁶ Graetz⁷ mistakenly identifies Sasportas with one Jaho Çaportas. This Çaportas had served as an ambassador to Madrid, and, from 1633 to 1636, was the Meturgeman of the Oran community. By that time, however, Jacob Sasportas was already in Tlemçen, Morocco.⁸

He was appointed to the rabbinic court of Tlemçen at the age of eighteen, and served there also in the capacity of preacher.⁹ At age twenty-four, he was appointed chief rabbi, and his influence extended to neighboring communities as well.¹⁰ In about 1647, he was forcibly removed from office by the government, and imprisoned. The reasons for his removal are unclear, but the event made a lasting impression upon him.¹¹ He somehow managed to escape, and fled to Salé, where he remained, without rabbinic office, until about 1650.¹² Toledano¹³ maintains that Sasportas held rabbinic office in Salé at this time, and that he was sent by Prince Benbakur, in 1649, to the Spanish king to seek aid against the endemic rebellions. He seems, however, to be confusing this period with a later return to Salé (see below, p. 4).

A few years later, the Sabbatian awakening found fertile ground in Morocco for a number of reasons. The kabbalah had for some time been a major force among Moroccan Jewry. (Sasportas and most of his colleagues were kabbalists.¹⁴) Between 1662 and 1669, famine struck a number of Moroccan cities.¹⁵ Benbakur was succeeded by Mulai Arshid, who continued to collect heavy taxes from the Jews in order to finance the many wars he had to fight against smaller princes.¹⁶ Salé was ruled in 1666 by the emir Ghailan, who was subsequently driven out by Mulai Arshid. Both rulers felt enmity for the Jewish community, ostensibly because of Jewish faith in Sabbatai Şevi.¹⁷ Under Ghailan, the Jews had been forced to pay a bribe to save themselves.¹⁸

Sasportas was in correspondence with a number of Moroccan rabbis throughout this period, and some of the letters are preserved in his

responsa collection, 'Ohel Ya'akov, as well as in Sisath Nobel Sevi. Like every other Jewish community, Moroccan Jewry was divided into factions of believers and nonbelievers. R. Daniel Toledano of Meknes, at one point a royal counsellor, was a leading nonbeliever, and corresponded with Sasportas.¹⁹ The leader of the nonbelievers in Salé was R. Aaron ha-Sab'uni (his annotations of Albaz's Heykhal ha-Qodesh were included in the edition published by Sasportas in 1653.²⁰) The believers included R. Jacob ibn Sa'adun of Sale, the naggid Maimon Maimaran of Meknes, and Solomon Avitabul in Marrakech.²¹

First Stay in Amsterdam

Sasportas left Morocco in about 1650, arriving in Amsterdam sometime in 1651. His first employment there was as a proofreader at the press of Menasseh ben Israel.²² He contributed an epilogue and poem for Menasseh's Nishmat Hayyim, published by the author's son, Samuel Soeiro, in 1652. In the same year, Soeiro also published, with his father's support, Sasportas' Toledot Ya'akov, an index of biblical verses found in the Jerusalem Talmud (see chap. III). Sasportas also served as head of the yeshivah 'Or ha-Hayyim, and as director of studies for the yeshivah Keter Torah.²³ While at 'Or ha-Hayyim he published, with his own introduction, the Heykhal ha-Qodesh (1653), a kabbalistic commentary on the prayer book written in 1575 by the Moroccan rabbi, Moses Albaz.²⁴

Sasportas was also a close friend of the other leading rabbis of Amsterdam, Isaac Aboab (1605-1693), Aaron Sarphati, and Isaac Nahar. (It was these same rabbis with whom he was later to be at odds over the Sabbatian movement.) But it was with Menasseh that he was most closely

identified during this period. Most authorities include him as part of the retinue that accompanied Menasseh on his famous mission to Oliver Cromwell in October of 1655.²⁵ The source of this tradition is a report in Ha-Meassef,²⁶ but Cecil Roth casts considerable doubt on its authenticity.²⁷

In 1657, Sasportas was looking into the possibility of moving to Leghorn, but was discouraged by the leaders of the Amsterdam community, who promised him a position that did not materialize.²⁸ He did, however, leave Amsterdam in 1659 to return to North Africa, whence he was sent on a diplomatic mission to the king of Spain.²⁹ According to Abraham Sasportas,³⁰ he was called back to North Africa while in Amsterdam, but Daniel Levi de Barrios³¹ reports that Sasportas was serving as chief rabbi of Tlemçen at the time of the mission. In any case, there is no doubt that he was sent on the mission, and the date 1659 seems correct. Open to question is the information in Ner Ha-Ma'arav³² that he was sent on a similar mission in 1649. The chronology given by Hyamson,³³ that he left Amsterdam and returned all before 1655, is totally inaccurate, because in 1660 Sasportas is found in Salé as a member of the rabbinic court.³⁴ He was happy to be back in his former home,³⁵ leaving this time not for political reasons, but because of war and famine. The exact date of his return to Amsterdam is not certain, but it was from there that he departed for London in 1664.³⁶

Tenure in London

The Jewish community of London was composed largely of former marranos in the days of the Resettlement. Prior to Sasportas' arrival,

the leader of the fledgling congregation was R. Moses Athias. As the status of the community rose, they decided to seek a more prominent rabbi.³⁷ Sasportas accepted their invitation in the spring of 1664. When the Great Plague broke out in London in 1665, Sasportas went back to Amsterdam briefly, then to Hamburg.

Not very much is known about his brief tenure as the first Hakham of the London community. Some Anglo-Jewish historians seem to have the notion that Sasportas began his opposition to Sabbatai Sevi while still there.³⁸ They offer no evidence for such a contention, however, and Scholem explicitly states that Sasportas left London "before the first reports of the messianic awakening arrived."³⁹ News of Sabbatai Sevi was known in Italy by November, 1665, and reached London a short time later.⁴⁰ But Sasportas was by then already in Hamburg.

Scholem goes into detail in discussing when the first news reached London. A letter from Johannes Duraeus (1596-1680) mentions two letters from the Dutch chiliast, Peter Serrarius (1580-1669), dated 15 September and 1 October 1665, which told "marvelous news of the Ten Tribes of Israel...." "In any event," Scholem concludes, "there can be no doubt that reports of this kind were actually received in September, 1665, at the latest."⁴¹ Although the messiah is not mentioned specifically, the tidings are clearly redemptive in character. A pamphlet on "The Restauration of the Jews" was published in London in the autumn of 1665⁴²--all of this prior to Sasportas' departure.

These reports were spread primarily by Christians, it would appear, and not by Jews. The tales of a Jewish army originated in Egypt and

Morocco. "According to other reports, the sons of Jonathan b. Rechab were preceding the rest of the Ten Tribes, but the origin of this particular detail is hardly Jewish. The Jews spoke of the 'Sons of Moses,' but never of the 'Sons of Rechab,' whereas Christian legend continued for some time to develop the version of the Rechabites as an ideal people beyond the river Sambatyon...."⁴³ In a footnote to his first letter to Amsterdam (see below, p. 59, n. 39) Sasportas repeats the rumors, referring to "Jonadab b. Rechab." This would indicate that Sasportas had contacts in the Christian community, or at least that he had seen the published reports of Christian authors. It is possible that Gaster and Hyamson had in mind his reaction to these reports, which preceded reports of the messiah. However, I have so far been unable to discover any explicit reaction on Sasportas' part, except his dismay over the role played by Christians in spreading the rumors (see below, p. 33).

After his departure, Sasportas' influence continued to be felt through the correspondence that he carried on with his successors. The office of Hakham remained vacant until 1670, when it was filled by Joshua da Silva, a friend of Sasportas and a pupil of R. Isaac Aboab in Amsterdam. On his death, in 1679, da Silva was succeeded by Jacob Abendana (1630-1695), who had held office in Amsterdam, although he had spent most of his life in Hamburg. Abendana was followed, in 1689, by Solomon Ayllon (Aylion), perhaps the most interesting of Sasportas' early successors.

Ayllon was born about 1660 in Salonica, but grew up in Safed. He

was sent to Europe to collect funds for the Palestine community, travelling to Leghorn, Amsterdam, and London. His Sabbatian beliefs were well-known even while he was still in Safed.⁴⁴ Ayllon's Sabbatianism caused dissent in the London community, and led finally to his resignation in 1700 (or 1701). Hyamson, too, maintains that Ayllon's resignation came under pressure, because "London, under the influence of Haham Sasportas, had been ranged on the other side."⁴⁶ But the case is not so simple. Others have pointed out that many members of the London Jewish community believed in Sabbatai Sevi.⁴⁷ Further, "not a few men...were the staunchest adherents of Ayllon...."⁴⁸ It must also be noted that Ayllon managed to hold office in London for some eleven or twelve years--longer than any of his predecessors. If dissent caused by his beliefs was what led finally to his resignation, it was certainly not because the entire London Jewish community found those beliefs outrageous. Ayllon is mentioned a number of times in 'Ohel Ya'akov. In the introduction to the work, Abraham Sasportas mentions him, and not unfavorably. This would seem to indicate that, if he and Sasportas had ever been at odds directly over the Sabbatian affair, there had been a reconciliation.

Sasportas' Family

Sasportas had at least four sons. Abraham assisted in publishing his father's correspondence in the 'Ohel Ya'akov (to which he wrote an introduction, mainly biographical) and the Qissur Sisath Nobel Sevi (both 1737). Isaac left a manuscript of ritual questions, Siah Yishak (Amsterdam, 1725).⁴⁹ Samuel, who was possibly the oldest, went to

London with his father, and served the congregation there in official capacities. He apparently left at the same time as his father, went to Barbados, and returned to London in the summer of 1668. In October, 1670 he became a sworn broker of the Royal Exchange, but was dismissed in October, 1681 when he pled guilty to a charge of "trading and Merchandising to his owne use."⁵⁰ Moses was a child at the time of the messianic awakening. He went to Palestine in 1694, leaving less than a year later on a mission for the Jerusalem Sephardi community.⁵¹

Hamburg and the Height of the Sabbatian Movement

An important question, which no one else seems to have raised, is, why did Sasportas go to Hamburg after leaving London? Why did he not simply return to Amsterdam, where he already had roots and many contacts? If there were some possibility that, as Gaster and Hyamson claim, Sasportas had begun his campaign against Sabbatai Sevi while still in London, he might have found himself unwelcome in his former home, since the leading rabbis of the city were adherents of the movement. But the evidence is clear and convincing that the tidings did not reach Sasportas until he was already in Hamburg (see above, pp. 5-6). There must have been some other reason for his going to Hamburg, but so far there is simply no evidence on which to base speculations.

He arrived in Hamburg on 7 November 1665. He was respected by the community, and received provisions from them, but was not allowed to settle permanently.⁵² He held no official position, but played the part of "an onlooker and a freelance,"⁵³ although he did continue to offer

halakhic opinions.⁵⁴ Not long after his arrival, on 30 November 1665, the first news of Sabbatai Sevi reached Hamburg in letters from Egypt. On 9 December, the elders of the community adopted a resolution stating that they believed the reports, and "'have sung today the Festival Psalms as on the Festival of the Rejoicing of the Law.'"⁵⁵

Despite Sasportas' historical image as the rock that stood firm in the raging sea of messianic belief, there appears to have been a brief period during which he was prepared to acknowledge Sabbatai Sevi as the messiah. How long a period of time this was is disputed by Scholem and Tishby. Scholem⁵⁶ believes that Sasportas' "conversion" lasted four to six weeks, from early February to the middle of March, 1666, and that Sasportas was even prepared to travel to Palestine to meet the messiah face to face. Tishby, in his review of the Hebrew edition of Scholem's work,⁵⁷ carefully analyzes the evidence mustered by Scholem. (The evidence centers primarily around an exchange of letters with R. Isaac Nahar.⁵⁸) Tishby disputes Scholem's contention that Sasportas concealed all his other correspondence from these weeks, an assumption for which there is simply no evidence. With regard to the intended journey to Palestine, Tishby points out that Sasportas took no practical steps to carry out his plans until the beginning of Adar II, by which time he was no longer a "believer." (That Sasportas actually began carrying out plans for the trip, even after he no longer believed, would indicate that there were other reasons for his plans than simply to go meet the messiah.)

Scholem refers to Tishby's reservations in the English edition of

Sabbatai Sevi,⁵⁹ but finds them unconvincing. The critical edition of Sisath Nobel Sevi makes clear that the stand taken by Sasportas against the leaders of the movement was actually considerably less strong at the time than appears from the published material. (Sasportas made numerous editorial revisions prior to publication.) News that the rabbis of Ismir (Smyrna) had suspended the fast of the Tenth of Tebet caused great excitement in Hamburg, and, according to Tishby, "even Sasportas was compelled to acknowledge, temporarily, the messiahship of Sabbatai Sevi."⁶⁰ Thus Tishby, too, admits that Sasportas went through a period of belief, but maintains that it lasted nowhere near the four to six weeks that Scholem claims.

Emotions ran so high in Hamburg that Sasportas, in a sort of marrano syndrome, was sometimes forced to conceal his true opinions. When he preached in public, he had to speak in praise of the messiah, but his lack of enthusiasm angered the believers nevertheless.⁶¹ Sasportas' reputation, however, saved him and his fellow nonbelievers from excommunication--at least according to his own account. The leaders of the Hamburg yeshivah judged him to have "transgressed and scorned the words of a prophet" by expressing doubts about Nathan's prophecy.⁶²

At the height of the messianic fervor, the custom of including the priestly blessing in the liturgy of every Sabbath, rather than only on the festivals as had been the previous custom, was instituted in the congregations of Amsterdam. It was continued even after Sabbatai's apostasy, the rabbis of the community claiming that it was in fact only

a return to a respectable ancient practice. Sasportas took the position, to no avail, that the blessing should be eliminated from Sabbath services because its reinstitution had been "conceived in sin." The issue was the focus of a lengthy and bitter series of letters.⁶³

Sasportas was not altogether alone in his struggle against the messianic faith. The Hamburg community, like all the other Jewish communities, was divided into factions. R. Moses Israel, rabbi of Hamburg (and formerly also a rabbi in Morocco), sided with the believers, who included also Isaac Señor de Texeira, the wealthiest Jew in Hamburg. Sasportas, however, had the support of the previous rabbi, R. David Kohen de Lara (who had retired due to age in March, 1665), and of Abraham Nahar, one of the lay elders.⁶⁴

The information Sasportas gives about events in Hamburg is corroborated by the record book, in Portuguese, of the Hamburg Sephardic community, which survived in its original form until this century.⁶⁵ There are hardly any other official records of Jewish communities still extant from that period. Scholem suggests that, after the collapse of the movement, the records of other communities "relating to the events of 1665-66 disappeared or the relevant pages were torn out."⁶⁶ It would appear, then, that there were forces in Hamburg working for the preservation of these documents, which were not powerful enough in other communities. It is difficult to guess whether these forces might have been pro- or anti-Sabbatian, but it does not seem unreasonable to postulate some sort of struggle over the records. According to Rivkah Shatz,⁶⁷ Amsterdam was the community most unanimous in its belief, and

Hamburg, under the influence of the neighboring city, conducted itself in similar fashion. Unanimous as opinion may have been in these communities, relatively speaking, Sasportas was allowed to remain in Hamburg and to carry on his activities with a fair degree of freedom. The divisions in the Hamburg community were surely deeper and wider than appear at first glance.

Return to Amsterdam

Most of the material that was to become Sisath Nobel Sevi was compiled in Hamburg, but Part IV was assembled in Amsterdam after Sasportas returned there in 1673.⁶⁸ His return to Amsterdam was at the invitation of the brothers Isaac, Jacob, and Moses de Pinto,⁶⁹ who appointed him head of their yeshivah. They were followed by their children, Joseph and David de Pinto, and Sasportas was succeeded in the post by R. Solomon Ayllon (see above, pp. 6-7).⁷⁰ Also at this time (apparently while employed by the de Pintos), Sasportas served as the head of the society Keter Torah.⁷¹

Leghorn

After two full years in Amsterdam, Sasportas went to Leghorn as director of the general yeshivah.⁷² His connections in Leghorn date back at least as far as 1657, when he had tried to move there (see above, p. 4). He had also received a call from the Leghorn community at about the same time that he went to London.⁷³ In the spring of 1666, R. Isaac Nahar of Amsterdam, formerly a friend of Sasportas and a leading believer, was on his way to Palestine to meet the messiah. In

Leghorn he was invited to stay on as a preacher, which he did through the spring and summer. Sasportas, at the time, had again been in touch with the leadership of the community about a possible rabbinic appointment there, and bitterly accused Nahar of going to Leghorn with the intention of gaining the position for himself. Nahar, as a believer, was very popular among the people there.⁷⁴ Indeed, Scholem's description of Leghorn⁷⁵ is of a city virtually engulfed by messianic enthusiasm. Yet R. Joseph ha-Levi, a staunch opponent of the movement and supporter of Sasportas, was able to retain his position as preacher of the community. In addition, someone in the community was carrying on negotiations with Sasportas (of all people!) about going there as rabbi. These two facts alone would seem to indicate that the community was more divided than Scholem would have us believe.

Sasportas did eventually receive an appointment in Leghorn, and in 1679 was serving on the high rabbinic committee of the city along with Moses Nahar and Emmanuel Ergas.⁷⁶ A dispute between him and the lay leadership of the community began in 1680, and led to his departure. When the Jews were invited to Leghorn, in 1593, they had been granted autonomy in civil and most criminal matters under a lay (not rabbinic) tribunal.⁷⁷ The dispute with Sasportas, then, basically concerned the areas over which rabbinic authority extended. This followed a decision made in 1677, that Jewish law would be binding in personal and religious matters, but not in commercial affairs.⁷⁸

Relations between Sasportas and the leaders of the community (at least, one faction of the leadership) had been strained since his

arrival. However, he did not publicly open the debate until he was in Marseilles, on his way back to Amsterdam, in 1681. He sent one letter from Marseilles and another from Amsterdam, written in characteristically fiery language.⁷⁹ Already seventy years of age, Sasportas carried on the dispute stubbornly and with a vengeance. At the request of the Leghorn community, the leaders of Amsterdam intervened to try to pacify Sasportas' wrath. The ruling to which Sasportas had objected was never put into force, but his victory was not complete: the Leghorn leaders never admitted they were wrong, but attributed the whole dispute to a misunderstanding.⁸⁰

The Final Years in Amsterdam

In 1681, Sasportas returned to Amsterdam as head of the Eys Hayyim yeshivah.⁸¹ In the 1680's, the rabbinical leadership of Amsterdam was in the hands of Isaac Aboab, Solomon de Olivera, and Jacob Sasportas.⁸² In negotiations that were carried on between Morocco and the Low Countries of Europe, a number of Jews played diplomatic roles. Sasportas participated as a translator in 1683.⁸³ When Isaac Aboab died, on 4 April 1693, at the age of eighty-eight, Sasportas succeeded him as chief rabbi.⁸⁴ He had the backing of R. Abraham Lopez Berchael, Rachel Suasso de Pinto, and Moses de Abraham Pereira.⁸⁵ He did not, however, succeed in consolidating his authority.⁸⁶

In Amsterdam, the Talmud Torah Eys Hayyim was roughly equivalent to a public school system.⁸⁷ There were five other academies, private or semi-private: Keter Torah was founded by Saul Levi Morteira; Torah 'Or, founded in 1656 by Ephraim Bueno and Abraham Pereira, was headed by

Isaac Aboab, chief rabbi of the community. The "Academy of the Pintos" was founded in Rotterdam in 1650 by the brothers Abraham and David de Pinto. Abraham's sons, Isaac and Jacob, moved it to Amsterdam in 1669. In 1683 it was headed by Isaac Aboab. (Sasportas had been its leader following his return to Amsterdam in 1673, and had been succeeded by Solomon Ayllon. See above, p.12.) The fourth yeshivah was Tif'eret Bahurim, composed mainly of younger members and led by Sasportas. Me'irat 'Eynaim was founded in 1643.

Daniel Levi de Barrios (1635-1701), who had formerly been a Spanish army officer (under the name Miguel de Barrios), was the leading poet among the marranos of Amsterdam.⁸⁸ In 1674, he joined a group of Sabbatian believers which included the wealthy Abraham Pereira. (Scholem⁸⁹ surmises that Pereira's presence may have been one reason why the group was not molested by the Jewish authorities.) Later, Sasportas and de Barrios became close friends, and some of his works are important sources of information about Sasportas' life.⁹⁰ De Barrios' wife turned to Sasportas for help when her husband was ill, and de Barrios preached the funeral sermon when Sasportas died.⁹¹

Political alignments in the Amsterdam Jewish community are anything but clear in the years following the collapse of the Sabbatian movement.⁹² That there were conflicts, however, is apparent from the publishing history of Qissur Sisath Nobel Sevi, the abridged collection of Sasportas' correspondence on the Sabbatian affair. The Amsterdam edition, published posthumously in 1737, was printed as an appendix, with its own title page, to 'Ohel Ya'akov, Sasportas' responsa collection.

It was edited for publication, at the request of Sasportas' son, Abraham, by R. David Meldola. Meldola's own preface is extremely apologetic. He says that he did not wish to deal with these matters, but is doing so at the request of certain wealthy leaders (gebirim) of the community--and also because he knows that if he does not do it, someone else will.

Much of the correspondence between Sasportas and the rabbis of Amsterdam, found in Part I of the complete work, are missing in the abridged version (including the letters translated in the present thesis). Despite the extensive editing job by both Abraham Sasportas and David Meldola, the work still did not meet with the approval of the leaders (parnassim) of the community, and copies were confiscated.⁹³ This explains the apologetic tone of Meldola's preface, but who then were the gebirim who had requested publication? Tishby⁹⁴ suggests two possible explanations: 1) those who favored publication were not aware that the work reflected unfavorably on the previous generation of their community; or 2) the gebirim represented a position different from that of the parnassim, who placed the work under the ban. The second possibility certainly seems the more likely one. All of this seems to reflect a serious internal struggle in the Amsterdam community. In the years 1693-98, Sasportas had been chief rabbi of Amsterdam. By 1737, the community appears to be again in the control of anti-Sasportas (could they also be pro-Sabbatian?) forces. Clearly, a great deal of work remains to be done if we are ever to have a full understanding of the forces that shaped the Jewish community of Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Warmington, Terrasse, and Barbour, "History of North Africa" in Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th ed., 1974, "Macropaedia," XIII, p. 161.

²David Corcos, "Morocco" in Encyclopedia Judaica, XII, pp. 335-336.

³Jacob Moses Toledano, Ner Ha-Ma'arav (Jerusalem, 1911) p. 115.

⁴Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1973) p. 649 (hereafter, SS).

⁵Jacob Sasportas, Sefer Sisath Nobel Sevi, complete text, based on the MS. copy, ed. Isaiah Tishby (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 169 (hereafter, Sisath).

⁶SS, p. 566, n. 249.

⁷Max Seligsohn, "Sasportas," Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p. 66, referring to Graetz, Geschichte der Juden, Vol. X, note ii.

⁸Sisath, intro., p. 24.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Jacob Sasportas, 'Ohel Ya'akov (Amsterdam, 1737). See the introduction by the author's son, Abraham.

¹¹Sasportas, Toledot Ya'akov (Amsterdam, 1652), preface (see chapter III of present thesis).

¹²Sisath, intro., p. 24.

¹³p. 115.

¹⁴SS, p. 570.

¹⁵Toledano, p. 117.

¹⁶Toledano, p. 117.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 116; SS, pp. 648-649.

¹⁸Sisath, p. 152, mentioned in SS, p. 649.

¹⁹Toledano, p. 135.

²⁰See EJ, Vol. II, p. 527.

²¹Toledano, p. 117.

²²Cecil Roth, A Life of Menasseh ben Israel (Philadelphia, 1934) p. 81.

²³Sisath, intro., p. 19. (His employment at two yeshivot is also mentioned in his preface to Toledot Ya'akov; see chap. III.)

²⁴SS, p. 570.

²⁵Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia, 1945) Vol. V, p. 38.

²⁶David Hofshi (David Franco Mendes), "History of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel," Ha-Meassef, 1788, p. 169. The writer mentions as his source a book by Daniel Levi de Barrios.

²⁷Roth, "New Light on the Resettlement," Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England. London, 1929. XI, p. 119, n. 8. Roth concludes that Menasseh was not accompanied by anyone.

²⁸Sisath, intro., p. 26.

²⁹Ibid., p. 19, n. 1.

³⁰Ohel Ya'akov, introduction.

³¹Mentioned in H.Z. Hirschberg, History of the Jews in North Africa (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1965) Vol. II, p. 106.

³²Toledano, p. 115.

³³Albert M. Hyamson, A History of the Jews in England (London, 1908) p. 224.

³⁴Sisath, intro., p. 19, n. 1.

³⁵Ohel Ya'akov, intro.

³⁶Sisath, intro., p. 19, n. 1.

³⁷Hyamson, pp. 223-224.

³⁸Moses Gaster, History of the Ancient Synagogue of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews (London, 1901) p. 32. See also Hyamson, p. 225.

³⁹SS, p. 547.

⁴⁰SS, p. 349.

⁴¹SS, p. 335.

⁴²SS, p. 335.

⁴³SS, p. 350.

⁴⁴Hyamson, p. 227.

⁴⁵Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews in England (Oxford, 1941) p. 282, n. VIII (a).

⁴⁶Hyamson, p. 228.

⁴⁷Wilfred S. Samuel, "The Jews of London and the Great Plague (1665)" in Miscellanies of the Jewish Historical Society of England. Pt. III (1937), p. 15.

⁴⁸Gaster, p. 24.

⁴⁹Gaster, p. 33.

⁵⁰Samuel, p. 12.

⁵¹SS, p. 578, n. 284.

⁵²Sisath, intro., p. 27.

⁵³SS, p. 567.

⁵⁴'Ohel Ya'akov, intro.

⁵⁵SS, pp. 569-570.

⁵⁶SS, pp. 577-579.

⁵⁷Tarbiz, XXVIII (1958-59), 119-123.

⁵⁸Sisath, pp. 41-57.

⁵⁹P. 567, n. 252.

⁶⁰Sisath, intro., p. 43.

⁶¹Sisath, intro. p. 15.

⁶²Ibid., p. 14.

⁶³SS, p. 534; Sisath, pp. 211 ff.

⁶⁴SS, pp. 572-573.

⁶⁵SS, p. 569, n. 256; p. 570, n. 257. The record book disappeared in World War II, but the sections dealing with the years 1665-67 were translated into German by A. Cassuto in Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft, Frankfurt A.M., X-XI (1913, 1916).

⁶⁶SS, p. 569.

⁶⁷Review of Tishby's edition of Sasportas, Sisath Nobel Sevi (Hebrew), Behinoth, no. 10 (1956), pp. 50-67.

⁶⁸Sisath, intro., p. 37.

⁶⁹On the de Pinto family, see H. P. Salomon, "The 'de Pinto' Manuscript," Studia Rosenthaliana, vol. IX (1975), no. 1.

⁷⁰Ohel Ya'akov, intro.

⁷¹Ohel Ya'akov, intro.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Hyamson, p. 224.

⁷⁴SS, p. 488, incl. n. 48.

⁷⁵See SS, esp. p. 485.

⁷⁶Alfredo S. Toaff, "The Dispute between Rabbi Jacob Sasportas and Lay Leaders of Leghorn" (Hebrew) Sefunoth, IX (1964), p. 172.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 170-172.

⁷⁸Ibid. pp. 172-173

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 174.

⁸⁰Isai Tishby, "The letters of Jacob Sasportas against the Lay Leaders of Leghorn," Qobes 'al Yad, IV, New Series (1946), p. 146.

⁸¹Ohel Ya'akov, intro. (although the date given there is 1680).

⁸²Kenneth Scholberg, "Miguel de Barrios and the Amsterdam Sephardic Community" JQR, LIII (1962), pp. 150-151.

⁸³Hirschberg, vol. II, p. 269.

⁸⁴Scholberg, p. 151.

⁸⁵Ohel Ya'akov, intro.; see also Salomon, pp. 41-42. I have not found another Latinized spelling of the name Berchael (Hebrew, ברכאל).

⁸⁶Sisath, intro., p. 23.

⁸⁷The Amsterdam academies are described by Scholberg, pp. 130-132.

⁸⁸SS, p. 540.

⁸⁹SS, p. 893.

⁹⁰These works, in Spanish, include: Arbol de las Vidas, Historia Universal Iudayca, and Triumpho del Gobierno Popular.

⁹¹Scholberg, p. 152. The sermon appears under the title "Monte Hermoso de la Ley Divina, Sermon exemplar en las Honras Funerales de...Jacob Sasportas" (Amsterdam, 5459).

⁹²To my knowledge, no research has been done which would show that the yeshivot of Amsterdam represented, at least in part, political groupings. On the basis of admittedly sketchy evidence, however, I would suggest that the yeshivot may well have been more than simply study groups.

⁹³Sisath, intro., p. 42.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 42.

CHAPTER II

EVALUATION OF SASPORTAS' ROLE DURING THE MESSIANIC AWAKENING

i. PERSONALITY

Although it is always difficult to evaluate the forces at work in a man's mind, especially three centuries after the fact, there is virtual unanimity among scholars who have written about Sasportas with regard to his fundamental traits of character. All agree that he was an unusually stubborn and self-righteous individual. In his view, his opinions represented absolute truth, and he responded angrily to anyone who dared disagree. He maintained friendships only so long as his friends paid him unqualified respect.¹ At the same time he tended to exaggerate the degree to which enemies were rising up against him.²

Scholem, while admitting Sasportas' courage and perspicacity, attempts to play down these qualities as far as possible, emphasizing more his "basic qualities of harshness, irascibility, arrogance, and fanaticism...[which] may have been responsible for the lack of success of his rabbinic career....His arrogance and unsteadiness in human relations...cast a shadow over him."³ Even a portrait, in Scholem's view, testifies against Sasportas, showing a "stern and dour face, looking out with shrewd and unfriendly eyes: the face of a Jewish 'Grand Inquisitor.'"⁴ Yet another portrait exhibits a rather different expression, which some might almost describe as meek.⁵ In any case, portraits are less than reliable historical documents.⁶

In general, Tishby offers a somewhat more positive opinion of

Sasportas' character, although he admits that it was flawed in many ways. If Sasportas was stubborn, his stubbornness enhanced his courage: "Sasportas was unique among the important figures of the European communities, in that he stood the whole time, stubbornly rebellious, unflinching, refusing to capitulate before those who threatened him and held him in contempt."⁷ Unlike the anti-Sabbatians of later generations, Sasportas found himself among the persecuted, rather than among the persecutors. Nevertheless, his bravery was remarkable.⁸ Scholem⁹ acknowledges Tishby's arguments on Sasportas' behalf, but finds them unconvincing.

Sasportas' attitude toward the rabbinate is also the subject of some dispute. Joseph Dan describes him as "a staunch defender of the rabbinate."¹⁰ Tishby,¹¹ however, points out a number of places where Sasportas speaks with disdain of the rabbinate, saying that it is beneath him to serve, especially in the communities of Europe. Though he at first spoke glowingly of Amsterdam (see below, p. 45), he later referred to it as a place "empty of Torah." He fancied himself still the rabbi, though in exile, of North Africa, and in fact kept up a considerable correspondence with the communities there during his absence. According to Scholem's evaluation, "he coveted the power and status of rabbinic office, and his thwarted ambition merely added to his bitterness and frustration. There is a hollow and unconvincing ring about the constantly reiterated protestations of his dislike of the rabbinate."¹²

It is quite possible that Sasportas himself felt a not inconsiderable ambivalence toward rabbinic office. In his preface to Toledot

Ya'akov (see Chap. III), he expresses deep regret over having served in a salaried rabbinic position. Nevertheless, he subsequently sought and served rabbinically in London, Morocco, Leghorn, and Amsterdam. Tishby¹³ agrees with Scholem in viewing the campaign against Sabbatai Sevi as, in part, an opportunity for Sasportas to vent his bitterness over not having a rabbinic position, as well as to make a greater name for himself. More importantly, they both point out¹⁴ that Sasportas, lacking official standing and thus free from the duties that went with it, could be much more open in his opposition to Sabbatai Sevi than could other rabbis whose communal responsibilities prevented them from openly expressing their reservations.

Indeed, it may have been precisely Sasportas' lack of office that made him an effective center of opposition. Despite the fact that he had no official standing, he could not be ignored. His personal prestige accounts partially for this. But he was not speaking simply as an isolated individual. Some, such as R. Joseph ha-Levi of Leghorn, were his outspoken supporters. Others, more quietly, must have provided him with a power base sufficient to enable him to offer arguments that could not be dismissed. His arguments demanded, and received, responses from the leaders of the movement in Europe.

ii. THE KABBALAH: SCHOLEM'S ANALYSIS

Gershom Scholem traces the roots of the Sabbatian awakening to something "deeper than...local circumstances and conditions."¹⁵ The Polish massacres of 1648, for example, had minimal causative effect: the movement did not begin in Poland, the messiah did not come from

there, nor were Polish Jews among the most prominent leaders of the movement.¹⁶ Economic and social explanations do not suffice. Responses to the messianic tidings were similarly positive in both the poorest and wealthiest communities. Nor did believers and non-believers line up according to social class. Some of the wealthy were of course reluctant to join in such an upheaval, but the majority acted against their apparent interests. "The messianic awakening clearly transcended all classes, insofar as we are at all entitled to apply this term to Jewish society, where the social mobility of individuals and the frequency of sudden changes of fortune were hardly conducive to the consolidation of 'classes.'"¹⁷

Yet might not the very social and economic instability that Scholem here describes have been a palpable factor in the susceptibility of Jews to the messianic upheaval? This might especially have affected the upper classes. It is easy to understand why the lower classes would so willingly follow the new messiah. The question here is why so many among the upper classes would set aside their interests for the sake of a messianic movement. If, as Scholem claims, the economic situation was subject to such sudden and wide fluctuation, the resulting sense of insecurity may have had a telling effect upon the wealthier members of the community. And more: it seems at least plausible that the divisions which existed within the upper classes (e.g., in Hamburg, see above, pp. 11-12) reflected not only disagreements over the legitimacy of Sabbatai Sevi as messiah, but also divisions which had existed prior to his advent. Scholem disregards these possibilities altogether.

"If there was one general factor underlying the patent unity of the Sabbatian movement everywhere, then this factor was essentially religious in character and as such obeyed its own autonomous laws, even if today these are often obscured behind smokescreens of sociological verbiage."¹⁸ Scholem does admit that "religious factors are not isolated entities and they never operate in a vacuum,"¹⁹ but he sees the religious factor as decisive and determinative, as what "caused the various groups, the leading classes in particular, to join the messianic movement."²⁰ For Scholem, at this point in his argument, the influence seems to run primarily in one direction: religious outlook determines social responses. In this case, the religious outlook is Lurianic Kabbalah.

A few pages later, however, he makes the following statement: "Apocalyptic messianism and kabbalah remained distinct spheres of religious life. The expulsion from Spain (1492) wrought a radical change also in this respect. The traumatic upheaval, which so profoundly altered the situation of a large part of the nation, inevitably called forth corresponding reactions in the specifically religious sphere."²¹ Thus there was a social cause that transformed the kabbalah into such a potent force. The "triumph of kabbalism" was made possible by the extreme insecurity of Jewish existence, mainly as a result of the expulsion. The Polish massacres did not precipitate the movement; the Spanish expulsion did. "The kabbalistic appeal to the public, unheard of before the expulsion from Spain, is in evidence soon afterward."²² The driving

force behind Safed kabbalism, which became the ideological underpinning of the messianic awakening, was the socio-historical situation of the people in the aftermath of the expulsion from Spain.²³ Thus, the underlying causes of Sabbatianism were, by Scholem's own admission (seemingly despite himself), as much social as religious. Indeed, the distinction between the two realms is rather blurred; in the eyes of seventeenth century Jewry there was perhaps no distinction at all.

By 1650, Lurianic kabbalism had become "the one well-articulated and generally accepted form of Jewish theology."²⁴ In Graetz's view, this was because "persecution and suffering had dimmed the light of reason."²⁵ Graetz's negative opinion of kabbalah is also clear in his evaluation of Sasportas, who "was entangled in the snares of the Kabbala."²⁶ Scholem dismisses Graetz's view as biased, yet he himself is as positive toward kabbalism as Graetz is negative: "Kabbalism triumphed because it provided a valid answer to the great problems of the time."²⁷

The very act of studying kabbalah came to be seen as speeding up the process of redemption. "Henceforth kabbalistic esotericism and messianic eschatology were intertwined and acted in combination."²⁸ Sasportas, however, did not view it thus. He quotes heavily from Maimonides (see Chap. V), whom Scholem calls "the most extreme representative of the antiapocalyptic tendency."²⁹ Lurianic kabbalism may have been the Jewish theology of the time, but Sasportas was one who, though steeped in the kabbalah, did not welcome the new messiah.

Scholem describes two parallel streams, or functions, of the kab-

balah: the conservative function reinterprets traditional forms and symbols, while the revolutionary function taps altogether new ideas. Safed kabbalism outwardly manifested a conservative character. "Its patent continuity with rabbinic tradition" enabled it to carry "on its wings--or perhaps hidden under its wings--some startling novel ideas."³⁰ The older generation of Safed mystics, including Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), tended more toward the speculative approach. The approach of the younger generation, such as Isaac Luria, however, released the dynamics of myth and symbol into the intellectual mainstream.³¹

One of the Jerusalem rabbis who signed the ban against Sabbatai Sevi was R. Jacob Semah, "the leading kabbalist in the city and an acknowledged authority on Lurianic kabbalah."³² Like Semah, Sasportas also represented the "conservative" aspect of kabbalism. "He had no use for innovations and departures from tradition, and even less for their justification in terms of esoteric mysteries. If the kabbalah justified anything, it was the existing tradition as taught and practiced."³³ The introduction that Sasportas wrote to the Heykhal ha-Qodesh of R. Moses Albaz is a kabbalistic essay which, according to Scholem, "shows him to be much closer to Cordovero's speculative kabbalah than to the dominant Lurianic system."³⁴

That work was published in 1653; thirteen years later, in his letters to the rabbis of Amsterdam (see Chaps. IV and V), Sasportas appears to be a sincere admirer of Isaac Luria. This may or may not indicate that his intellectual orientation changed during the intervening years, but it clearly shows that one could be a student of Lurianic teachings

while retaining a conservative outlook on events. If Sasportas and Semah represented the conservative position, others were led in quite a different direction. "Indeed, for many kabbalists the tremendous gnostic drama of redemption, which is the essence of Lurianism, was no mere booklore but a deeply felt experience whose inner tension would find its natural and adequate discharge in actual messianism. It would be these kabbalists who everywhere embraced the good news from Gaza."³⁵

Despite Scholem's careful and profound analysis of seventeenth-century Jewish intellectual history, at least one important question is left partially unanswered. If Lurianic kabbalism was the root of the Sabbatian movement, and was indeed the generally accepted Jewish theology of the day, then why were there so many who opposed the movement? It does not seem sufficient to explain the phenomenon by describing the two contrasting aspects of the kabbalah, and concluding that some decided to follow the conservative aspect, while others favored the revolutionary. For then the question remains, why did some choose one and some the other? If this question can be answered at all, research must take into account social, as well as intellectual, factors. This would in no way belittle the sincerity of either believers or nonbelievers, nor would it diminish the crucial importance of intellectual dynamics. It would, however, add another dimension to the historical reconstruction, and shed additional light on this dramatic era of Jewish history.

iii. SEFER SISATH NOBEL SEVI

The title of Sasportas' major work, "The Wilting Flower of Sevi," is based on Isaiah 28:1 ("Whose glorious beauty is but wilted flowers").

The book covers a period of about ten years, from 1666 to 1676. It is arranged chronologically, and divided into four sections. The first, 1666-67, ends with Sabbatai's apostasy in the early part of 1667. The second, 1667-68, contains reports of the movement and its failure. Letters against Sabbatian propaganda, 1668-69, appear in the third section, and the fourth briefly summarizes events of the years 1673-76.³⁶

The work is primarily polemical, and as such it is not always scrupulously accurate. Sasportas was interested less in leaving a precise historical record than in denouncing transgressors and justifying his own position. Nevertheless, his is the only contemporaneous attempt by a Jewish author to arrange an orderly record of what transpired.³⁷ Tishby, Scholem, and Shatz make it quite clear that Sasportas actually altered the wording of many of the letters in Sisath Nobel Sevi prior to publication, in order to make himself appear even more brave and uncompromising than he had in fact been in the midst of the messianic frenzy. Tishby, in preparing his edition of the full work, used a photostat of the original draft made by the late Dr. Zechariah Schwarz. The autograph had been in the library of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, but was lost during World War II.

The book was not compiled all at once, but gradually. As early as 1667, just after the apostasy, Sasportas was ready to go to press with what material he had, under the title Sisath Nobel Sevi.³⁸ Sasportas kept a notebook into which he copied all of his correspondence, arranging it later for publication.³⁹ The book, in its shortened form (Qissur Sisath Nobel Sevi), was published in three editions: Amsterdam, 1737

(see above, p. 15); Altona, 1757; and Odessa, 1867. The confiscation of the first edition would have resulted in the complete disappearance of the work, had it not been for R. Jacob Emden, who published the second edition (Altona) to aid his anti-Sabbatian activities.⁴⁰

During the Sabbatian controversy, the two sides spoke to each other in separate languages. Nathan viewed traditional rubrics from a non-traditional perspective. Sasportas, on the other hand, refused to acknowledge the new psychological reality of the time.⁴¹ The passage that Sasportas quotes from Maimonides, that "no one knows how these things will be worked out until they actually come to pass" (see below, p. 67), serves, as Shatz⁴² points out, to preclude the possibility of messianic claims, and to set the entire question off at an historical distance. Such a halakhic weapon simply did not fit with the messianic fervor of the mid-seventeenth century.

The awakening of teshuvah became the basic argument of the supporters of the movement. It was the key defense especially for those rabbis who may privately have had some reservations, but who, because of their positions of communal leadership, could not openly express that opposition. Sasportas, of course, also favored teshuvah, but opposed its messianic basis, as did R. Joseph ha-Levi, his major partner among the nonbelievers.⁴³ An example of this reasoning is found in Abraham Pereira, a wealthy merchant and leading believer in Amsterdam. Following Sasportas' first letter to that city, Pereira, among others, wrote to him and requested that he not write against Nathan's prophecy because it might discourage the spiritual revival taking place among the

masses.⁴⁴

Joseph Dan⁴⁵ lists the ideological bases of Sasportas' opposition to Sabbatai Sevi. The events connected with the Sabbatian movement did not correspond to traditional notions of what the messianic age would be like. Nathan and the other Sabbatian thinkers threatened the established rabbinic norms by directing their appeal to the populace, and not to rabbinic tradition. Sasportas feared the antinomian elements, such as the abolition of certain fast days and Sabbatai's "strange acts." Finally, he recognized certain parallels between the movement and early Christianity.

One of the most striking parallels with Christianity occurs in Nathan's letter to Raphael Joseph: "For because of the great and infinite sufferings--more than any mind can comprehend--which the rabbi Sabbatai Sevi has suffered, it is in his power to do as he pleases with the Israelite nation, to declare them righteous or--God forbid--guilty. He can justify the greatest sinner, and even if he be as sinful as Jesus he may justify him. And whoever entertains any doubts about him, though he be the most righteous man in the world, he that is, the messiah may punish him with great afflictions."⁴⁶ Herein is contained the Christian doctrine of salvation through the messiah and belief in him, a connection that Sasportas did not fail to point out. Tishby⁴⁷ mentions Sasportas' explicit comparison of those who continued to believe in Jesus after his death to those followers of Sabbatai Sevi who would continue to believe even when there was no longer any hope of redemption.

Sasportas was relieved that Sabbatai converted, rather than being put to death, because of the parallels with Jesus that the latter course would have suggested. He recognized that the forces released by the messianic awakening might carry beyond the collapse of the movement (see below, pp. 52-53). No one, including Sasportas, realized, in the weeks following the apostasy, that the faith was powerful enough to persist even in the face of such an unexpectedly disastrous climax. Some of Sasportas' fears of Christianity were more immediate than mere historical parallels, and may indeed have been just as well-founded. There is clear evidence that many of the messianic reports were actually spread by Christians (see above, pp. 5-6), and their motives, in Sasportas' view, were suspect. He complained that they spread the tidings in order to mislead the Jews and make them a laughingstock.⁴⁸ He also expressed his fear that the movement actually served to strengthen Christian faith.⁴⁹

In his very first letter to the rabbis of Amsterdam, he predicted that, with the collapse of the movement, the Jews would be "disgraced before our neighbors" (see below, p. 62). He was certainly ever conscious of the reactions of non-Jews. But even more than he feared the outside community, he feared for the future of Judaism. He might justly be called the outstanding Jewish conservative of the seventeenth century. Among all his contemporaries, his insight into the forces that were sweeping the Jewish world was unequalled.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹Sisath, intro., p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³SS, p. 567.

⁴SS, pp. 566-567, describing oil portrait by Isaack Luttichuijs (Amsterdam, about 1680-90) in the collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (SS, Plate IX, facing p. 594).

⁵Hyamson, facing p. 228, from an engraving by P. van Gunst, in the collection of Israel Solomons.

⁶My thanks to Prof. Yosef Yerushalmi of Harvard University, who, in a conversation, called my attention to the problematics of interpreting portraits.

⁷Sisath, intro., p. 14.

⁸Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁹SS, p. 567, n. 252, referring to Tishby's review of the Hebrew edition of Scholem's work.

¹⁰Joseph Dan, "Jacob Sasportas," Enclopedia Judaica, XIV, p. 893.

¹¹Sisath, intro., pp. 25-26.

¹²SS, p. 567.

¹³Sisath, intro., p. 27.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 27; SS, p. 568.

¹⁵SS, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶SS, p. 2.

¹⁷SS, p. 6.

¹⁸SS, p. 7.

¹⁹SS, p. 18.

²⁰SS, p. 7.

²¹SS, p. 18.

²²SS, p. 20.

²³See SS, p. 23.

²⁴SS, p. 25.

²⁵Quoted in SS, p. 20.

²⁶Graetz, vol. V, p. 138.

²⁷SS, p. 20.

²⁸SS, p. 22.

²⁹SS, p. 12.

³⁰SS, p. 20.

³¹See SS, pp. 22-23.

³²SS, p. 248. Scholem evaluates his writings as exhibiting "a somewhat rigid and narrow adherence to Vital's system, rather than bold and original thought" (p. 253).

³³SS, p. 571.

³⁴SS, p. 570.

³⁵SS, p. 253.

³⁶Sisath, intro., p. 35.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 34-35.

³⁸Sisath, intro., p. 37.

³⁹Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 42.

⁴¹Shatz, p. 58.

⁴²Ibid., p. 58.

⁴³Sisath, intro., pp. 27-28.

⁴⁴SS, pp. 529-530, referring to Sisath, p. 49.

⁴⁵EJ, vol. XIV, p. 894.

⁴⁶Sisath, pp. 9-10, trans. in SS, p. 272.

⁴⁷Sisath, intro., p. 34.

⁴⁸Sisath, p. 17, mentioned in SS, p. 471.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 167.

PART II: THE WRITINGS

CHAPTER III

THE PREFACE TO TOLEDOT YA'AKOV

INTRODUCTION

Toledot Ya'akov, an index of biblical verses appearing in the Jerusalem Talmud, was published by Samuel ben Israel Soeiro in 1652.¹ Support for the project came from the publisher's father, Menasseh ben Israel. As Sasportas explains in his preface, the work is a supplement to an earlier index, Toledot Aharon by R. Aaron of Pesaro, Italy. According to the title page, the first edition of Toledot Aharon, indexing biblical verses found in the Babylonian Talmud, was published in Freiburg, Germany. The second edition appeared in Venice, supplemented by references to the Zohar, to Isaac Arama's 'Aqedat Yishak', and to Joseph Albo's Tiqqarim. The Amsterdam edition, the third, continues the practice of supplementing the material by including Sasportas' work.

Sasportas' preface to Toledot Ya'akov may be divided into two major sections. The first is mainly autobiographical; the second describes the history and purposes of the work. The autobiographical information centers primarily on his reaction to his fall from rabbinic office and his subsequent imprisonment. Unfortunately, he does not go into detail about the circumstances, and we have no other source that tells us more about what led to his removal. But clearly the event had a profound im-

¹Apparently, the last book printed by him. See Roth, Menasseh ben Israel, p. 337, n. 40.

pact both on the course of Sasportas' life and on his state of mind. He reproves himself for having served Torah for the sake of reward, and surmises that this may have been what precipitated his downfall (pp. 40-41). Nevertheless, he reaffirms his attachment to Judaism, and, with a pride not fully disguised by his humble self-deprecation, places himself in the hands of God: "whatever happens will be in accord with God's way" (pp. 42-43).

Much of this section has the quality of musar (ethical) literature. He poses, and answers, three questions which elucidate his attitude toward the past and future. The question of time, of whether his tribulations will hasten his death, he answers with a pledge to intensify his search for God's presence (p. 43). Second, he raises the question of whether God may perhaps stand behind the events that have befallen him, both evil and good. His answer is that one cannot know the ways of God, but for his part, he will do even more to serve Him (pp. 43-44). To the third question, that of the magnitude of the harm that has come to him, he replies that he will continue to emphasize the good in human beings, and increase his efforts to understand in order to spread wisdom (p. 44).

The conclusion of all of this is that the evils have been accidental, and are outweighed by the good (p. 44). He scorns those who try to improve their lot by forming alliances with lesser individuals, calling on people to join "the reality of my deeds" (p. 44), that is, laboring on behalf of Torah. The section ends with a very effective midrash whereby he turns optimistically to the future (pp. 44-45).

Having found refuge and employment in Amsterdam, "a great city of sages and scribes" (p.45), he resolves to spend all his time with Torah. He recites the praises of his protector, Menasseh ben Israel (p.45), and goes on to describe the reasons for composing the present work. Although Sasportas, ever a proud man, apparently had reservations about writing a work for which he would not receive sufficient credit, these were overcome by the realization of the needs that would be met by the work. He specifies three purposes that are served by familiarity with the Jerusalem Talmud: 1) Jewish farmers, few though they may be, can find the agricultural laws discussed in Order Zeraim, which are lacking in the Babylonian Talmud; 2) parallel discussions may help clarify passages that are unclear in the Babylonian; 3) preachers will have access to additional interpretations of biblical verses.

THE TRANSLATION

Said the exiled one, the banished: those who howl, howl, and those who groan, groan when I set upon my heart that which I place in setting my eyes [toward] the formations of the stars in the heavens and all their hosts, commanded and standing before me, against me, formed for war with shield and spear, aiming, flinging arrows. And catapult stones [become] perpetual burdens, like murder, they will break my bones. Yet I had my soul, a "living soul"² suspended and standing, by a miracle, enclosed within my body. Abandoned like a broken cask and old wine, I said: "Yet my breath is within me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils."³ To be kidnapped and imprisoned because of that tree which is full of fruit, for taking off the robe to gather and take away some of these leaves. And [even though] the robe is discarded, the fragrance makes it worth thirteen thousand.⁴ "'And the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing'...for a laxative."⁵ Now I await healing; the judgement is with cause. I have waited upon

²Gen. 2:7.

³Job 27:3.

⁴Cf. B.M. 114b: Elijah led Rabbah b. Abbuha into Paradise and said to him: "Remove thy robe and collect and take away some of these leaves." So he gathered them and carried them off. As he was coming out, he heard a remark, "Who would so consume his [portion in] the world [to come] as Rabbah b. Abbuha has done?" Thereupon he scattered and threw them away. Yet even so, since he had carried them in his robe, it had absorbed their fragrance, and so he sold it for twelve [thirteen] thousand denarii, which he distributed among his sons-in-law. (Soncino trans.)

⁵Deut. R. 1.1, quoting Ezek. 47:12.

Him like those who attend Torah for the sake of monetary gain⁶ when they wear "the wreath of roses"⁷ [and] do not attain to "the wreath of willow branches."⁸ Let him wander among those who stand in the vault of the heavens wearing weapons of battle and not be afraid, for nothing is of greater beauty than the firmament. And with my mouth I shall scream and cry aloud, saying: O House of Aaron, "take now a blessing,"⁹ let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.¹⁰

I thought that my way was a simple one, and, even when it took me and set me in a narrow and confined place, I thought that my journeys and travels were toward a desirable destination, in that I would be looking after the needs of the public in matters of civil law and other things required for the public interest. And if I am not worthy, has the present generation grown any better?¹¹ It was not because of [unworthiness] that I refrained from engaging in labors of Torah. Reluctantly, but not lazily, did I set myself and my powers to be a public spokesman.¹² But then I fell into the hands of the unjust nobles. My

⁶Compare Avot 1.3: "Do not be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward...."

⁷I.e., youth. Cf. Shab. 152a.

⁸I.e., old age. Ibid.

⁹II Kings 5:15.

¹⁰Cf. Micah 4:2; Isa. 2:3, 5.

¹¹Cf. Yeb. 39b; Hul. 93b. "אכלור דור," "have the generations (the present) grown better?" (Jastrow, p. 320.)

¹²The meaning of the Hebrew, *נבא אר*, is unclear.

feet were cast into irons.¹³ How many adventures befell me! And the end of them was to be bound and tied, with a knot so heavy on my shoulder that I could not even say, "Enough! Enough!" of the trouble. Because of this and the like--"one whom a serpent has bitten will be frightened by a rope"¹⁴--I set out on a long journey, and crossed over the sea. But all this is not enough to make me cast off the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, either in reciting [the Shema] or in receiving [upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven], with those who rise with the sun.¹⁵ And in loving it [i.e., the Kingdom of Heaven] I shall always meditate upon it. The beatings of rods and sceptres that time brings shall not terrify me. Despite the wounds and binding ropes, I have had a pleasant life,¹⁶ and the day of sickness and terrible pain will be a sweet inheritance for me. Let me know that events pass and fade away, and "my inner strength"¹⁷ is great enough to remove the beam that falls¹⁸ upon me whenever it will. I shall not jump, I shall not skip over, I shall not kick, and I shall not exchange my success. My heart and my innermost parts accept that whatever happens will be in

¹³Cf. II Sam. 3:34.

¹⁴Cf. Jastrow, p. 292. His reference is to Eccl.R. on VII.1, but I have not found it. The meaning, however, is clear: following his unpleasant experiences, the author decided it would be more prudent not to wait around for more.

¹⁵I.e., the early morning minyan, מנין א'ק'א.

¹⁶"א'פאן א'פאן," a play on Eccl. 1:2; and cf. Alcalay, p. 1656.

¹⁷Lit., "bone of my bones." Gen. 2:23.

¹⁸Reading א'ע instead of א'ע .

accord with God's way. Most events are wrought by God.¹⁹ In spite of recurrent mishap,²⁰ I shall move from patron to patron, from champion to champion in the yeshivot, which are high as walls in their exalted wisdom with respect to the four ells of the halakhah, and the disputes of Rav and Samuel, and of Abaye and Rabbah. "As for me, where shall I go?"²¹ And my present situation is that of a target for arrows, receiving one trouble after another, faster than I can cast them off. In my situation, I am also quite ready to gather and collect the fragments, to accept events [as part of] laboring with the words of the living God--with reading and writing them, to establish their limits. If it is a question of when, in the course of seasons, days, and years, the ebb and flow of time, there will be the hastening of my demise, the expiration of my powers, and the decline of my natural vitality through a multitude of changes in a short time, [then I answer that] I shall not refrain from intensifying my scrutiny of that which fails to help or which may do harm. My only desire is the nearness of God, to spend my time pushing myself toward the grasping of the hoped-for good. I shall see it with my own eyes, saying, "How long will this be?"²² If it is a question of how the Lord has increased the essential quality of the events, for evil or for good, [I answer that] I shall increase the ac-

¹⁹The meaning of the Hebrew is obscure.

²⁰Reading נִשְׁחָדַת instead of נִשְׁחָדָה .

²¹Gen. 37:30.

²²Ex. 10:7.

tions required for all their affairs. The requirements of God are to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. How is God sought out, and how are the secret chambers of action revealed? If the question is how much He has added to the harm against me alone, even if it is to the fullest extent, to witness, to imagine, to envision whether there is a pain such as mine--in its two varieties, pressing in and rending apart, [then I shall answer that] I have set a place before them for the good traits of human beings. And I want to give double preference to understanding, and how much the more so to know, to announce, and to make known the mysteries of wisdom. What has happened to me through accidental evil would be thought little when compared to the great good and the perpetual good fortune that has befallen me through the fitness of earlier events. So too with regard to the deeds of men: the deeds of him who, in reversing his circumstances, joins with those of lesser powers, will be considered feeble tricks in comparison to him who joins himself to the reality of my deeds. And in completing it [i.e., the reality of my deeds] the parts are improved. Let it be clarified, purified, and refined. If his whole intention regarding me is, by saying "If only..." to all his followers, to point his finger at me and give me a bad name by saying, "If only he would be...", then my intended aim is to pursue the good. Towards Him I direct my words. I have found strength in all my labors, and I believe that the mishaps will not persist. And it is easy to push them aside by the abundance of strength and power, insofar as they are directed against them. And "wherever the biblical text has

'these' (וְכֵן), it is meant to cancel the preceding; wherever it has 'and these' (וְכֵן), it is to add to the preceding:" "These are the Generations of Jacob."²³ This is especially so now that I am in a great city of sages and scribes, the city of Amsterdam, may God defend her, "as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night."²⁴ I see my feet firmly fixed in the two yeshivot,²⁵ besides, of course, being in my own house. And all my desires and wishes are to increase the heavy burdens I take upon myself, such as the yoke of Torah, and to set my shoulder to carrying. I shall lift it onto my back, and shall give my soul no rest, except the rest that is part of its [Torah's] labor²⁶--and no free time other than that. It must have been for this reason that the Lord awakened His spirit within the Torah sage and divine philosopher, the champion, prince, and great one of Israel, our teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, may the Merciful One guard and bless him, to publish the Sefer Toledot Aharon, an index [of verses from] the Torah, Prophets, and Writings found [mentioned] in the Babylonian Talmud and Midrash ha-Zohar,²⁷ along with Sefer ha-

²³Gen. R. 30.3; cf. also Ex. R. 1.2. Thus, referring to the verse, Gen. 37:2, whence the title of this work, is Sasportas' way of putting the past behind him and looking to the future.

²⁴Jer. 14:8.

²⁵Or ha-Hayyim and Keter Torah. See above, p. 3.

²⁶I.e., Sabbath and festivals.

²⁷I.e., the Zohar.

'Aqedah²⁸ and the 'Iqqarim.²⁹ He wanted to add a supplement to the old version, and in order to do so, he suggested that I prepare something. It occurred to me to fill in what was missing from it, [the entire volume] to be called by the name of Israel,³⁰ while [the new addition] would be called by the name of Jacob. The completed collection would be called [by] one [name], but the single [addition] and the complete [collection] would be considered identical. No one of the parts would be described by its own name.³¹ Then I saw repeated and consistent evidence [that] that book,³² written truly and perfectly, gathers all the camps of the Babylonian Talmud to the hosts of the Bible, as "they will pitch their tents, every man with his own camp, and every man with his own standard,"³³ and every man at his own place; but the camp of the Jerusalem Talmud had travelled away from it. Therefore I said [to myself] that "his banner of love was over me,"³⁴ [requiring me] to complete this standard by attaching to it an index of the Jerusalem Talmud. Together they will be perfectly suitable, "that the tabernacle may be-

²⁸'Aqedat Yishak by Isaac Arama (Spanish, c. 1420-1494).

²⁹By Joseph Albo (Spanish, 15th century).

³⁰I.e., of Menasseh ben Israel.

³¹Raising doubts in Sasportas' mind as to whether it is worthwhile for him to proceed with the task, since he will not get due credit for his labors.

³²I.e., the Toledot Aharon.

³³Num. 1:52, with a slight change.

³⁴Cant. 2:14.

come one whole,"³⁵ Together they will encompass [everything needed by] one who is resigned and has no hope of concluding his endless search for a gezerah shava or for the similarities between them, [i.e., the two Talmuds]. All who seek the Lord shall come within the tent of Jacob. Its opening is pure, its covering of fine silver, and its desire is to stand steadily, like nails, upon the words of the sages, to mention and re-iterate a second and third time³⁶ the three benefits attained by [knowing the Jerusalem Talmud]. The first is that the entire Order Seeds (Zeraim) is lacking in the Babylonian Talmud, with the exception of Tractate Blessings (Berakhot). If there should be, among the scattered few who come [to study] the Orders [of Talmud], a small farmer here and there, that whole subject may be found in the Jerusalem Talmud covered fully and "very plainly"³⁷ in the aforementioned order. Not one of its laws is missing, and all of the authorities drink of its essence in making judgments. And that which causes difficulty for the lover of knowledge--namely, explications of biblical passages that go beyond the words of the commentators--in this matter he will easily find what he seeks to calm his mind, the truest desire of his soul. The second benefit is for those who, when studying the Babylonian Talmud, find difficulty with the language of the Talmud or Tosafot. Anything that is hidden from his understanding he may seek in the Jerusalem Talmud--perhaps it will clarify that which seems closed off to him. The

³⁵Ex. 26:6.

³⁶Cf. Ber. 18a: "If you have read it, you have not repeated it; and if you have repeated it, you have not gone over it a third time."

³⁷Deut. 27:8.

third is for preachers, who preach on the Bible. They will grasp that its way is straightforward, will do them good, and will reveal to them high secrets of wisdom in the biblical verses. Even though the complete explanation of a verse may sometimes not appear, he is still permitted to add something to complete the exposition of the verse--for a portion of it is like the whole. Now the author of the Yafeh Mar'eh³⁸ has brought together the aggadot, but no more. Yet their benefit is withheld from one who seeks an explanation of a [particular] verse or statement, because there is no index of the text arranged to give access to it. And so, for the sake of the many, and to reveal the hidden treasures of kings,³⁹ we have created a means whereby anyone looking for a verse may easily find it according to the order of the biblical sections: an index to the tractate, chapter, folio, and page of the [readily] available Cracow edition. This will also enhance the authority⁴⁰ of the Yafeh Mar'eh, by telling the tractate and the chapter. The public weal depends upon us to help and to aid, to publish and to complete a collection of the sermons on the Torah--most of which are fairly similar among us--that are preached in public every week, to waken the ear to hear as they that are taught,⁴¹ and its voice is heard, the book, "The Voice of

³⁸ A collection of the aggadic passages from the Jerusalem Talmud by Samuel Jaffe, second half of the 16th century.

³⁹ Cf. Eccl. 2:8.

⁴⁰ Reading *אלוהים* instead of *אלהים*.

⁴¹ Cf. Isa. 50:4.

Jacob."⁴²

A palanquin should be fetched for the rabbi⁴³ who initiated the misvah and completed it by printing [the work] at his own expense, who enthusiastically received the lengthy addition to the main work--the primary purpose of which is for our merit and the merit of the many which depends upon it. And we called this composition, small in quantity but great in quality, by the name Toledot Ya'akov for the two reasons alluded to above: "The generations of Jacob" refers to Jacob's teacher and his forgotten transmigrations, no longer able to labor over Torah. Or "generations" may also be understood in its literal meaning, counting [the book] as my offspring, the creator being considered the father. I have also followed in the footsteps of the original author.⁴⁴ May God grant us the privilege of "making many books without end."⁴⁵ (Signed:) The least of those who engage in the labor of the exalted Torah, who breaks the rock in pieces like a hammer,⁴⁶ Jacob Sasportas, a pure Sephardi, in honor of my father, Aaron Sasportas, may the Merciful One guard and bless him, who is among the inhabitants of the city of Oran, may God defend her.

⁴²Gen. 27:22. He appears to be referring to a projected work, which apparently never came to fruition.

⁴³I.e., Menasseh ben Israel.

⁴⁴R. Aharon of Pesaro, Italy, who also called his work "Toledot."

⁴⁵Ecc1. 12:12.

⁴⁶Of. Jer. 23:29.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST LETTER TO THE RABBIS OF AMSTERDAM

INTRODUCTION

The opening paragraphs of this letter set the sarcastic and derogatory tone for what is to follow. They are composed in an extremely flowery style, with heavy use of biblical and talmudic phrases. All of this establishes Sasportas' mastery of melisah, but contributes little, if anything, to the actual argument. He leaves no doubt, however, about his basic attitude toward the events that were sweeping the Jewish world.

The central issue dealt with in this letter is that of prophecy. Is a prophet necessary to announce the messiah? Since there is a prophet, is he a true one? What is required to verify his mission? Sasportas does not here question the possibility of anything that has been predicted. He is primarily concerned that both prophecy and evidence be properly verified by the established authorities: "'Let the Almighty answer me ' --or a court-attested document written by the rabbis of the Land of Israel..." (p.61). He affirms his faith in the messianic promise: "Let me not falsify my faith" that the messiah is always present (p. 61). With, however, an intuitive grasp of the dangers inherent, not only in the Sabbatian awakening, but in the messianic doctrine as a whole, he prefers to err on the side of caution.

Sasportas takes the position that a prophet is not required for the messianic announcement (see p. 58, n.34). Indeed, he expresses amazement that rabbis would anoint a king "at the word of a prophet and not at his own word" (p.57). With regard to Nathan in particular, Sasportas points out a number of factors which cast doubt on his mission. There had been early reports of a Jewish army, reports which preceded Nathan's first letter and which seemed more hopeful than his prophecies. Yet Nathan had suppressed all those reports. Nevertheless, according to Sasportas, it was only on the basis of the early rumors that people were putting any faith at all in Nathan's words (pp. 59-60).

The second stricture against Nathan's prophecy is that of geographical origins. Nathan had tried to demonstrate that Gaza was an appropriate place for the messianic tidings to originate (see p. 58, n.35). Sasportas contends that Jerusalem, or at least the territory of Judah, would have been far more appropriate. In fact, there is some doubt about whether Gaza is even properly a part of the Land of Israel (pp. 58-59).

Finally, and perhaps most important, Nathan's actions are not in keeping with those of the true prophets. The signs he has offered are not convincing. They are no better than, for example, those wrought by R. Isaac Luria, yet Luria made no prophetic claim at all (pp. 62-63). A prophet presumably could verify the messiah's mission, if he himself could be verified by the proper signs. But Nathan's style, and his prophecies, represent such a radical departure from the past, that they raise grave doubts in Sasportas' mind. Indeed, it is precisely their

unprecedented nature that is the most telling argument against Nathan: "But what above all else compels me not to believe, is that [the prophecy] is offered in such a manner, and in words, the like of which has never been used by any prophet or seer..." (p. 61).

The difficulty with establishing a prophetic mission is that there are precedents. We have guidelines for knowing who is a true prophet and who is not. Thus, if Nathan fails to meet these criteria, which to Sasportas' eyes he certainly does, he is a false prophet. If, however, the messiah were to make his own claims, the problem would be more complex. In such a case, the only precedents are false messiahs. There have been true prophets to whom Nathan can be compared; there has never been a true messiah to whom Sabbatai can be compared. That Sabbatai's mission has been attached to Nathan's prophecies is, for Sasportas, a major factor casting doubt on the whole affair at this early stage.

One of Sasportas' major preoccupations in this letter is his long-range concern, truly far-sighted under the circumstances, that the Sabbatian movement might continue even after the initial prophecy had been disproved, that Nathan might "cause additional sin by finding a way to say that his promise and prophecy were conditional" (p. 61). Sasportas takes pains to anticipate events by developing an argument against the potential claims of conditional prophecy. This was, of course, months before the apostasy, and no such contention had been raised by Nathan. Indeed, the explanations that would keep the movement alive after the apostasy were to take rather different forms (and for good reason: claims of conditional prophecy could hardly have explained away

an apostate messiah!). Nevertheless, it is to be noted that Sasportas, the arch-nonbeliever, perhaps more than any of the adherents, was the one who realized the depths that had been touched by the messianic awakening.

In this first letter he already sees the possibility that the movement might continue despite the collapse of the prophecy. It is not surprising that he should predict failure for the movement: that is simply consistent with his generally negative and conservative attitude toward the events that were unfolding. Nor is it surprising that he should expect Nathan to offer an argument that the success of the messiah had been undermined by external factors: no one could have anticipated that the movement would fail because of the messiah himself, that Sabbatai's climactic act would be apostasy.

What is remarkable is Sasportas' intuition that enough power resided in the movement to keep it going, in some form, even though the prophecy would prove false. This insight is probably due to the parallels that Sasportas rightly recognized between the Sabbatian movement and early Christianity. Although Christianity is not explicitly mentioned by him, it seems clear that he had the comparison in mind. His attitudes on this subject are discussed a little more fully in Chapter II.

THE TRANSLATION

Within a week after seeing Nathan's letter, with its delusions and heresies, I sent my letter to Amsterdam and its sages--including the chief amongst the believers, the great Rabbi Isaac Aboab. Here is a copy:

"From the end of the earth we hear singing: Glory (Sevi) to the righteous! And I said: I waste away! I waste away! Woe is me! The faithless have acted faithlessly; the faithless have broken faith!"¹

News has come recently which we could not have imagined, but which is now the constant topic of conversation in your midst, where "laughter has not ceased from their lips,"² even "jest and derision."³ And since they are "speeding to the spoil, hasting to the prey,"⁴ the good awaited one,⁵ for whom nothing is prepared from one end of the earth to the other, from the deepest pit to the highest rooftop, has become like a laughingstock in my eyes.

"From the end of the earth we hear singing:"¹ Sevi has become a righteous one and a savior. Nathan the Prophet has come and said that this rabbi, whose name⁶ suggests that he will rise from "the thickets

¹Isa. 24:16.

²Ber. 9b.

³Eruv. 68b.

⁴Cf. Isa. 8:3.

⁵I.e., the messiah.

⁶Sabbat^{ai}, in Hebrew, is also the name of the planet Saturn.

of the Jordan,"⁷ go (from) across the river Sambatyon to make it rest,⁸ and take himself a wife from there:⁹ "He goes to his mate," but his mate does not go to him.¹⁰ "Where then is my hope?"¹¹ "For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth: a woman shall court a man."¹²

To say to those who are imprisoned, Go out!, to those who are in darkness, See light! and their King will pass before them, "mounted upon swift strength,"¹³ King of praises,¹⁴ riding upon a

⁷Zech. 11:3.

⁸The mythical River Sambatyon was supposed to rest on the Sabbath. Thus, "to make it rest" is to usher in the perpetual Sabbath that characterizes the messianic era.

⁹Cf. Nathan's letter (Sisath, p. 11 trans. in SS, p. 273): that Sabbatai "will return from the river Sambatyon together with his predestined mate, the daughter of Moses."

¹⁰Gen. R. 68.3.

¹¹Job 17:15.

¹²Jer. 31:21, with a slight change. (Two words appear in reverse order, probably due only to a lapse of memory, since the change does not affect the sense.)

¹³Isa. 19:1. The original reads, "on a swift cloud." Sasportas alters one letter: "ענן" (cloud) becomes "עז" (strength), in order to fit with the description of a lion. (So Tishby, relating it to what follows.) The two words, "עז" (strength) and "קל" (swift), do appear together in Avot 5.20 (some versions, 5.23). The complete citation makes it clear that Sasportas had it in mind:

הוּא עֹז כְּנֶמֶר וְקֵל כְּנֶשֶׁר
... אֵינִי מֵעֵת
"Be strong as a tiger, swift as an eagle, run like a deer (Sevi), be brave as a lion, to do the will of your Father who is in heaven..."

¹⁴The word "praises" (אֲמִנָּה) is also to be read "animals." With a slight spelling change it could be sounded as Sabbatianism, though the latter is an unlikely pun: according to Scholem (SS, p. 238), "The modern term 'Sabbatians' never occurs in original sources and documents. Later expressions...were names of abuse invented by their opponents in the early eighteenth century."

lion¹⁵ and not "upon a colt the foal of an ass."¹⁶ And his jaw is bored through with a bridle, "his mouth must be held in"¹⁷ by a twisted snake, a terrifying snake that pursues, fantastic, with seven heads.¹⁸ What has the ear not heard from the mouth of the prophet? Yet not one of them has gone out to meet serpents,¹⁹ as they usually do. Truly, prophecy sweet to my mouth²⁰ has not come forth from Gaza,²¹ neither am I able to draw out the honey of faith from the body of the Lion.²² Indeed, it is an exaggerated vow made lightly,²³ it is nothing but an object of derision.²⁴

¹⁵The original text of Nathan's letter reads "אָרִי," which Sasportas changes to "אָרִי." The sense is thus preserved, but the reference is now to R. Isaac Luria, ha-Ari. The phrase may be read, "and exalts himself above ha-Ari."

¹⁶Zech. 9:9, describing the humble arrival of the messianic king.

¹⁷Cf. Ps. 32:9, also Job 40:26.

¹⁸Cf. Nathan's letter, Sisath, p. 11, (trans. in SS, p. 274). Nathan's original statement is: "...he will return from the river Sambatyon, mounted on a celestial lion; his bridle will be a seven-headed serpent...." Scholem (SS, p. 274, n. 221) gives us the sources for the imagery, which is "a combination of several Talmudic and Zoharic symbols."

¹⁹Also means, "go out to use magic" like idolators.

²⁰Cant. 2:3; also a pun on Jud. 14:14.

²¹Gaza was the base of operations not only for Nathan, but also for Samson, which leads to the following allusion.

²²Cf. Jud. 14:8. Again, it is also a reference to Luria.

²³Lit., "a snake that resembles the beam of an olive press."

²⁴Lit., "a proverb and a byword." Cf. Deut. 28:37 and elsewhere.

I cannot believe what is told, that the rabbis of the Land of Israel could take it upon themselves to anoint a king, "a shoot out of the stock of Jesse,"²⁵ at the word of a prophet and not at his own word. For, however easily it may come to the prophet, the spirit that shines within him had long since come to rest upon the breath of his life, the anointed of his lord.²⁶ It is "the spirit of counsel and might"²⁷ that led him to raise that man up as a prophet--but one is no better than the other.²⁸ We must see whether the signs and wonders of this individual agree with the clear signs given by the true prophet, Isaiah, in chapter eleven [of his book].

It is not difficult for me to believe that the mighty king of Refat²⁹ and Turkey could be brought to remove the turban, to take off the crown³⁰ and place it upon the head of the messiah. Nor shall I doubt the One who has the power to prevent it, for "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the watercourses: He turns it whithersoever He will."³¹ "That which is low shall be exalted, and that which is high abased." But a multitude of changes within a short time,

²⁵Isa. 11:1.

²⁶Or, "his Lord, the messiah." Cf. Lam. 4:20, which reads, "The breath of our life, the Lord's anointed..."

²⁷Isa. 11:2.

²⁸I.e., Sabbatai is no better than Nathan (and vice versa), so how could he have raised him up?

²⁹I have been unable to find the place referred to here.

³⁰Cf. Ezek. 21:31. This verse, to which Sasportas twice refers in this passage, deals with the theme of the sudden overturn of the established order. Sasportas develops the theme in what follows.

³¹Prov. 21:1.

³²Ezek. 21:31.

things switching back and forth, will accumulate in the course of a year like the wages of a laborer not paid on time. It can only diminish his glory and excellence. And that he should do all this without giving any sign as to whether it is a time of war or a time of peace, is enough to raise questions in my soul, to bring grief to my heart, to cause the most fundamental kind of doubt.³³

Even during the time of the Second Temple there was no prophecy. And now that our land is desolate, the House of our Splendor gone, [prophecy] is no longer needed.³⁴ I do not know the reason for this, since it is within the Land of Israel. But if it is territory conquered by a single individual,³⁵ then he finds the hidden good, the

³³Lit., "doubt based on the Torah."

³⁴Cf. Sisath, p. 39. In a subsequent letter to R. Aaron Sarphati, Sasportas explains that "the coming of the messiah does not require a prophet" to announce it.

³⁵Cf. Git. 8b, top, esp. Rashi beginning "כי לא ידענו": Refers to David. Under him all Israel was not united as it had been at the time of Joshua's conquest. At that time they conquered the land together, prior to its division, to serve the needs of all Israel; but David conquered only for his own need." (See also Git. 47 ab, Av. Zar. 21a) According to tradition, the spirit of prophecy is found only within the Land of Israel. Sasportas, by raising the question of whether Gaza can properly be considered part of the land, or whether it is part of a later conquest, calls into question the legitimacy of a prophecy originating in an area that might be outside the Land of Israel. This is Sasportas' response to Nathan's attempt to show that Gaza is where redemption begins. See Nathan's letter, Sisath, p. 11, translated in SS,

p. 273: "...None will be saved from these tribulations except those dwelling in this place [that is, Gaza] which is the ruler's residence, even as Hebron was unto David. The name [of the city] expresses its nature, for its name is [in Hebrew] 'Azzah ('the strong one'), and with the advent of redemption, strength ...will spread...."

concealed light "before the time appointed"³⁶ for messiah and prophet. It seems wondrous to me that this should not come from the land of Judah and the King's Temple. And what is the power of the territory of Gaza, that there "a portion of a ruler was reserved, and there came the heads of the people?"³⁷

Why in all of this have they not spoken of the strange deeds of the true and righteous prophets, who gave genuine signs? We have not seen such signs accompanying this prophecy, wherefore I conclude that there are no more prophets, that no one among us knows what will be the end of the wonders, and that "Gaza shall be forsaken."³⁸

In his prophecy, why did that prophet suppress reports of the first letters³⁹ which brought tidings of a great army, vast and mighty, surrounding the entire land of Ethiopia? It was the voice of a great multitude of people from the Hebrew camp, who laid out siege-works and stretched forth ramparts against the accursed

³⁶ Cf. Pesikta Rabbati, the beginning of chap. 36, where the messiah is referred to as "the light that is concealed beneath the throne of glory" from before the creation.

³⁷ Deut. 33:21 Rashi understands the verse as referring to a tradition that "Moses (a ruler) would be interred in that territory."

³⁸ Zeph. 2:4.

³⁹ In a footnote, Sasportas describes the rumors he had heard while still in London (translated in SS, p. 336): "Multitudes of Israel had come by way of the desert to Mecca, the burial place of the prophet of the Muslims, which they had despoiled. When the Grand Turk marched against them with a mighty army, they wrought vengeance on him and also laid siege to the great city called Mokka. These rumors were accepted even by Christians in England, and 'the voice waxed stronger.' Some said that these Israelite armies were the sons of Jonadab b. Rechab who had preceded the Ten Tribes." Tishby points out that Mokka is a city in Yemen, but Scholem suggests that it may well be a misspelling for Mecca.

city, a city arrogant in its foolish faith in the prophet and madman, the "man of spirit."⁴⁰ Again and again they struck against it "with stroke unceasing."⁴¹ They had laid siege⁴² to the greatest city in India, "and they cry, Less! Less!" of those who wage war against them.⁴³ And, as if to confirm everything, letters came from Africa which at first appeared trustworthy enough, to the effect that great numbers of our people had appeared in [the African] desert. But he did not prophesy concerning them; all mention of them was absent from his mouth. The first [letters] had scarcely arrived--there had not even been time for belief in them to flower in our hearts--when new tidings arrived which raised the first doubts. "And I said: I waste away! I waste away! Woe is me!" The first [letters] are faithless. They "have acted faithlessly; the faithless have broken faith!"⁴⁴ The first ones acted faithlessly and lied and fabricated words that were not true, in order to sustain the faith⁴⁵ in our hands, but nothing at all is sustained in our hands. For had it not been for the original letters, not the smallest remnant would have remained whereby that prophet might raise himself up as a true prophet, herald of good news, proclaimer of salvation.

⁴⁰Refers to Mohammed.

⁴¹Isa. 14:6.

⁴²Git. 28b.

⁴³Cf. B.M. 114a. "פ'נ'י," translated "less," may also be a reference to Mecca, on which see SS, p. 347. The geography seems hopelessly confused.

⁴⁴Isa. 24:16, as above.

⁴⁵I.e., belief in Sabbatai Sevi.

Let me not falsify my faith that at every moment, at all times he i.e., the messiah is present, and that every hour is the hour of his birth. For this is what is said: Come and I will show you Bar Nafli.⁴⁶ And this: Today Menahem is born.⁴⁷ But what above all else compels me not to believe, is that the prophecy is offered in such a manner, and in words, the like of which has never been used by any prophet or seer, or by R. Simeon b. Yohai⁴⁸ and his comrades. "Lo, here is my signature,"⁴⁹ "the entreaty of the lowly."⁵⁰ "Let the Almighty answer me"⁵¹--or a court-attested document written by the rabbis of the Land of Israel, may it be rebuilt and established speedily in our days, to confirm everything.

I am afraid lest, when the time has arrived and the utterance of that prophet has not been fulfilled, he cause additional sin by finding a way to say that his promise and prophecy were conditional.⁵² Yet there would remain grounds for arguing against him, for a promise of good, even though it is conditional, cannot be annulled.⁵³ In any case,

⁴⁶Cf. San. 96b, although the exact phrase is not found there.

⁴⁷Cf. J.Ber. 2.4; Lam. R. 1.51.

⁴⁸According to tradition, the author of the Zohar.

⁴⁹Job 31:35.

⁵⁰Ps. 10:17.

⁵¹Job 31:35.

⁵²Thus leading people to continue following him in hopes of rectifying the situation.

⁵³Cf. Shab. 55a: "R. Aha b. R. Hanina said: 'Never did a favorable word go forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, of which He retracted for evil....'"

his prophecy will yield us no benefit whatsoever, especially if things happen as in the days of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory,⁵⁴ when ten men, whom he had singled out by name, prepared themselves to hasten the coming of the redeemer, that one of them should be the messiah from the tribe of Ephraim.⁵⁵ Yet, when the slightest blemish was found in one of them, he, of blessed memory, said that their power had diminished, and they would not be able to bring him before his [appointed] time.⁵⁶ On the basis of a transgression, whether minor or serious, it is possible that the prophet might find room to excuse [the fact that his prophecies were not fulfilled], and the name of the messiah would become a mockery, the prophet [merely] a dreamer of dreams, and we disgraced before our neighbors. And what of his uncovering the sealed graves of nameless dead?⁵⁷ Who will verify that these are the graves, and what sign has he given concerning this? Have the

⁵⁴Tishby suggests comparison with a passage in Shivhei ha-Ari (Liqqutei Shas, Koretz, 1785), although he did not find the actual source of this statement there. I have been unable to check this source (Sisath, p. 15, n. 2).

⁵⁵There is a tradition that the Josephite Messiah is supposed to precede the Messiah of the House of David.

⁵⁶"Certain allusions made to his disciples suggest that he [Luria] believed himself to be 'the Messiah, the son of Joseph'..." (EJ, vol. XI, pp. 573 - 574).

⁵⁷Immediately following the text of this letter, Sasportas summarizes the reports that were received in the days after its composition. They tell of a voice speaking to Nathan out of a pillar of cloud and revealing to him the location of hidden graves (Sisath, p. 15). These reports arrived, however, after this first letter was written. We may surmise that earlier reports of the incident had been received, the latter reports serving to clarify the rumors.

dead themselves testified and come alive and stood upright to fulfill his word, or is there another sign like this? Even if you were able to say that he was right about them and their names, it is still not enough to prove him a true prophet, for more than this is told of R. Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, and his disciple(s).⁵⁸ And they had more to tell us about the things [Luria] did in his life--and all this was legally attested to and endorsed by the court.⁵⁹ But if [Nathan] has revealed that which the prophets kept secret, then "how good is our lot, how pleasant our fate"⁶⁰ that we are privileged to see in our generation what others have not merited. Which is not to say that it is because of our deeds that we have merited this, but rather for the sake of His name which is profaned by the nations, as it is written: "For My sake, My own sake, do I act."⁶¹ Pray God that He will establish His good word speedily in our days, in whatever manner He will. Peace from the signer [of this letter]. (Dated in) Torah portion "that the matter has been determined by God, and that God will soon carry it out."⁶² Hamburg, 1665, Jacob Sasportas, your humble servant.

⁵⁸ But no claim is made for their being prophets. There is also a tradition that Luria used to point out unknown graves of righteous individuals to his disciples (cf. EJ, vol. XI, pp. 573 - 574).

⁵⁹ I have been unable to find any additional information about this incident.

⁶⁰ Birnbaum, Siddur, p. 25.

⁶¹ Isa. 48:11.

⁶² Gen. 41:32, portion Migges, read in Kislev/December.

CHAPTER V

SECOND LETTER TO THE RABBIS OF AMSTERDAM

INTRODUCTION

The second letter followed the first by about a week. In the intervening days, additional reports had been received concerning the activities of Sabbatai and Nathan, and Sasportas summarizes them in the pages preceding the text of this letter.¹ Most of the incidents are alluded to also in the letter itself.

The three main features of Sasportas' early polemic² all appear in this letter. The first is that, if Sabbatai were in fact the messiah, he would have punished those who refused to believe in him. This point is discussed on pages 73-75. The second, that news of the messiah's activities came in common letters, and not in legally verified documents of a rabbinic court, is mentioned on page 74, and more fully elaborated on pages 78-79. Apparently, individual rabbis had signed letters stating their faith in Sabbatai Sevi, but Sasportas sought legal (court) verification, particularly to certify Nathan's mission. Scholem points out that, "when letters arrived saying that the rabbis had 'repented' and acknowledged the prophet, Sasportas

¹Sisath, pp.15-18.

²Mentioned by Tishby, Sisath, intro., pp.30-31.

immediately realized that this report provided implicit evidence of their original disbelief, but no proof at all of their subsequent change of mind."³

This relates also to the third argument, stated only indirectly in this letter, that, if the reports were true, the local rabbis would have taken some initiative in spreading the news. It was in the first letter (above, p.61) that he openly appealed for a court document. In the second letter, he expressed surprise that messengers had not been dispatched from Palestine to seek alms, as well as "to inform the multitudes of their trouble" (p.94). The inference may be made that, if things there were going well, official messengers should have been sent to announce the tidings.

More important than these early arguments was his concern for the long-term consequences of the movement. Sasportas' fears that the movement might be playing into the hands of the Christians were discussed above (p.33). A major concern expressed in this letter is that the messianic awakening, when it collapses, will undermine people's faith, especially their faith in the eventual coming of the true redeemer. He makes use of an intriguing statement attributed to Hillel: "Israel has no messiah, because they already consumed him in the days of Hezekiah" (San. 99a), applying the principle to his own time (p. 68).

Sasportas protected himself by stating his willingness to accept the truth of Nathan's prophecy--if the proper conditions are met. He was very strict about his requirements, and even the long-awaited court

³SS, p. 576.

document would leave room for doubt: "But even were I not to believe that this man is the messianic king I would not be sinning, especially since I have not seen his might" (p.69). The passage that he quotes from Maimonides, Hilkhot Melakhim 11.4 (p.69), effectively places the burden of proof on the messiah himself, whereas Nathan's teaching unequivocally places the burden upon the people's willingness to believe "without sign or wonder."⁴

The argument concerning the resurrection of Moses (p.80-82) is an interesting one. According to Nathan's original letter, Moses had been resurrected thirteen (fifteen) years earlier. Sasportas offers a double criticism of the legend. First, if someone can be resurrected prior to the advent of the messiah, then perhaps there is no need for the messiah at all. Furthermore, tradition has it that those buried outside the Land of Israel merit resurrection through the fact that Moses is buried among them. (The concept of the vicarious effect of Moses' merit is mentioned by Rashi, Bahya, Moses Alshekh, and Mordecai ha-Kohen. See p.81, notes 76-78). If Moses' resurrection had already occurred, hope would be lost for all but those buried within the Land of Israel.

⁴Sisath, p. 10.

THE TRANSLATION

Sages, perfect in the faith of Israel, Rabbis of the people,
Sages of the Congregation of Amsterdam, may God preserve them, and at
their head the honorable sage, Rabbi Isaac Aboab, may the Merciful
One protect and bless him:

Having given regards and paid my respects, I have come in writing
to express my opinion, briefly, based not on generalizations but on
details, for there is nothing to a generalization except what is in
the details. So I must accept the opinion that your broad knowledge
confirms, or (at least) place it within the realm of the possible--
whether it be a likely or unlikely possibility. And if, after the first
letters I was doubtful, now that the second letters have increased your
faith even more--have almost brought the matter to a state of near
certainty--I have come as an inquirer. If there is no answer to my
questions, I shall temporarily suspend the matter, await the working
of miracles, and agree with the words of the Rambam,⁵ of blessed memory,
who wrote at the end of Hilkhos Melakhim:⁶ "No one knows how all these
things, and things like them, will be until they have come to pass....
One ought never to deal with the aggadot, and ought not draw out the
midrashim that have been uttered on these and similar subjects, and
ought not take them to be of the essence...but ought to wait and
believe in the general outlines of the matter...."

⁵Moses Maimonides (1135-1204).

⁶12.2.

I would not, because of this, do harm to my faith--Heaven forbid!--or cast doubt upon it. On the contrary, I fulfill it by my asking in order to know the truth, and it seems to me that my doubt is better than certainty. For if, after some time, all the "generals and particulars" concerning the coming of the Redeemer, about whom the man of God⁷ has prophesied, have not been fulfilled, it will result in a "serious confusion of ideas."⁸ For all the masses of the people and some of their leaders, including yourselves, have believed that he is the messianic king, and have "caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp"⁹ of the Hebrews: that nothing is to be taken away from what has been heard, and there shall not "roar after it a voice"¹⁰ that casts doubt. But afterwards, when they see that his faith has not been fulfilled, they will say that "there is no messiah for Israel because they consumed him in the days of" the prophecy of Gaza.¹¹ And this if they would not deny the fundamental principles of the words of the Torah and prophets.¹² By the same token, I say that upon seeing a document written and authenticated by the sages of the Land of Israel, I shall

⁷I.e., Nathan.

⁸Arak. 12a. The Soncino translation is "offence," but I prefer here the understanding of Jastrow (p. 439).

⁹Ex. 36:6.

¹⁰Job 37:4.

¹¹Cf. San. 99a: היה אומר: אין להם משיח בישראל שגבר אצלם היה חזקיהו
"Hillel says: Israel has no messiah, because they already consumed him in the days of Hezekiah."

¹²I.e., they would be forced by logic to admit either that the messianic promise had been used up by the false prophecies of Nathan, or that there never was a messianic promise at all. The latter would be an uprooting of the words of the Torah and prophets.

believe with firm faith in all that has been said, and shall support the prophet. And I shall open the gate of repentance to my doubts and questions, to say that all was by way of puzzle and proverb, or a temporary teaching [awaiting] the working of miracles. But even were I not to believe that this man is the messianic king I would not be sinning, especially since I have not seen his might, as the Rambam, of blessed memory, said at the end of Hilkhos Melakhim:¹³ "And if there should arise a king from the House of David, acting in accordance with the Torah and engaging in mitzvot as did David, his forefather, in keeping with the written and oral Torah; and if he compels all Israel to go according to [the Torah] and to repair its breaches; and if he fights the wars of the Lord--such a one falls in the messianic category. If he succeeds in rebuilding the Temple at its site and gathers the dispersed of Israel--such is certainly the messiah"--since it appears that his very deeds certify him and support his messianic claim. As for his being [mentioned] in the utterance of a prophet: if after his righteousness and fitness [are established] he works signs that are worthy of being believed, if in the face of all that I do not believe him, then I would be sinning and denying the words of a prophet established by written decree. Thus I would be sinning by testing the two of them, namely, the prophet and the messiah. Wherefore I say that everything depends upon the faithfulness of the prophecy of the man of God, [to know] whether what is

¹³11.4.

said is true.¹⁴

How fortunate and blessed we are in the tidings [brought] to us, in our seeing the writing of God on the original tablets in letters blossoming forth in the upper air and standing by a miracle.¹⁵ How good is our portion, the portion of God above in these: He added to the first ones a second set of tablets with the appearance of the first, without discrepancy, addition, or elision.¹⁶ In bringing the first fruits set aside from the new fruit, "and the flute," in the hollow of a happy heart, "was played before them."¹⁷ And the power¹⁸ of the righteous and the wicked¹⁹ is covered over and hidden "on a fruitful hill."²⁰ There is revealed "a king in Jeshurun"²¹ to

¹⁴It is not clear from what is said here whether the important factor in Sasportas' mind is the legitimacy of the prophet or the power displayed by the Messiah. Scholem reflects the ambiguity. In one passage (SS, p. 571) he says, "For Sasportas everything hinged on the proper authentication of Nathan's mission...." But he also points out (SS, p. 577) that, "It was possible, theoretically, that Nathan was a false prophet and yet Sabbatai might be the Lord's Anointed."

¹⁵Cf. J. Ta'an. 4.8; B. Shab. 104a. The closed mem and the samekh stood in the tablets by a miracle: the letters were cut all the way through, but did not fall out.

¹⁶Cf. M. Bik. 3.3-12. תוספת (addition) there refers to the "additions to the first fruits; ריע" ("elision") there has the meaning, "that which bedecks the first fruits." Sasportas continues the discussion with further references to the bikkurim procession described in the Mishnah.

¹⁷M. Bik. 3.4.

¹⁸Hebrew, רך.

¹⁹Here abbreviated ר"ב, to make a pun on ר"ב, the ox involved in the bikkurim procession with its horn (קרן) covered.

²⁰Isa. 5:1, also the name (קרן בן שמן) of a place near Jerusalem. Note also that קרן השמן, "the horn of oil," is what Samuel used to anoint David (cf. I Sam. 16:13).

²¹Deut. 33:5.

anoint the Holy of Holies. They announce over and over that "when the heads of the people were gathered,"²² with "those who collect sayings"²³ from the written and the oral Torah. And the fire flared up around them and over against the plaster [wall] of the king, the palm of the hand²⁴ made of heavenly fire pours the good oil over the head of his king and lord, Sabbatai Sevi, and it comes down on his clothes.²⁵ And the eyes of the assembly see the glory of the Lord which appears to them: this is an erudite and powerful debater, an expert in Talmudic discourse.²⁶ "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and look upon the king whose peace²⁷ is in the crown with which his mother," the Shekinah of the uplifted and exalted God, "crowned him on his wedding day"--this is Sinai²⁸--"and on the day of the rejoicing heart"²⁹ of the messianic king. Fortunate is the generation whose desire is to see their king arrive at the open gates of Heaven, gates split asunder by the voice of fiery speech, proclaiming and saying: Give honor and glory to the king known and acknowledged in the gates

²²Deut. 33:5.

²³Eccl. 12:11.

²⁴Cf. Dan. 5:5.

²⁵The Hebrew also implies "tainting his character."

²⁶Lit., "Sinai and an uprooter of mountains." See Alcalay, p. 1763.

²⁷הַשְׁלָמָה instead of שְׁלָמָה .

²⁸I.e., the day of the revelation at Sinai.

²⁹Cant. 3:11.

of the heavenly court.³⁰ Is it not our souls' desire to hear with our ears, to merit hearing the voice speaking, "that man may live though God has spoken to him!"³¹ Was it not of God that his lord³² requested life not followed by death, eternity unceasing, and the true good with which nothing can be compared? And it was especially since all, at that moment, were making use of the heavenly voice,³³ that the spirit of Elijah came to rest upon them, speaking directly as one would to his neighbor.

Who has believed the good tidings we have heard, tidings that rejuvenate our bones, the dry bones of all the House of Israel? And from the four winds comes the wind that "hovers--this is the spirit of the messiah,"³⁴ who breathes on them from his very essence, to restore them to life with the morning dew that falls from the prophet's spittle in a public display "that all his words are true and righteous."³⁵ And one who has not said "true and enduring..." in the day and "true and trustworthy..." at night has not fulfilled his obligation³⁶ concerning the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven. [The messiah] must return him to taking it upon himself, for this is for each and every man of Israel.

³⁰ All of this refers to the legends concerning Sabbatai Sevi and Nathan of Gaza summarized by Sasportas (Sisath, p. 16).

³¹ Deut. 5:21.

³² I.e., Sabbatai Sevi.

³³ For their own purposes.

³⁴ Gen. R. 2.4

³⁵ From the blessing after the haftarah, Birnbaum Siddur, p. 375.

³⁶ Ber. 12a, referring to the third blessing of "Shema and its blessings," and its formulation in the morning and evening service, respectively (Birnbaum, pp. 77, 195).

The man of God gave signs and wonders, great and frightening marvels to support the truth of his prophecy, namely: If I am a man of God, let pieces of rock fall from the heavens to divide and to clear out, to scatter, to cleanse, to tear down the house of the boastful.³⁸ The sign and wonder came, and you will tell the future that will come to pass at its appointed time. If it is so, who, having seen with his own eyes his good deeds and his clear fitness, along with his definite pronouncements, would get up and not hearken to his word, which he speaks in the name of his God, and accept him as a true prophet--to believe with firm faith that there will be peace and truth in his lifetime?! And if his former prophecies are fulfilled, my heart would be glad and my honor rejoice [to know that there is] another vision of the appointed time in his latter prophecies.

But in the place where he made his revelations, there will be an earthquake and a great panic such as will startle the sages of the Land of Israel, may it be built up and established speedily and in our day, who sinned concerning him in that they did not believe in the man of God and did not trust in the salvation of the messiah. By their lack of faith in the prophecy, they rendered themselves liable to the punishment of death at the hands of Heaven, as it is written, "I will require it of him."³⁹ And by their lack of faith in the messiah

³⁸In a note (Sisath, p. 16), Sasportas mentions a report describing one of Nathan's signs as bringing rocks down upon a Christian church, razing it to its foundations. Compare Sevi Muddah, p. 124, par. 13, which mentions an early report that all the "houses of idols" were suddenly destroyed.

³⁹Deut. 18:19, on the question of believing in a prophet who shows clear signs that he is sent by God.

of the Lord, they have rendered themselves liable to the death penalty as rebels against his kingdom. Did not David, at the word of the Sanhedrin, judge Nabal deserving of death for rebelling against the kingdom?⁴⁰ And even though his kingdom was not yet firmly established, even so, David considered it established from the moment he was anointed as king. Such is the interpretation of "Gird ye on every man his sword,"⁴¹ given in the Talmud, in Sanhedrin.⁴² Are the conditions of prophecy that are found in that prophet, with his signs and his wonders, whence we should assume that also the hoped-for king is his lord Sabbatai Sevi, hidden from the eyes of the aforementioned sages⁴³ so that they do not accept him and believe in him enough to offer a written document? And why would they render themselves liable to death by deviating from the straight path, and endanger themselves by acting treacherously toward him, God forbid!?

It is also to be wondered at--and indeed it is a wonder--that the prophet has not prophesied evil against them, according to the word of God: "Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them."⁴⁴ Nor

⁴⁰Cf. I Sam. 25.

⁴¹I. Sam. 25:13.

⁴²San. 36a, and see there Tosafot, beginning with Rabbah bar Bar Hanna, where it is explained that Nabal could be sentenced for rebellion against the government because David already thought of himself as king. The girding on of swords is understood as the Sanhedrin taking a vote on the case.

⁴³I.e., the sages of the Land of Israel.

⁴⁴Num. 20:12, spoken to Moses and Aaron.

has he⁷ witnessed retribution against them, or cried out from his heart like Moses, his teacher: "If these men die as all men do,...it was not the Lord who sent me."⁴⁵ Nor like Elijah: "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven..."⁴⁶ For the Lord does not delight in these who transgress His Torah. And with regard to His messiah, it is to be wondered why, since [the sages] are speakers of emptiness and have joined together against him, he has not judged them as rebels against his kingdom and for denying a prophecy delivered according to the Torah. But it was enough for him to embitter their lives in that they did not have sufficient food.⁴⁷ And this would not be enough except that, it was said, they acted in strict performance of the laws and they judged them leniently from the beginning. "Upon whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed,"⁴⁸ if not to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who see that he has grown like a sapling before them.⁴⁹ And "the stock of Jesse that has remained standing shall become a standard to nations--peoples shall seek his counsel,"⁵⁰ when he surrounded Jerusalem and

⁴⁵Num. 16:29, spoken by Moses about Korah and the rebels.

⁴⁶II Kings 1:10, 12.

⁴⁷A later passage (6isath, p. 303) makes clear that Sasportas had in mind the fact that people, upon hearing that the messiah was in Palestine, stopped sending provisions to the Jews living there, assuming that the messiah would be able to provide for them. Scholem (SS, p. 590) disputes Sasportas' contention that people stopped sending alms.

⁴⁸Isa. 53:1.

⁴⁹Cf. Isa. 53:2.

⁵⁰Isa. 11:10, with minor emendations.

marched around it for seven days. But even for this they considered him "shunned by men."⁵¹ And moreover, my inward parts will rejoice when I see that the prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter Fifty-Three is fulfilled partially according to the Christian interpretation.⁵² I have trusted God's mercy that all will be fulfilled through His spirit.

But I did not know whether his⁵³ going outside the Land [of Israel] was on the advice and at the bidding of the prophet, or on his own, or with the agreement of them both: according to the word spoken, he went out from Beersheba to go toward Haran,⁵⁴ to the Plain of the Head of State⁵⁵ of Turkey to seize his kingdom. But at least at the beginning he should have seized Jerusalem and Gaza, where the signs and schemes of [the messiah's] kingdom had appeared, along with his deeds of might and power. And the whole matter of his greatness, wherein the King over Kings of Kings has magnified him, is written in the Book of Chronicles of past days. For the prophet did not at first speak secretly before the masses, nor did he show favor to nobles who refrained from speaking against him, especially the King of Gaza, to whom he revealed the peace he would make in the future with those who were making war against him, who would entreat him with an offering accompanied by a magnificent and costly garment which had been doused with poison that would cause his death soon after he put it on. And his prophecy, which had brought fear

⁵¹Isa. 53:3. The Hebrew also connotes "utterly without manliness."

⁵²A good example of Sasportas' extreme sarcasm. He, of course, looked with grave misgivings upon the parallels with Christianity which he saw in the Sabbatian movement.

⁵³I.e., Sabbatai's, discussing now his journey to Constantinople.

⁵⁴Cf. Gen. 28:10.

⁵⁵פדן ארם instead of פדן הרם .

upon him and his people, was fulfilled, whereupon courage took hold of the residents of Philistia, Gaza, and all its territories.⁵⁶ But why should this, their righteous one,⁵⁷ go out from there, he who is their glory, their splendor, and their majesty--if he could do it⁵⁸ through an agent such as R. Abraham Shebili.⁵⁹ So it came in the original letters, which told of, and denied, his going.⁶⁰ I did not know which of them to confirm, by holding to the earlier or later version. According to what came in those letters,⁶¹ the prophet spoke of some great thing [to take place] at the end of a specified period of time, after a year or more: that the royal crown would be placed upon his head without any [resort to] force, without weapons, not even a shield or spear would be seen, but only by the will of the King over Kings of Kings, which will move the heart of the Turkish king toward all those who

⁵⁶The incident is described in Sisath, pp. 16-17, and Sasportas adds, "but for all this, some of the sages of the Land of Israel still did not believe in his [Nathan's] prophecy."

⁵⁷I.e., Sabbatai Sevi.

⁵⁸I.e., make preparations in Constantinople for what was to take place.

⁵⁹See Sisath, p. 16 and SS, p. 402 on the reports that Shebili was dispatched to Constantinople to make preparations for the messiah's arrival. Scholem has been unable to identify him more precisely (SS, p. 402, n. 156).

⁶⁰See Sisath, p. 16. Some reports said that Sabbatai had dispatched Shebili to Constantinople, some said he went himself.

⁶¹E.g., Nathan's letter to Raphael Joseph (Sisath, p. 10; translated in SS, p. 272): "And now I shall disclose the course of events. A year and a few months from today, he will take the dominion from the Turkish king without war...."

wish to honor⁶² Sabbatai, to serve him wholeheartedly and with a willing spirit, to bear and to accept the yoke of his kingdom. If the prophet had prophesied thus, why should he go to seize it before the appointed time? It is not possible to say here that it was to warn him and to harden his heart in order to show his signs, for it is already known that there is "a time for every experience."⁶³ Unless it is said that there is a reason in it, that his steps are set by the Lord, his way desired for other reasons which the Ancient of Days has not revealed--and His ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

How should one take the light of testimony that came in the documents signed by the rabbis of Jerusalem, or the Land of Israel, may it be rebuilt and established speedily and in our days? To appease and grovel in the dust of the feet of the king, to beg pardon and forgiveness and atonement for their denial and their sin toward him and toward the prophet? And why did Nathan not follow after him, on the path cleared by Rabbi Sabbatai? Whether it was through force (ojk) or through a miracle (oj) that he came to Leghorn--since they say that his comrades were captured and he escaped, or he was brought there by accident--it is still a wonder that the lot⁶⁴ of captivity did not befall him, and he did not drink from its essence.⁶⁵ And as if this

⁶²Cf. Esther 6:6.

⁶³Eccl. 3:1, 17.

⁶⁴Lit., "cup."

⁶⁵Lit., "juice."

were not enough, he was brought, of all places, to Leghorn, and not to some other city.⁶⁶ All this casts doubt on the matter, and I saw a discrepancy in the evidence, except that it is said, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our sight."⁶⁷

What must be investigated is whether the testimony of the messengers of the masses agrees with the letter signed by the honorable R. Abraham Gedaliah.⁶⁸ Some may say that it is verified, since they testify in general about the matter, that is, they maintain that the prophet is a prophet and that the messiah is a king. But some do not agree, since details have changed. If there are other letters supported by R. Abraham Gedaliah's outstanding reputation, would that they take the trouble to explain to me all that is hidden. For the things are hidden, and they do not see light, neither in their general aspects nor in their details which are specified by harp and lyre: "if it is a tradition, learn it by heart, let it be like a song."⁶⁹ And what you conceive will surely be, in my eyes, as "truth springing up from the

⁶⁶Leghorn was a major center of the believers, which is why Nathan's ostensibly accidental arrival there was suspect.

⁶⁷Ps. 118:23. One who is convinced that "this is the Lord's doing" is not likely to be dissuaded by a few discrepancies.

⁶⁸Died 1672. A highly regarded rabbi of Jerusalem. He and R. Jacob Najara signed letters confirming Sabbatai as the Messiah, and the letters were certified by a rabbinic court. Sasportas had obviously seen one of his letters, but failed to reproduce it (intentionally, it may be presumed). See SS, pp. 244, 360, 577.

⁶⁹"The wording of which you dare not change." Shab. 106a; Erub. 60a; and elsewhere. (See Jastrow, p. 255).

earth [if] justice looks down from heaven"⁷⁰ on your camp.

I shall not turn to the words of the letter⁷¹ which say that a faithful shepherd⁷² merits being resurrected thirteen years⁷³ before [everyone else]. And he took a wife at the river Sambatyon and begot the mate of the messianic king, Sabbatai Sevi. Even if the thing were possible, it would not be according to divine power, especially since it would mean that hope is lost for those who died outside the Land [of Israel], along with those who died in the wilderness, and all of us would be banished from the land of the living. If the jewel is found of itself, for the sake of which the lost prutah was sought, then the prutah will remain permanently lost.⁷⁴ If those who died in the wilderness and outside the Land [of Israel] all seek and merit resurrection through the request of the faithful shepherd who is buried among them, and according to the words of our rabbis, of blessed memory,⁷⁵ on the verse, "For there a portion of a ruler was reserved,

⁷⁰Ps. 85:12. The last part of the verse might be better read here as "if true justice is found" in your camp. Sasportas and his supporter, R. Joseph ha-Levi of Leghorn, expressed concern that the spiritual awakening had not been accompanied by improved ethical conduct. (See, e.g., Joseph ha-Levi's letter, SE, pp. 487-8).

⁷¹The letter of Nathan seems to be intended.

⁷²I.e., Moses.

⁷³The text should read "fifteen years" (See Sisath, p. 11; SE, p. 274).

⁷⁴The parable is to be understood thus: If a dead person can be resurrected before the coming of the messiah, then the messiah himself is not needed.

⁷⁵Deut. R. 2:9, discussing Moses' burial outside the Land of Israel.

and there came the heads of the people...."⁷⁶ And according to the words of the sages of truth,⁷⁷ at whose feet the king and prophet [now] supported by you [once] sat as disciples. And like the words of the masters of hidden meanings:⁷⁸ "And if the household is too small for a lamb,⁷⁹ then he and his neighbor shall take...."⁸⁰ And on account of them [Moses] did not merit entering the Land [of Israel]: how [then] can the makers of parables⁸¹ say that he resurrected himself and left the others behind in the lands and wilderness of the peoples?! And this

⁷⁶Deut. 33:21. Gad chose territory in Transjordan because, according to Rashi, "He knew that Moses [a ruler] would be interred in that territory."

⁷⁷Bahya (trans. Mansoor, p. 438): "'Whoever makes the many righteous, sin shall not prevail over him' (Avot V, 26, 27). Moses was righteous and made the many righteous and the righteousness of the many was laid upon him, for it is said (Deut. 33:21): 'He executed the justice of the Lord and his judgments with Israel'..." Moses Alshekh, *Torat Mosheh* on Deut. 33:21 gives a lengthy discussion of the verse, the theme of which is the enduring and protecting merit of Moses: "Do not underestimate the place where Moses' body rests. The Shekinah resides there, for did he not, with his finger, which is part of his body, inscribe the tablets?" Through having Moses' burial place in territory occupied by Israelites "there is hope for them for the future."

⁷⁸Mordecai ha-Kohen, *Sifte Kohan* on Deut. 33:21 also mentions that Gad chose territory in Transjordan because Moses would be buried there, "who in the future would bring them with him."

⁷⁹The Hebrew (" מֹשֶׁה ") is also to be read as the name, Moses.

⁸⁰Ex. 12:4.

⁸¹I.e., Nathan and his followers.

verifies the interpretation by Rabbi Akiba⁸² of "in this very wilderness they shall die to the last man"⁸³ and also with regard to those who die outside the Land [of Israel] not meriting resurrection.⁸⁴ Then R. Ishmael need not have said to him, "Rabbi Akiba has abandoned his [usual] kindness."⁸⁵ Then a spirit passed before his face⁸⁶ to make him know what will happen in the end of days. If you cannot accept this, then let us return to the words of the Rambam, of blessed memory,⁸⁷ that one should not deal with the words of the aggadot and midrashim. But despite all this, it is something logical, natural, and sensible.⁸⁸ So even with [their] respect for his glory, may they open their eyes [to the question of] whether the prophet has spoken thus, and of whether or not the faith applies to it. For the existence of a prophecy is meaningless if it is partially or completely false: faith and prophecy do not come by halves. And this is not a dream, for "there can be no [dream] without idle things, just as there can be no

⁸²Sanh. 110b.

⁸³Num. 14:35.

⁸⁴Cf. Ket. 111a. This comment is not by R. Akiba.

⁸⁵"I.e., his harsh opinion does not agree with the liberality shown elsewhere" (Jastrow, p. 487). San. 110b, where the statement appears not in the name of R. Ishmael, but rather "Rabbah bar Bar Hanna said in the name of R. Yohanan." The Tosafot point out that the statement is uncharacteristic of R. Akiba because he usually argues in Israel's favor, but here he argues against them.

⁸⁶Cf. Job 4:15.

⁸⁷Hilkhos Melakhim 12.2.

⁸⁸I.e., the traditional expectation of the messiah is something logical, etc. It is only this particular messiah that Sasportas is questioning.

grain without straw,"⁸⁹ "for what has the straw to do with the wheat?"⁹⁰ Is it not also said that he spoke through riddle and parable, or metaphorically,⁹¹ and so on, so that, if the generalizations are true, we need not worry about the particulars?

I have trusted in the mercy of God that what comes to pass will be according to the words of the prophet. When the altar is dedicated, may it be the altar revealed by his word, to sacrifice upon it thank-offerings and free-will offerings. And [I shall be able] to offer a sin-offering for the error of my utterances, and a trespass offering for uncertain guilt, for my doubtfulness and in case the way is too great for me. But I would feel derelict if I did not ask about something raised by Your Excellencies in your wide-ranging deliberations: is this altar that of Moses, of Solomon, or of the hoped-for Ezekiel? And if it is one other than that of Ezekiel, is it to be used into the future, or only temporarily? For this is not mentioned in the prophets. But what will be will be: all that is hidden from me, but is revealed through his glory. If they have reasons for what is said, do not withhold their goodness from those who walk uprightly.⁹² Now

⁸⁹ Ber. 55a, bottom. (The clauses are reversed.)

⁹⁰ Jer. 23:28, which is the verse under discussion in the passage on Ber. 55a.

⁹¹ Following Tishby's understanding of the term *šēšē*.

⁹² Cf. Ps. 84:12.

with the eye of reason I see two "seeings:"⁹³ The grave lack of food among the people and the poor of the Land of Israel, may it be rebuilt and established speedily and in our days, because the king⁹⁴ indirectly sentenced them to death by not filling their needs, and thus made it difficult for them. But the king turned around and left. They have no one to send after him to catch him, and their messengers have not reached us. The great wonder is that they did not send out courier after courier, and a messenger right behind him, to spread out over all the dispersion of Israel, to bring tidings of their suffering or to inform the multitudes of their trouble, that they might pray for mercy for them, or, as is the custom, open their pockets to fill their needs. May the Lord put an end to their sufferings and to ours, and establish His good word. May He add days upon days to the life of the true king, may his years be from generation to generation. He will speed, He will hasten His action in order that it will soon be seen: the profit of the wisdom of the Holy One of Israel. In our days and in the days of Rabbi Sabbatai, "Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely,"⁹⁵ even if he is not the savior. (Dated in) Torah portion "to give you a remnant in the earth,"⁹⁶ 1665. Your brother and humble servant, Jacob Sasportas.

⁹³Cf. Ex. R. 3.2, commenting on Ex. 3:7, "I have surely seen (וַיֵּרְא)...." The two "seeings" that Sasportas here refers to are the impoverishment of the Palestinian community, and Sabbatai's departure from thence (read: abandonment). See above, p. 75, n. 47.

⁹⁴I.e., Sabbatai Sevi.

⁹⁵Jer. 23:6.

⁹⁶Gen. 45:7, portion Vayigash, read in Tebet/December.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by Jacob Sasportas

Epilogue to Sefer Nishmat Hayyim by R. Menasseh ben Israel (Amsterdam, 1652). The epilogue does not appear in latter editions of the work (Stettin, 1851; Warsaw, 1876).

Toledot Ya'akov, an index to biblical verses found in the Jerusalem Talmud, with a preface by the author. Published together with Toledot Aharon by R. Aaron of Pesaro (Amsterdam, 1652).

Introduction to Heykhal ha-Qodesh, a kabbalistic commentary on the Siddur by R. Moses Albaz (Amsterdam, 1653).

'Ohel Ya'akov, responsa collection. (Amsterdam, 1737).

Sefer Sisath Nobel Sevi, complete text, based on the MS. copy made by the late Dr. A. Z. Schwarz. Edited, with an introduction, notes, and variant readings by Isaiah Tishby (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1954).

Historical Works

Corcos, David. "Morocco," Encyclopedia Judaica, XII, 335-336.

Dan, Joseph. "Jacob Sasportas," Encyclopedia Judaica, XIV, 893-894.

Gaster, Moses. History of the Ancient Synagogue of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews (London, 1901).

Graetz, Heinrich. History of the Jews (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1945), 6 vols.

Hirschberg, H(ayyim) Z(e'ev). History of the Jews in North Africa (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1965), 2 vols.

Hofshi, David (David Franco Mendes). "History of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel," Ha-Meassef, 1788, p. 169.

Hyamson, Albert M. A History of the Jews in England (London, Chatto and Windus, 1908).

Roth, Cecil. A History of the Jews in England (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1941).

_____. A Life of Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi, Printer and Diplomat (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1934).

_____. "New Light on the Resettlement," Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England (London, 1929) XI, 118-126.

Salomon, H. P. "The 'de Pinto' Manuscript: A 17th Century Marrano Family History," Studia Rosenthaliana, IX (1975), no. 1.

Samuel, Wilfred S. "The Jews of London and the Great Plague (1665)," Miscellanies of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Part III (1937), 7-15.

Scholberg, Kenneth. "Miguel de Barrios and the Amsterdam Sephardic Community," Jewish Quarterly Review, LIII (1962), 120-159.

Scholem, Gershom. Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1973).

Shatz, Rivkah. Review of Tishby's edition of Sefer Sisath Nobel Sevi (Hebrew), Behinoth, no. 10 (1956), 50-67.

Seligsohn, Max. "Sasportas," Jewish Encyclopedia, XI, 65-66.

Tishby, Isaiah. "Jacob Sasportas' Letters against the Lay Leaders of Leghorn" (Hebrew), Qobes 'al Yad, IV, New Series (1946), 145-159.

_____. Review of the Hebrew edition of Scholem's Sabbatai Sevi, Tarbiz, XXVIII (1958-59), 119-123.

Toaff, Alfredo S. "The Dispute between Rabbi Jacob Sasportas and the Lay Leaders of Leghorn" (Hebrew), Sefunoth, IX, (1964), 167-191.

Toledano, Jacob Moses. Ner ha-Ma'arav, History of the Jews of Morocco (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1911).

Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, "Sasportas," IX, 372.

Warmington, Brian, H., Henri-Louis-Étienne Terrasse, and Neville Barbour. "History of North Africa," Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edn. (1974), "Macropedia," XIII, 161.

Classical Sources, Rabbinic Literature, etc.

Alcalay, Reuben. The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary (Ramat Gan-Jerusalem, Massada Publishing Co., 1963).

Alshekh, Moses. Torat Mosheh (Dyhrenfurth, 1798).

Bahya ibn Pakuda. The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart, trans. Menahem Mansoor (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973).

Birnbaum, Philip, ed. Daily Prayer Book (Siddur) (New York, Hebrew Publishing Co., 1949).

The Book of Isaiah (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1972).

The Book of Psalms (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1972).

Braude, William, trans. Pesikta Rabbati (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1968), 2 vols.

Epstein, I., ed. The Babylonian Talmud (English) (London, Soncino Press, 1938).

Frances, Jacob and Emmanuel. Sevi Muddah (Hebrew) in Qobes 'al Yad, Old Series, I (1885), p. 124.

Freedman, H. and Maurice Simon. Midrash Rabbah (English) (London, Soncino Press, 1939), 10, vols.

The Holy Scriptures (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1917).

Jastrow, Marcus. A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York, Pardes Publishing House, 1950).

Maimonides, Moses. Mishneh Torah (Rambam la'Am, Jerusalem, Rav Kook Institute, 1966), 20 vols.

Midrash Rabbah, (Jerusalem, 1970).

Mikra'ot Gedolot, standard editions.

Mishnah, standard editions.

Mordecai Ha-Kohen, Siftei Kohen (Warsaw, 1883).

Pesikta Rabbati (Tel Aviv, 1963).

Scholem, Gershom. "Isaac Luria," Encyclopedia Judaica, XI, 572-578.

Strack, Hermann L. Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (New York, Atheneum, 1969).

Talmud Babli, standard editions.

Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem, Shiloh, 1969).

The Torah. (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1962).