

MOSES ZACUTO'S YESOD OLAM

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Preface

I would like to acknowledge the help of five people who aided me in the preparation of this thesis. First, Dr. Arthur Lesley provided some helpful hints in the area of translating a difficult document. Dr. Martin A. Cohen has been a teacher and friend during my years as a rabbinical student. I owe him a debt of gratitude for teaching me how to comprehend Jewish history in a new and exciting way. The love that I feel for my heritage, a love that I hope is reflected in the following study, is a result of the influence of my parents, Meyer and Helen Goldstein. Finally, I was able to persevere the frustrations of writing a thesis because of my wife's love and understanding. It is to Sally that I dedicate this thesis.

Introduction

To the casual reader, Moses Zacuto's Yesod Olam is a simple play on the early life of Abram and his rebellion against idolatry. To the student of literature, Zacuto's work reflects one of the first attempts at writing Hebrew drama. The student of religion would note Zacuto's fervent belief in God's power of salvation. None of these aspects, however, would reveal the purposes behind Zacuto's effort. Why was Yesod Olam written in mid-seventeenth century Amsterdam? What message did Zacuto try to communicate? Who were the people he hoped would read Yesod Olam?

The answers to these questions can only be derived from the historical context. It is to this purpose that the following study is directed. The first chapter of this study delves into the historical, religious, and intellectual influences that shaped Zacuto's life. The seventeenth century was a period of adjustment for many ex-marranos. The change from a persecuted existence in the Iberian Peninsula to a relatively free life in Amsterdam was welcome, but difficult nonetheless. The strong ancestral tie to Spain and Portugal left its influence upon the ex-marranos in many ways. There was a need for the new Amsterdam community to find support for its decision to return to Judaism. Chapter two attempts to illustrate Zacuto's response to this need. Yesod Olam was, in part, written to reinforce Jewish unity following the expulsion. Zacuto utilizes the character of Abram as a symbol of Jewish determination to remain

true to the faith despite the penalty of expulsion. As a further bolster to the ex-marranos, Zacuto alludes to the salvation that Judaism would promise in the future and to the weaknesses of Catholicism. The third chapter is a further analysis of those elements in Yesod Olam that illustrate Zacuto's intentions. The final section of this study is a translation of Yesod Olam. The goal of chapter four is to express the meaning of Yesod Olam and not to attain any level of stylistic translation.

CHAPTER I

Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto

Zacuto's Life

Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto, the author of the first biblical drama in Hebrew literature,¹ was born into a Portuguese Marrano family in Amsterdam.² Zacuto was educated in Amsterdam's academy, the Bet Midrash Etz Hayyim.³ The academy flourished during the seventeenth century under the leadership of Saul Levi Morteira⁴ and Aboab de Fonseca.⁵ In addition to Talmud, Hebrew grammar and poetry were taught.⁶ Many of the academy's students became rabbis in Sephardi communities in Western Europe and the Mediterranean countries, as well as Hebrew writers and poets.⁷

In respect to this literary activity, Zacuto was typical. In his youth, Zacuto manifested a love for poetry and the Kabbalah.⁸ His attraction to Kabbalah led him to further study in Poland's yeshivot.⁹ From there, he went to Venice, planning to emigrate to Palestine.¹⁰ Zacuto's intended journey was never fulfilled, and the remainder of his life was spent in Italy.¹¹ From 1645, Zacuto lived in Venice, serving as a preacher, rabbi, member of the Venetian yeshivah, and proofreader of books printed in Venice, especially works on the Kabbalah.¹²

In the beginning of the Sabbatean movement, Zacuto was an ardent follower of the messianic pretender.¹³ Although opposed to certain innovations,¹⁴ he gave credence to the messianic tidings.¹⁵ After Shabbetai Zevi's apostasy, however, Zacuto became an opponent of the movement.¹⁶ In 1668, he joined with other Venetian rabbis in discrediting Nathan

of Gaza, upon the latter's arrival in Venice.¹⁷ In addition, Zacuto sent a letter to Moses Isserles in Vienna, in which he openly opposed the Sabbateans.¹⁸

In 1673, Zacuto went to Mantua to serve as rabbi.¹⁹ Zacuto remained in Mantua until his death in 1697.²⁰ There he enjoyed great authority as a leader among Italian Kabbalists.²¹

Historical Influences

The settlement of Marranos in the Netherlands, where Zacuto spent his youth, was not a sudden phenomenon.²² As the persecution of New Christians in Spain and Portugal was maintained in the sixteenth century, it was inevitable that the Netherlands would become a focus of attraction to the Marranos.²³ The Low Countries were provinces of Catholic Spain, and Antwerp was the greatest port of Northern Europe.²⁴ In Portugal, where recent converts could emigrate only with special permission, many New Christians were attracted to Antwerp as a temporary refuge.²⁵ Permission to travel to a Moslem country, where the opportunity to revert to Judaism could easily be taken, was refused by Portuguese authorities.²⁶ Therefore, a great number of refugees obtained permission to emigrate to the Catholic Low Countries, from where they could travel to a safer haven of refuge.²⁷

Antwerp remained a legal temporary refuge until 1537, when Emperor Charles V officially permitted New Christians to settle in Antwerp with full rights.²⁸ This act, combined with the advent of the Portuguese Inquisition, stimulated greater emigration.²⁹ Although a small number of Marranos were able to remain as permanent settlers in Antwerp,³⁰ conditions soon became less favorable. New Christians were not permitted to enter the Low Countries.³¹ In 1549, an edict was issued, expelling any Portuguese New Christian who had arrived during the past five years.³²

When the northern provinces of the Netherlands³³

proclaimed their independence of Catholic Spain in 1571,³⁴ a new breed of New Christian emigrants began to settle permanently in Holland.³⁵ No longer threatened by the Inquisition, many began to openly reveal themselves as Jews.³⁶ Amsterdam had ousted Antwerp from its former position of superiority,³⁷ and the Marranos looked to it as a center of secure refuge and humane treatment.³⁸

By the end of the seventeenth century, Amsterdam had grown into one of the most important international commercial centers. The warehouses by its harbor held merchandise from various areas in the world.³⁹ Attracted by the promise of material advantage, and by Holland's reputation for tolerance, New Christian immigrants arrived at a frequent rate in Amsterdam's port.⁴⁰ The legal status of the recently professed Jews remained unclarified for many years.⁴¹ The Reform Church opposed Jewish settlement in Amsterdam. The civic authorities, however, favored it. Amsterdam Jews, therefore, were not formally recognized as citizens, but were granted religious freedom and protection of life and property.⁴² The newcomers were allowed to engage in professions that were not organized in guilds.⁴³ Despite these restrictions, Sephardi Jews who brought a portion of their family wealth from the lands of exile,⁴⁴ were able to take part in Amsterdam's improving economy.⁴⁵ As Dutch trade became extensive, and as the guild system was removed, there came the recognition that general prosperity demanded the unhampered activity of every human being.⁴⁶ Eventually,

Portuguese Jews controlled much of the maritime commerce of Amsterdam.⁴⁷ Jewish merchants were one of the first groups to engage in modern capitalist-type activities.⁴⁸ Many became extremely prosperous.⁴⁹ The wealth of Amsterdam may not have been a direct result of Jewish economic activity,⁵⁰ but it is a fact that the greatest period of Dutch prosperity coincided with the period of Marrano immigration and activity.⁵¹

The settlement of ex-Marranos in Amsterdam eventually helped to stimulate Jewish emigration from the Low Countries.⁵² Impoverished by ghetto conditions, expulsions, and massacres, German Jews began arriving in the 1620's.⁵³ This new settlement multiplied and was further increased by an influx of Polish Jews following the Chmielnicki massacres.⁵⁴ Eventually the Ashkenazi community outnumbered the Sephardi.⁵⁵ The ex-Marranos, however, maintained a superiority in wealth and influence for many years.⁵⁶

Religious Influences

Many ex-Marranos, having obtained the right to practice Judaism openly, became strict observers of tradition. It was, after all, for the sake of this freedom that their forefathers had lived in fear of the Inquisition. In addition, the first generation of Amsterdam Jewry had been familiar with Catholicism since birth. It would, therefore, be natural for the ex-Marranos to relate the Catholic insistence on religious piety through observance to Judaism.⁵⁷ This first generation found it difficult to grasp a more profound understanding of Jewish tradition.⁵⁸ The Ashkenazi Jews had an advantage in this respect, since they had never broken the chain of Jewish tradition. There was, however, a higher cultural level in the Portuguese communities. Secular learning was more widespread among the ex-Marranos.⁵⁹ Yet, the first generation could bring little more than loyalty to their Judaism. It is, therefore, understandable that isolated individuals would be dissatisfied with a recently assumed Judaism whose traditions were not easily understood.⁶⁰ Amsterdam Jewry responded to such cases by rigorously maintaining religious discipline.⁶¹ This stance may have been influenced by the strict Catholic ecclesiastical control witnessed in their former countries of residence.⁶²

Catholicism's influence on the ex-Marranos' brand of Judaism may have attracted many to the practical Kabbalah.⁶³ In the sixteenth century, a new school of mystical study was established at Safed in Palestine by Isaac Luria and his

pupil and prophet, Hayim Vital. It was based upon the belief that the individual could hasten the coming of the Messiah through proper spiritual exercises. This movement was particularly appealing to the ex-Marranos.⁶⁴ By virtue of their recent sufferings, the Sephardi Jews imagined that the final deliverance was imminent.⁶⁵ Moreover, the cardinal principle of their former Catholicism had been that the Messiah was still to come.⁶⁶ Unable to find clear-cut doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of retribution in another world in the Scriptures,⁶⁷ the ex-Marranos would be naturally attracted to the Lurianic doctrine of imminent salvation. The appeal of Messianic Judaism to the ex-Marranos of Amsterdam led to the joyous acceptance of the Sabbatean movement in the middle of the seventeenth century.⁶⁸ It was an enthusiasm endorsed by Moses Zacuto.

Intellectual Influences

Interwoven with the mysticism that appealed to many ex-Marranos was an intellectualism founded in their former countries.⁶⁹ Among the refugees from Spain and Portugal were doctors, writers, and poets.⁷⁰ Amsterdam Jewry established schools, libraries, and presses⁷¹ with the aid of wealthy patrons who provided generous support.⁷² Amsterdam quickly became the chief center of Jewish culture in northwestern Europe.⁷³

The literature of the ex-Marranos reflected the impact of their sufferings. They could not forget the land of their birth, though filled with gratitude for their hospitable, new settlement in Amsterdam.⁷⁴ The "golden century" of Spanish literature had started, and it was paralleled by the literary creativity of the ex-Marranos. The refugees from Spain and Portugal began producing their own heroic poems, dramas, and tragedies.⁷⁵

A branch of literature which flourished among the emigrants was polemics.⁷⁶ It was inevitable that the decision to abandon Catholicism in favor of Judaism would lead to a desire to write about the factors leading to that decision. The purposes of this polemical literature were to convince others to take the same step, and to oppose Christian objections to this reversion to Judaism.⁷⁷ Since these writers were familiar with Catholic literature, they were well suited to accomplish their goals.⁷⁸ A degree of tact had to be utilized, however, so as not to arouse hostility in gentile

circles. Therefore, many of these works were never published.⁷⁹

It was in the literary circles of the ex-Marranos that the first attempts were made to write Hebrew drama.⁸⁰ One of these creations was Moses Zacuto's Yesod Olam.

CHAPTER II

YESOD OLAM

Zacuto's Purpose in Writing Yesod Olam

When Moses Zacuto left Amsterdam for his circuitous journey to Venice, he took with him his initial poetic work, Yesod Olam.¹ Zacuto's play has been called the first dramatic work in Hebrew literature.² He may have chosen to write Yesod Olam in the form of a drama under the influence of the golden age of Spanish national drama.³ Zacuto wrote his play in Hebrew because it was considered the preferable language for literary compositions.⁴ Moreover, his education in Amsterdam's academy, where only Hebrew was spoken in the upper grades,⁵ prepared him for writing in that tongue.

Zacuto may have had many purposes in mind when he wrote Yesod Olam. In dealing with the story of Abram's life in Ur of the Chaldees and his subsequent exile, Zacuto relates this midrashic legend⁶ to the Marranos who fled from Spain and Portugal.⁷ Zacuto characterizes Abram as a courageous battler for Judaism, while those who remained under pagan influence are pictured as weak and indecisive. Yesod Olam can, therefore, be seen as a polemic intended to encourage the Marranos to openly accept Judaism. Zacuto, in addition, may have written Yesod Olam with the purpose of confuting those opposed to reverting to Judaism. His work expresses what Zacuto saw as weaknesses in Christian dogma. For example, in the play, Abram regularly speaks out against the pagan concept of man's unworthiness. This may be seen as an allusion to the Christian doctrine of original sin.⁸ As opposed to this, Abram speaks of Judaism offering salvation through

immortality of the soul.⁹ Zacuto's argument can be understood also as a response to the views of Uriel da Costa, who angered Amsterdam Jewry by his denial of the immortality of the soul.¹⁰

In using the polemical form, Zacuto can express the fortifications of Judaism that would attract the Marranos and that would serve as a means for reinforcing Jewish unity following the expulsion from Spain and Portugal.¹¹ To ease the pain of separation from the countries, Zacuto pictures Abram's land of exile as immoral. This would give positive reinforcement to the Marranos' decision to embark upon a new way of life within the relative freedom of Amsterdam.

Content of Yesod Olam

The influence of the Marranos fleeing Spain and Portugal can be discerned in Yesod Olam.¹² The play details the major events in the legend of Abram's life in Babylonia. As the central figure, Abram is characterized as a courageous fighter, prepared to sacrifice his life for his faith. Zacuto's Abram can be seen as symbolic of those Marranos who sternly upheld the unity of God in a land where idolatry had obscured the essentials of monotheism.¹³ When Abram breaks his family's idols, this image is reinforced. Abram's father, Terah, reports on Abram's action to King Nimrod. Abram's betrayal by Terah alludes to the fear among Marranos that even family members might disclose their secret faith to the authorities.¹⁴ When Nimrod hears Terah's report on his son, Abram is quickly brought to the king's quarters. There, Abram tells Nimrod of the convictions that motivated the destruction of the idols. Nimrod's response to this declaration of faith is an attempt to convince Abram of the foolishness of his ways. Nimrod symbolically enacts an Inquisitorial procedure. When an accusation of Judaizing was made against a Marrano in Spain or Portugal, the subsequent procedure by the Inquisition was based upon a desire to make the accused person admit his guilt. In the Inquisition's eyes, the Marrano's soul would be saved, though his body would suffer.¹⁵ When Abram remains steadfast in his belief, Nimrod decrees the penalty of death by fire. The death decree was the Inquisition's final sanction. It was, in

general, a penalty reserved for offenders who refused the opportunity for repentance.¹⁶ It would have certainly applied to one such as Abram, who gloried in his "crime".

Zacuto's play now shifts to the character of Haran, Abram's brother. Upon hearing of Nimrod's decree against Abram, Haran becomes conflict-ridden. He hesitates to align himself with his brother, fearing dire consequences. Haran's character alludes to the hesitancy of many Marranos to openly reveal themselves as Jews in their new lands of refuge.¹⁷

Haran's vacillation ceases when he sees his brother miraculously survive the fire. Abram had been led, in a public ceremony, to the stake. This scene alludes to the so-called Act of Faith, where the Inquisition's sentences were announced and carried out.¹⁸ Bolstered by God's rescue of Abram, Haran proudly confesses his faith to Nimrod. Haran is convinced that salvation is possible only through Abram's God, a key doctrine among the Marranos in rejecting the Law of Christ.¹⁹ Haran, however, dies at the stake. His death serves to symbolically express a warning to the Marrano, that none could be entirely safe from the Inquisition. It is better to resolve one's doubts through open acceptance of Judaism, Zacuto seems to say, than to endure a conflict-ridden life.

With no other option, Nimrod decrees exile on Abram. This is clearly an allusion to the exile in Spain.²⁰ Abram's family is divided over their allegiances. Terah rejects pagan worship but remains in Ur. Abram's brother, Nahor, and

his wife, Milkah, reject Abram's faith without hesitation. Abram's wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, enthusiastically accept the new faith and accompany Abram into exile. Each of the family's responses reflect the various attitudes of the Marranos from the fifteenth century on.

The Style of Yesod Olam

The literary style of Yesod Olam reflects skill in the construction of verse. Most of the work is written in rhymed verses. The sentences are usually short and comprehensible. The flowery language is largely drawn from the Bible. Zacuto utilizes the four-footed choriambus and the sonnet, which Immanuel of Rome had introduced into Hebrew poetry.²¹

No details exist to determine the exact date of Zacuto's work. Yesod Olam, however, contains discernible allusions to the Lurianic Kabbalah. It might, therefore, be assumed that the composition was written when Zacuto became attracted to that school of mysticism.²² In addition, the play's treatment of the theory of the soul's immortality, a possible polemic against the views of Uriel da Costa, suggests that it was written in Amsterdam, before 1640.²³

The Significance of Yesod Olam

Zacuto's Yesod Olam remained in manuscript during the author's lifetime. It was published only in modern times.²⁴ Because of its polemical form, it may have been felt that publication would arouse hostility in gentile circles.²⁵ The influence of Yesod Olam in Zacuto's time was, thus, negligible.

As a historical document, however, Yesod Olam is significant. Its allusions to Marrano life support much of modern research's knowledge of that period. The characters reflect the existence of open and secret Judaizing in Spain, Portugal, and the Diaspora.²⁶ The play speaks of the conflicts felt by the Marranos and their responses to these problems. Zacuto makes numerous allusions to the Inquisition and the exile imposed upon the Marranos. In addition, Yesod Olam sheds light on the life of the ex-Marranos in Amsterdam. Abram often speaks of the importance of critical thought in the play, reflecting the tradition of culture among the Sephardi community.²⁷ Allusions to mysticism are frequently expressed in Yesod Olam, suggesting the needs of the ex-Marranos and their attraction to Messianic Judaism.²⁸ Yesod Olam also provides a source for the understanding of how Jews viewed Judaism in seventeenth century Amsterdam. Through Abram's explanations of his religious convictions, Zacuto expresses those areas of Judaism he regarded as requiring fortification. Finally, the literary skill that Zacuto exhibits in Yesod Olam reveals the high level of Jewish culture and education in contemporary Amsterdam. The fact that

such a young man could have written the first dramatic work in Hebrew literature, combining an excellence in style, Hebrew, and knowledge of the Bible, is a positive reflection on the quality of Jewish education in seventeenth century Amsterdam.

CHAPTER III

Analysis

Jewish Polemics

Much of Zacuto's Yesod Olam, as previously mentioned, alludes to basic conceptions and fundamentals of Judaism. The polemical nature of these sections of the play should be stressed. A majority of those who sought refuge from the Inquisition in Amsterdam lived as professing Christians at one period in their lives.¹ Zacuto may have seen the necessity of expressing Judaism's principles as a means of vindicating those who had rejected Christianity. It is hardly likely that most ex-Marranos, living in seventeenth century Amsterdam, were capable of understanding Zacuto's stylized Hebrew.² His work, therefore, may not have been intended to re-educate newly-professed Jews in the fundamentals of Judaism. It is more likely that Zacuto's potential readers had attained high levels of Jewish education.³ Yesod Olam can, therefore, be seen as a defense of Judaism against its opponents.

Zacuto's defense of Judaism stresses the idea of one God as Creator of the world.⁴ In his initial meeting with Terah, after the idols had been destroyed, Abram outlines the details of creation in six days.

He said: "Let there be light"...And by His great grace, there was a full man.⁵

After Haran has been killed, Abram angrily shouts at Nimrod.

One God has created us. By your transgressions, you forsake and repel him.⁶

In stressing God's oneness, Zacuto may be reacting to the Catholic worship of images that had obscured the essentials

of monotheism.⁷ This theme is maintained in the same speech when Abram speaks of God's sovereignty in the world.

Will not the Rock of Retribution rule in the
nether-world and in the heights of heaven?⁸

Zacuto's message is that no earthly ruler, Inquisition, or trinity can take precedence over God's supreme rule. It was, therefore, incumbent upon all Jews to reject any distortion of God's supremacy.

In another polemical defense of Judaism, Zacuto mentions God as commanding fixed laws.⁹ In the beginning of Yesod Olam, Abram explains to Terah,

...it's commands are established and fixed
for all the world's dwellers and inhabitants
of the land.¹⁰

Near the end of the play, Lot supports Abram's words.

The King who, by law, establishes the land.^{10a}

More than a statement of Judaism's principles, these expressions allude to Christianity's rejection of the fixed laws of the Bible. Zacuto refers to the necessity of observing the Law as ordained by God. His emphasis on law can also be seen as a reflection of the strict ecclesiastical control that was prevalent in Catholic Spain and Portugal.¹¹ Zacuto may, therefore, be relating his expressions on God's fixed Law to those who would rebel against that restriction, such as Acosta.¹²

As a justification of the law, Zacuto speaks of the righteousness of the God-given ordinances. In attempting to convince Nahor and Milkah of the logic of his faith, Abram

says:

Do not trust in repugnant idols...But only declare in the name of the living God. For His laws of righteousness were made in truth.¹³

In speaking to Terah, Abram says

He...supervised the entire existence with righteous eyes...the great reward...was kept: to walk with Him in the paths of righteousness.¹⁴

God's righteousness is also revealed at the time of judgment.

It is then that

One is judged in righteousness and truth.^{14a}

Because God is righteous, there is no need to worship any other deity. Clearly, Zacuto's allusion is to Christianity's belief in the trinity. The allegiance to the God of righteousness is, moreover, reinforced when He is seen as perfect.

He is perfect and the essence of purity.¹⁵

Man is, therefore, unjustified in questioning or altering the validity of God's rule and law. To submit to Christianity is to reject God, for He, alone, comprehends the meaning of His essence. In dealing with the unique nature of God, Zacuto is expressing an anti-Christian polemic.

...He is without existing helper...He has no likeness nor descriptive formation...His names are but adjectives. Only He...knows His name.¹⁶

Zacuto, thus, criticizes Christianity's belief in Jesus as God's son. God is beyond our comprehension. The assumption that He is part of a trinity reflects man's lack of understanding. The Catholic worship of images is without purpose, in Zacuto's allusion, because God can have no likeness.¹⁷

To support those who are faithful to Judaism and its law, Zacuto speaks of God's perception of earthly affairs. When confronted with the arguments of Nimrod's advisors concerning God's inability to view man's acts, Abram simply says,

He observes and sees from the place of His dwelling.¹⁸

This statement can be understood as an attempt to console those who had suffered persecution. The Inquisition, expulsions, and conversions to Christianity have not gone unnoticed by God. When man sins, God perceives it.

Now know if God perceives this, and see if God does not also view your apostasy.¹⁹

Zacuto may, again, be directing his statements to Acosta, for it is not only the acts of man that God sees, but also his thoughts.

...He perceives man's thoughts.²⁰

Any intention, therefore, to divert from the Law of Moses is noted by God. It is best, Zacuto implies, for the Jew to embrace Judaism fully and not to rebel against its teachings.

Zacuto writes that one of God's attributes is that He is unchanging yet active.²¹

...He is unchanging yet moving.²²
He brings His actions to existence without cessation.²³

Such an attribute precludes the justification of idol worship since the work of man is subject to change. It is important, however, for Zacuto to stress God's ability to act in the world. Without God's help, man is subject to the rule and whims of mortals. This is a key theme in Yesod Olam,

since Abram's existence is dependent on God's aid. As Abram's deliverance presupposed faith in God, so did the escape from the Inquisition necessitate belief in Judaism,²⁴ according to Zacuto.

A basic Marrano belief was that salvation was possible through Judaism, and not through Christianity.²⁵ This doctrine reflects the influence of Christian theology upon the Marranos.²⁶ The concern with salvation was, as was mentioned, basic to the Judaism of the ex-Marranos. It provided an easily understood motivation for enduring hardships for Judaism's sake. Zacuto utilizes this salvation doctrine throughout his play.

With You is my salvation...²⁷
 God will protect me...²⁸
 God's lofty mercy...will rescue me to a
 heavenly hiding place as a cover from the
 tempest.²⁹

These words are expressed by Abram before he is saved from the fire by God. Zacuto thus isolates the man of unrewarded faith in order to show that God does respond to sincere belief. When Abram survives the fire, his faith is publicly acknowledged. Zacuto's allusion to the Marrano condition is that the escape from Spain and Portugal was predicated on faith in God. Had their faith been less secure, God would not have allowed them to leave.³⁰

In writing on the nature of man and his relationship to God, Zacuto maintains his allusions to the Marrano period. Zacuto states, in various parts of Yesod Olam, that man is created in the image of God.³¹ In Abram's reply to the views

of Nimrod's advisors, he says

...Man's Maker created him with the projection
of His light...³²

Zacuto's intent here may be to criticize the Christian conception of original sin. If such a conception were true, Zacuto hints, then Abram would not have escaped the fire and the ex-Marranos would not have left Spain and Portugal.³³ In the play, Nimrod's servants testify to the idea of man as creation in God's image when they report on Abram's rescue from the fire.

...His image was similar to our features.³⁴

The source of man's strength and hope, writes Zacuto, is with God. God's mercy is especially focussed on those who have undergone misfortune.³⁵

For the depressed and low-spirited, God
will show mercy...³⁶

Zacuto's intent here is to console the ex-Marranos after the trauma of expulsion, persecution, and loss of property. Their faithfulness will be rewarded with salvation by God.

...For those who are upright in spirit, the
true God fights...He removes their reproach...
wealth and honor is given...He will lead them...
to the Garden of Eden...in the joy of salva-
tion.³⁷

Zacuto's Messianic emphasis alludes to the belief of many ex-Marranos that salvation was soon to be realized.³⁸

As if to encourage New Christians to openly reveal themselves as Jews, Zacuto stresses the importance of repentance.³⁹

Repent...call to God, He will answer...if we
have sinned, He will have compassion.⁴⁰

To those who refuse to repent, that is to embrace Judaism fully, God reacts with punishment. Abram directs his words to Nimrod's advisors when he says

...your cunning counsel will be nullified by God...you will be punished...your iniquity will be eternally punished.⁴¹

Zacuto's allusion may have been directed toward Acosta, who denounced the idea of divine retribution.⁴² The ex-Marranos, on the other hand, found consolation in these words, since they imply that the persecutors in Spain and Portugal will not escape God's punishment.

The appeal of mysticism to the ex-Marranos was, as previously mentioned, related to the Safed school in the sixteenth century. The Lurianic Kabbalah proclaimed a connection between the religious activity of the Jew and a messianic goal.⁴³ It stated that all living beings had been in exile since the time of creation.⁴⁴ The problem of restoring the world to its natural order has been placed upon the Jews, according to this school, because they are symbolic of the state of exile.⁴⁵ Sparks of divinity are dispersed everywhere. These sparks are, however, imprisoned by the "kelipah," the power of evil. The Jewish task is, therefore, to redeem these sparks.⁴⁶ The process of restoring the world to a state of harmony is effected through a long chain of events. The final redemption would then be announced by the appearance of the Messiah, who marks the last stage in the process.⁴⁷ Zacuto utilizes the image of divine sparks in describing Abram's appearance in the fire.

...in the next instant, sparks flew off from him...⁴⁸

Just as Abram's dedication to his faith led to the freeing of divine sparks, Zacuto implies, so the decision of ex-Marranos to live as Jews hastens the arrival of the Messiah. Such an allusion would be appropriate to the Lurianic declaration that the process of restoration was near completion by Zacuto's time, and that the final redemption was imminent.⁴⁹

In the same section of Yesod Olam, Zacuto envisions God's chariot descending and rescuing Abram from the fire. The vision, in its general detail, corresponds with the complex speculations and homilies connected with the Throne of Glory and the chariot (merkavah) which bears it.⁵⁰ Zacuto lets the servants describe the descent to Nimrod.

...the heavens were opened. There, glorious and majestic chariots were set up.⁵¹

For the sake of those who saw but could not understand the vision, Abram says

Understand...your awe when my God's glorious chariot descended...the miracle that descended... was God on high...⁵²

The influence of Zacuto's training in mysticism is obvious here.⁵³ His description of the chariot would appeal to the messianic aspirations of the ex-Marranos.

Zacuto's allusions to other elements within Judaism are more limited. The concept of Jews as a chosen people is expressed once by Abram. In praying to God that he be exonerated of the peoples' scorn, he says

my soul desires my choseness.⁵⁴

Zacuto may be alluding to the Jewish task, in Lurianic thought, of restoring the world to its proper order. Without the desire to be chosen for this work, the messianic hope would be lost. The desire to be the chosen people would, moreover, be natural for the ex-Marranos, since salvation was seen as possible only through Judaism.

The growth of Amsterdam as a center of Jewish learning has been mentioned above. Zacuto reflects Amsterdam's intellectual environment in speaking of Judaism as a source of wisdom.⁵⁵ After Haran sees Abram survive the fire, he says

Be no longer fearful of burning ideas. Intensify your efforts to gain wisdom and to be sensible.⁵⁶

Zacuto may be referring here to the ex-Marranos' acceptance of Judaism. New Christian doubts regarding the validity of their faith were reinforced by the Inquisition's persecution of them. Their apostasy ultimately served to explain their misfortunes. It was Judaism, therefore, that enabled them to understand their situation.⁵⁷

In parts of Yesod Olam, the relationship between Judaism and moral behavior is stressed. In his speech before the entire community following God's rescue, Abram says

Acquire ethics; acquire zeal to reproach your idolotry.⁵⁸

The allusion here may be to the sympathetic feelings of many old and new Christians for the Inquisition's victims. Such empathy was often motivated by the fulminations of the Inquisition, itself. In many cases, it led to a return to

Judaism.⁵⁹ It was this moral sensitivity that often reinforced the belief that it was the Jews, and not their Christian oppressors, who embodied the image of God in man. Certainly Zacuto's statements reflect the traditional stress on moral behavior as expressed in much of Jewish literature.

The eschatology expressed in Yesod Olam reflects Kabbalistic ideas. The mystical basis of redemption, centering on the midrashic view that redemption would be a return to the Garden of Eden, was stressed in the Lurianic Kabbalah.⁶⁰ Similarly, Zacuto writes:

To walk...in the path of righteousness until
the end of the span of days in Eden.⁶¹

At that time, according to the Kabbalah, the physical resurrection of the dead will take place.⁶² There are a large number of descriptions in Kabbalistic literature of the details and degrees of punishment in hell(gehinnom).⁶³ The descriptions of hell in Yesod Olam are similarly detailed.

You will descend to...hell and flame. There
you will be as a flock at the time of shearing.
God will deepen and widen its bonfire.⁶⁴

Both the descriptions of heaven and hell in Yesod Olam may have served to console the ex-Marranos. Their courage in maintaining Judaism, Zacuto hints, will be rewarded with eternal salvation. The sinners and persecutors will be punished by God with unending horrors.

Anti-Christian Polemics

Throughout Yesod Olam Zacuto uses the character of Abram to criticize the beliefs of non-Jews. The popularity of anti-Christian polemical literature among the ex-Marranos has been discussed. It was a literature calculated to persuade vacillating Marranos to return to Judaism, to vanquish Christian objections, and to give consolation to the ex-Marranos. Because Zacuto was writing for a limited audience,⁶⁵ it is likely that Yesod Olam could fulfill only the goal of providing solace.

In the play, Abram is continuously critical of the idolatry practiced in Babylon. It is a disapproval that would easily apply to Catholic Spain and Portugal where praying to Christian images was prevalent.⁶⁶ Zacuto's polemic against idolatry begins with the rejection of the idea of worshipping the work of man's hands. When Abram sarcastically tells Terah the story of one idol destroying the other images, Terah unwittingly asks

How can they act if they are like stone...?⁶⁷

Abram replies with the obvious.

Why be foolish, for what do you praise-an image
that you formed with your hands?⁶⁸

Zacuto's point is in keeping with his previous statements which express the unity and unique quality of God.⁶⁹ No image, especially one made by man, can embody the nature of God. The idols, in addition, are characterized as powerless and unable to answer prayer.

When mankind shouts and crys out to idols...,
there is none to speak, none to answer, none
to heed.⁷⁰

The rescue of Abram from the fire illustrates the powerlessness of the idols in overcoming opposition. In the same way, Zacuto alludes, Catholicism was unable to prevent the Marranos from embracing Judaism. In fact, the salvation that had been promised to New Christians became nothing more than persecution.⁷¹ That may be the reason why Zacuto characterizes the worship of images as a dishonest act. In this light, Abram asks God to

...break and trample the gods of dishonesty.⁷²

Zacuto's view of Judaism as the source of knowledge⁷³ is supported by his contention that Christianity reflects a lack of wisdom. The philosophical environment of Amsterdam, combined with its high level of Jewish scholarship, may certainly have contributed to Zacuto's condescending view of Christian intellectualism. In asking Terah to understand the wisdom of his faith, Abram says

...fools despise wisdom...⁷⁴

In a different section of the play, Abram prays that God will arise against the nation that

...desires wisdom to prepare an idol.⁷⁵

Again, Zacuto's allusion is directed to the Catholic nations under the Inquisition.

The idea of Judaism as the embodiment of moral behavior⁷⁶ is opposed, according to Zacuto, by Christianity's lack of morality. Abram's criticisms of Babylon can easily be related

to the situations in Catholic countries under the Inquisition. Abram addresses the following remarks to Nimrod's advisors.

Enquire concerning the peace of the city, a place where valued honor is vanity...do not strike your friends...⁷⁷

Certainly the honor and respect that Jews had obtained during their history in Spain were disregarded during the persecutions of the Catholic rule. The Jewish population might equate the change in attitude toward them as reflecting an immorality inherent in the Catholicism that had taken over the leadership in Spain from the Moslems.⁷⁸ In the eyes of a Jew like Zacuto, living under the relative freedom of Protestant rule, this view of an immoral Catholicism is understandable. The arrogance of a nation dedicated to the destruction of all other faiths would have moved Zacuto to write the imagined words of Torquema:

Who in heaven can compare to us?⁷⁹ Who can destroy us and who can rule us?⁸⁰

Because the Marranos lived under harsh conditions in lands of the Inquisition, and because they were preoccupied with the salvation of their souls, Jewish prohibitions were observed more than its practices.⁸¹ It would be natural, therefore, for the Marranos to view the freedom of behavior among the gentile population as hedonistic. Zacuto seems to allude to this when the advisors invite Nimrod to

...act according to your inclination's desire...
rush to every pleasure.⁸²

In another section of Yesod Olam, Nimrod says

Lift my spirits...with my cakes...prepare tasty food...my eyes will desire all that I possess.⁸³

The reference to food may allude to the Marrano observance, if only partial, of dietary laws.⁸⁴ The threat of the Inquisition precluded detailed observance in so public a matter.⁸⁵ The lack of such prohibitions among the gentiles would support the Marrano view that the Catholics were immoral. A more specific allusion to the image of Catholics as hedonists occurs when Nimrod's advisors entice Abram to

...eat blood, that it may be a source of eternal power for you.⁸⁶

This may be related to the holy wine, representing Jesus' blood, which is symbolically received by the Catholic worshipper at mass. The Torah prohibits the consuming of blood when it comes from animals and birds.⁸⁷ Although it was necessary for the Marranos to occasionally attend Church, certain expedients were resorted to in order to avoid active participation in rites such as drinking the symbolic wine.⁸⁸ Abram's rejection of this act is, therefore, an allusion to Marrano rejection of Catholicism.

The purpose of these Marrano prohibitions was the belief that Judaism, alone, offered salvation.⁸⁹ The lack of Catholicism's redemptive power is alluded to in almost every part of Yesod Olam. Zacuto uses Nimrod, the non-Jew, to support this argument.

...after death, he /man/ will spend time like a moth-eaten garment...Who will bring him to his treasures, to see what will happen after him?⁹⁰

Abram answers Nimrod's question later in the play.

For why should your soul be in hell while you
bow down to Belus...?91

Abram's intent is to show Nimrod that there is an after-life. Salvation, however, cannot be expected if one chooses to bow down to idols. The allusion is clearly to Christianity. The after-life that can be expected by those who do not observe the Law of Moses is hell. Zacuto offers the reader a detailed vision of the underworld.

Quickly one's day becomes dark, and then his
grave is opened....The chief of the under-
world judges his soul in the pit's recesses,
in raging heat. He hunts him in the pits
with burning pitch, fire and brimstone. And
his name is destroyed forever.92

This description may have been derived from the Kabbalistic idea that punishment in hell consisted of a spiritual fire which burned the soul.⁹³ Zacuto's purpose in describing hell is, again, to console those who suffered under the Inquisition.⁹⁴ Through Abram, however, Zacuto does hold out the promise of salvation to the gentiles. When Abram speaks to the multitude of citizens, he appeals to them to turn to God for the sake of their children.

...save their souls from the nether-world,
that your soul may abide in heaven.95

This also may be construed as an appeal to Uriel Acosta to rescind his heretical statements concerning the soul's immortality and, thus, be rewarded with eternal salvation.

The Christian belief in original sin is again alluded to in Zacuto's polemic.⁹⁶ Nimrod's advisors express the

idea of man's unworthiness in attempting to convince Abram to reject God.

Throw away your heart's investigations, for man
but resembles the animal.⁹⁷

The allusion seems to be to the Catholic belief that until the Jews accepted Jesus as their savior, they would be sinful by nature.⁹⁸ Zacuto's, Abram, however, is a courageous man who, at least, reflects greater ethical sensitivity than his persecutors. If any ex-Marranos had doubted their decision to reject Catholicism because of the doctrine of original sin, Zacuto's characters help to reassure them.

Another section of Yesod Olam alludes to the Christian belief in Jesus as an intermediary between man and God. While arguing with Abram, one of Nimrod's advisors asks

How will pure essence...be able to view depressed
humanity? What right does man have with God,
and how is he worthy?⁹⁹

Zacuto may, thus, be hinting at the need of an intermediary, as fulfilled through Jesus, for Christians. Abram's answer to this is expressed throughout the play. When he prays directly to God and receives His help, Abram illustrates the Jewish belief that everyone has access to God and to salvation.¹⁰⁰ This would, again, serve to console the ex-Marranos.

Zacuto also expresses the view that the laws of Christianity are not divinely ordained, but created by man. When Abram is arrested by Nimrod's officials, one officer says

...his insolent heart will be subdued by the
law of Nimrod, in a dark dungeon, devoid of
order.¹⁰¹

This can be construed as Zacuto's belief that Catholicism's teachings could not attract the Marranos away from Judaism. It was, instead, necessary to have the Inquisition force Catholicism upon the New Christians. That impression is supported by Nimrod.

Mine are the scales in two hands, death and life,
without premeditation.¹⁰²

Christian salvation is, therefore, seen as dependent upon the whims of a mortal ruler, not a divine savior. Certainly the persecuted New Christians of Spain and Portugal would have verified that view. This alleged Christian lack of faith in God is supported by the statement of Nimrod's advisor:

That which will be already was, and there is
nothing new...¹⁰³

Zacuto's allusion, then, is to a Catholicism lacking a true message of salvation. Had that message existed, Zacuto says, there would have been no need for persecuting the Marranos.

Character Representations

Each of the characters in Yesod Olam can be understood as symbolic of Marrano existence. Zacuto utilizes Abram as the protagonist in most of his dramatic allusions. Abram is, in the beginning of Yesod Olam, seen as a rebellious son. That rebellion may be related to the rebellions by New Christians against the Catholic faith accepted by their forbears.¹⁰⁴ Such education was not necessarily endorsed by parents,¹⁰⁵ although the family's influence would, most likely, be crucial to a child's religious beliefs. In any event, Terah's anger at his son's declaration of faith in God is probably used to bolster the heroic aspect of Abram's personality.¹⁰⁶ Zacuto does, however, allude to a faith previous to paganism when Nimrod's advisor berates Abram.

...have you not come with quarrelsome words
to restore apostasy without contrition?¹⁰⁷

The restoration of Judaism can be construed as Zacuto's meaning. It may allude to the period of persecution against New Christians when Judaism often served as an explanation of the suffering of the apostates.¹⁰⁸ The ostensible reason for New Christian suffering was the rejection of the ancestral faith.¹⁰⁹ It is clear, however, that the change to Catholicism opened up New Christian economic opportunities that had previously been denied them. Their enterprise motivated the scorn and hatred of the populace and nobility in Spain, thus fostering the Inquisition's persecution.¹¹⁰ Zacuto may be referring to this when Terah says to Nimrod:

A tyrant has been uncovered...¹¹¹

The allusion may be to the Old Christian fear of being dominated by the New Christians,¹¹² as represented by Abram.

Abram is characterized as a proselytizer in Yesod Olam. He argues the benefits of the faith of salvation to all who come in contact with him. There were, of course, Judaizers who braved all perils to proselytize among those they knew to be of Jewish stock.¹¹³ They were, in many instances, successful in convincing New Christians to return to Judaism.¹¹⁴ Zacuto alludes to this success when Nimrod's servant reports of the mass response to Abram after he emerged from the fire:

...they approached him and said to him: "We are all here, happy to hear you. Please teach us, o prince, the paths of truth, that we may become wise by it and study it...."¹¹⁵

When Nimrod finds his position weakening, he sees no other option than to impose exile on Abram. As in Spain and Portugal, Nimrod understands the hopelessness of extirpating the Judaizing heresy from the land while Abram, symbolizing the Jew, is allowed to teach its fundamentals.

...hasten to leave my land, o proud fool.¹¹⁶

As in Spain, Nimrod hopes that his country would now begin, with the expulsion of the Jew, to realize a degree of national unity.¹¹⁷

The character of Nimrod is interwoven with symbols of the Old Christians and the Catholic monarchy in Spain and Portugal. The New Christians, as was noted, were initially able to take advantage of the various social and economic

opportunities opened to them by virtue of their conversion. They represented legitimate competition to the Old Christians, whose interests were now threatened.¹¹⁸ Zacuto alludes to this when Nimrod speaks of Abram:

For will this fool also stand next to us, intending...to remove my majesty, the crown of my glory.¹¹⁹

The ostensible reason for the persecution of Abram, again, is the dissident faith he observes. Indeed the Inquisition was set up, in part, because of the desire of pious Christians to exterminate the Marrano heresy.¹²⁰ The interests of the townsmen in destroying New Christian competition, the eagerness of the aristocracy to cast suspicion on their rivals, and the desire of King Ferdinand to enrich the royal treasury through confiscation, were other factors in establishing the Inquisition.¹²¹ Each faction is represented in the sentiments of Nimrod when he says of Abram, the Jew

...I will stand against him as long as I live.¹²²

When Terah exclaims that he possesses the power to punish and reward, it is reminiscent of King Henry the Fourth's command to his bishops that they punish vigorously any New Christian who might be found guilty of backsliding into their ancestral faith.¹²³ Nimrod's analogous power is reflected in Terah's submissive relationship with him:

Lord of the world, look upon this old one who, like an ox, would lick up the dust from your feet.¹²⁴

When Nimrod finally decrees expulsion upon Abram, Zacuto's allusion is clearly to the expulsion from Spain. Just as the

fiery furnace cannot impede Abram's proselytizing activities, so the Inquisition is unable to block the Jewish influence on the Marranos. The only option left is for the King to expel the Jews.

The importance of Nimrod's advisors to Zacuto's allusion of the persecution and exile of Jews in Catholic lands is obvious. The advisors in Yesod Olam suggest every policy that is carried out against Abram, except expulsion. This would reflect the activities of the Inquisition, whose purpose was to find and punish heresy. Normally, Jews did not come within the scope of its activity unless they interfered in matters of faith.¹²⁵ Abram's destruction of the idols would, of course, constitute a form of heresy, whether or not he is symbolic of Marrano or Jew. Terah's report of Abram's act constitutes the accusation that formed the first step of the Inquisition's activities.¹²⁶ When Abram is arrested,¹²⁷ the advisors question and, then, rebuke him when he openly admits his faith. Zacuto, thus, alludes to the Inquisition's trial. Terah is not present during this symbolic trial, reflecting the Inquisition's secrecy during the tribunal. The accuser never confronted the accused in Inquisitional tribunals.¹²⁸

The extreme penalty of death was the final sanction in the hands of the Inquisition.¹²⁹ The penalty was generally reserved for those who refused the opportunity for repentance.¹³⁰ Abram would, of course, fit into this category. The advisors suggest that Nimrod

Punish his body for the insolence of his guilt,
that his bones might be a poker for the flashing
fire, and that he might dress in sin in the
middle of the streets, in shabby rags and filthy
garments.¹³¹

As an ecclesiastical body, the Inquisition could not be a direct party to the physical execution. It only recommended that the penalty be affected by burning.¹³² Appropriately, Abram is led by two of Nimrod's servants who carry out the recommendation of the advisors. As with Abram, the ceremony of the Act of Faith was publicly held.¹³³

The garment that Abram wears is reminiscent of the special tunic that each prisoner wore.¹³⁴ The picture, then, that Zacuto draws of Nimrod's advisors is analogous to that of the Inquisition. The image is supported by Abram's accusation.

Your acts...deceive the ignorant of your people.¹³⁵ Zacuto's allusion is to the enormous scale of false accusations that the Inquisition's system lent itself to.¹³⁶ Often the admitted details of an accusation were so flimsy that many pious New Christians were executed.¹³⁷

The development of Terah, from opponent of Abram to acceptance of his faith, reflects the history of many New Christians in Spain and Portugal. When Terah comes to Nimrod's palace in order to report Abram, a servant says of him:

Sorrow and despair are with him...the simple
man would come in joy...¹³⁸

Terah is thus characterized as above the level of the peasant. Similarly, the New Christians, as previously noted, had often

attained high positions from which, as Jews, they had previously been excluded. Terah's motivation for accusing Abram can be understood in view of the disabilities entailed upon the convicted person's family. Any relation to the accused stood to be implicated, whether justifiably or not, in the crime of heresy.¹³⁹ Terah alludes to the fear of implication in Abram's heresy:

Woe that my son has become our disgrace, for
ridicule and mockery is about us!¹⁴⁰

Zacuto utilizes the plural "us" to illustrate Terah's fear that his entire family might be accused of Abram's offense. Terah even begins to disclaim any blood relationship to Abram.

...you are not any relation nor flesh. How is
it possible for you to be the son of my loins,
that your flesh came from my flesh?¹⁴¹

In Spain and Portugal, Christians of old ancestry prided themselves on their purity of blood.¹⁴² The revelation of Jewish ancestry would jeopardize the economic and social standards that a family may have attained. The question of Terah's ancestry is answered by Abram.

...my father is as a sinner, greatly misbehaved
in his...apostasy!¹⁴³

The allusion is, thus, to the Jewish ancestry of the New Christians. At the end of Yesod Olam, Terah says

...the idols that are the works of my hand, I
will not believe in again....¹⁴⁴

Terah's rejection of the idols represents the New Christian reversion to Judaism.

The character of Haran reflects the hesitancy of many New Christians to revert to Judaism. Like many Marranos, Haran is deeply moved by Judaizing influences. He is, however, afraid of being implicated in Abram's heresy.

...his words of faith shine. The enemies are many, and they slaughter for nothing.¹⁴⁵

Haran's vacillation ends when he sees Abram survive the fire. After he announces his alignment with Abram to Nimrod, the King decrees death by fire upon him and Haran dies. Abram later explains the reason for his death:

...Haran was burned by justice, for he distorted His acts...because of his lacking in faith.¹⁴⁶

Zacuto's meaning here is that Haran refused to accept Judaism because of fear of the consequences, even though its faith appealed to him. It was only when he viewed the miracle of Abram's deliverance that Haran openly accepted Judaism. Zacuto's allusion, as mentioned previously, is directed toward those Marranos who hesitate to reveal themselves. Zacuto clearly states, however, that God pardoned Haran for his sin of vacillation. In this way, Zacuto holds out the promise of salvation for those who openly return to Judaism.

The other specific characters in Yesod Olam do not appear until the end of the play. Sarai delivers a long speech in which she announces her secret belief in Abram's faith.

I will tell you the secrets of my bosom
that had been absorbed and hidden...¹⁴⁷

Zacuto's allusion is, clearly, to the secret Judaism practiced by the Marranos. Sarai also rebukes Nahor and Milkah

for rejecting her faith. Abram's joy at the wisdom of Sarai's speech is reminiscent of the important role that women had in Marrano groups. Women comprised a majority of those who maintained Judaism until their deaths in the earliest Inquisitional period in Spain. They often acted as spiritual leaders of Marrano groups.¹⁴⁸

Nahor and Milkah reject Abram's religion for different reasons. Nahor states his desire to avoid implication:

...the man who is faithful to an inherited law is protected...¹⁴⁹

The phrase "inherited law" is curious, since Nahor is Abram's brother and is, therefore, assumed to be a New Christian. Zacuto may have intended to posit Nahor as an Old Christian, if only to express that group's imagined reaction to Abram's beliefs. Milkah cannot accept Abram's faith because

...the acts of devils pervade his cunning.¹⁵⁰

Her lack of faith is a product of her environment and, Zacuto alludes, reflects the Old Christian influence upon the Jews.¹⁵¹

Lot decides to accept Abram's faith because of the miracle performed by God in saving Abram. It is the same thinking used by Haran, although Zacuto does not pass judgment on Lot. Perhaps Zacuto allows the reader to conjecture that the fate of Lot's wife in the biblical story¹⁵² was based upon the same reasoning that led to Haran's death.

The masses of people to whom Abram speaks can be seen as symbolic of the vast number of New Christians scattered

throughout Spain and Portugal.¹⁵³ This is indicated, at first, by their desire to learn of Abram's God. A further allusion to the Jewish ancestry of the masses is given when Abram speaks to the masses:

...why should your soul be cut, like a lost person without food? For you are a stiff-necked people.¹⁵⁴

Zacuto's use of the phrase "stiff-necked" is an appellation generally related to the Jewish people. Zacuto may again be alluding to the great number of Marranos who had not accepted salvation through full acceptance of Judaism.

Allusions to Marrano Life in the Iberian Peninsula

Zacuto's basic purpose in writing Yesod Olam is, as mentioned, to reassure the ex-Marranos that their decision to revert to Judaism was a proper one. The story of Abram's early life is a thinly veiled allegory of Marrano existence.

A key allusion in Zacuto's work is to the false accusation of Judaizing among the New Christians in the middle of the fifteenth century in Spain.¹⁵⁵ The Old Christian aristocracy had contrived the charge to elicit popular hatred against their new competitors and to provide a religious ideology for their extermination.¹⁵⁶ The great majority of New Christians were initially sincere in their new faith. They were shocked at the realization that an apostate was as threatened by religious persecution as a Jew. As the persecution increased, many New Christians began to secretly return to Judaism. They viewed their persecution as divine punishment for their apostasy.¹⁵⁷ Zacuto's clearest allusion to the false accusations and to the reversion to Judaism is expressed through Haran:

...we have been deceived with many vain lies...
I am informing you /Nimrod/ of my secret intentions.
Know that my heart believes in God
exalted.¹⁵⁸

The New Christian return to their ancestral faith ultimately justified the charge of heresy against them. Some Marranos began to proselytize among those known to be of Jewish stock.¹⁵⁹ Abram's appeal to the masses to atone for their sins would fit that image of a courageous Marrano.

Abram's initial fear of being reported for these activities to the authorities, however, reflects the suspicions that even members of the same family felt toward one another.¹⁶⁰

...I have provoked my family...to whom can I turn within the household...?¹⁶¹

The characters in Yesod Olam who are attracted to Abram's message, frequently speak of their secret intentions and hidden faith. This would, again, provide an allusion to the secret Judaism practiced by the Marranos. The hardships that this way of life imposed upon them were justified by the certainty that Judaism, alone, could provide salvation.¹⁶²

Zacuto refers to this belief through Abram:

I will endure the hardships for the sake of
Your honor....Like a bird that escapes the snare,
will my soul be, with Your powerful help...¹⁶³

Zacuto makes frequent reference to the Inquisition and its activities. In order to combat the growing numbers of Judaizers, the Spanish Sovereign established the Inquisition in 1481 to arrest heretics and to take over their possessions. The Inquisition soon created a mortal terror in the minds of all New Christians.¹⁶⁴ Zacuto may have utilized Abram's sarcastic allegation that one idol had destroyed the others as an allegory of the Inquisition's goal of rooting out all heresy. The clearest allusion to the Inquisition occurs when Abram is sentenced to death by burning. In its later stages, the Inquisition would periodically issue an "Edict of Faith", summoning all Catholics to report to the authorities anyone imagined to be guilty of heresy.¹⁶⁵ That accusation

is provided by Terah against Abram, when he denounces his son to Nimrod for destroying the idols. The Inquisition's trial was then held, characterized by secrecy and intensive admonitions to the accused that he renounce his sin.¹⁶⁶

Zacuto again alludes to this process when Abram is confronted by Nimrod and his advisors. The Inquisition would recommend the penalty of death by burning to anyone refusing the option of repentance.¹⁶⁷ Zacuto relates this to Abram's open declaration of his faith before Nimrod and his advisors, and his subsequent sentence of death by fire. Finally, the Inquisition handed over such cases to the secular arm at the conclusion of the ceremonial auto-da-fe. The auto-da-fe was generally held in public and the accused would be dressed in special garments.¹⁶⁸ In Yesod Olam, Abram is led by two officials of the court through the streets of the city, wearing special clothing and entering the fire.

Zacuto refers to the Inquisition's persecution of all people known to have Jewish ancestry. If an accused person had any infidel blood in his background, the suspicions of the Holy Office against him would be increased. Very little was needed to make the Inquisition label a New Christian as a heretic. Full genealogical details of suspected individuals were kept in The Inquisition's records.¹⁶⁹ Terah's declaration that Abram is not his son is, therefore, a direct allusion to the New Christian fear of implication in the heresy of others.

In Yesod Olam, moreover, Abram speaks frequently of the

people's need to return to God. Zacuto's intent is to illustrate the fact that, at one time, much of the population had been Jewish. This is given further support when Abram refers to the people as "stiff-necked", a title reserved for Jews. The New Christian desire to conceal the fact of their Jewish ancestry is referred to most explicitly when Abram rebukes Nahor and Milkah hiding the truth:

...should the truth be covered with garment and deceitful veil, is this not like the work of perforated linen.¹⁷⁰

The decree of expulsion imposed upon the Jews of Spain in 1492 is alluded to when Nimrod expels Abram from the land. Spain had realized the hopelessness of extirpating the Judaizing heresy while Jews were left in the country to teach the ancestral religion, directly or indirectly, to their kinsmen.¹⁷¹ Nimrod faces the same problem as long as Abram is allowed to remain in Ur. Expulsion is, therefore, declared upon the Jews and, in Yesod Olam, upon Abram.

Allusions to Jewish Life in Amsterdam

Information regarding the life of the ex-Marranos after the expulsion can be gleaned from Yesod Olam. Zacuto provides veiled references to the messianic mysticism, the critical thinking, and the state of exile that characterized early Jewish existence in Amsterdam. Zacuto's early attraction to the Kabbalah relates to the mystic mood among many ex-Marranos. The Kabbalah's teachings were difficult for the people to assimilate, but its aims lent themselves easily to popularization.¹⁷² Its creative force came from the new center of Safed, with Isaac Lurin as its central figure. Ultimately, the messianic fervor led to the pseudo-messianic mania in the middle of the seventeenth century which greatly affected the Amsterdam community, as well as other Marrano centers.¹⁷³

Most of Zacuto's mystical allusions focus upon God's rescue of Abram from the fire. Zacuto's description of the descent of God's chariot is derived from the contemplative vision of the Merkabah (God's chariot), for which the mystics of the tannaitic and amoraic period strove.¹⁷⁴ Zacuto describes the vision:

There was the vision of God in the image of a Cherub. And, behold, His image was similar to our features.¹⁷⁵

This description reflects the midrashic concept of God contracting himself into the Holy of Holies in the abode of Cherubs.¹⁷⁶ The statement of God's similarity to man is, as previously mentioned, a possible refutation of the pagan

concept of man's unworthiness before God. No intermediary is needed for man to behold God, alludes Zacuto. This would serve to refute the Catholic belief that man's original sin precludes his ability to perceive God without the acceptance of Jesus as savior.¹⁷⁷ Finally, Zacuto's description of sparks flying off of Abram alludes to the Lurianic belief that sparks of divinity are dispersed everywhere.¹⁷⁸ They must be redeemed, according to this concept, through the gradual restoration of harmony in the world and, in the final stage, through the state of redemption announced by the appearance of the Messiah.¹⁷⁹ Abram's dispersal of the sparks may refer to their symbolic redemption from the power of evil that hold them captive. Zacuto thus alludes to the messianic hopes of the ex-Marranos, supporting the belief that the final deliverance was imminent by virtue of their recent suffering. These Jews were, again, attracted to messianic ideas in consequence of the previous Catholic influence on them.¹⁸⁰

The forced assimilation to the general Spanish population of many Jews before the onset of New Christian persecution afforded many Marranos opportunities for immediate advancement. In the fifteenth century, the Marranos had attained high occupational and social levels. They had important roles in literature, science, the universities, and even in the Church.¹⁸¹ With the onset of expulsion, the exiles continued this magnificent tradition in their new European homes. The intellectual life of Amsterdam's ex-Marranos was, thus, not only brilliant but distinctively

Iberian in character.¹⁸² Since their ancestral religion was seen as the source of their salvation from Spain and Portugal, the ex-Marranos emphasized the wisdom inherent in Judaism.¹⁸³ This stress is referred to by Zacuto throughout Yesod Olam. Abram's rebuke of the idol-worshippers for their "lack of knowledge", Haran's acceptance of "burning ideas", and Abram's admiration of Sarai's "knowledge", all allude to the ex-Marrano's belief that intellectual wisdom was inherent in Judaism. In the final scene of Yesod Olam, Nahor says to Abram:

Why, as a philosopher in class,...do you...confuse my understanding?¹⁸⁴

Zacuto's intent is to show that as long as one refuses to embrace Judaism, the attainment of wisdom, as well as salvation, is elusive.

CHAPTER IV

Translation

Part One

Chapter One

Terah

Who is it, which is the one, that has extended his hand
Against Baal with insolence?

Who is the mischievous one, an enemy and traitor,
Expanding, in his wickedness, my eternal suffering?

Who would believe that he has broken and trampled
The gods above, who are beaten as trampled fennel?

Woe, that my son has become our disgrace,

For ridicule and mockery is about us!

Abram

Listen and be silent, sir, please hear my words,

For why should you shout uselessly?

Know that yesterday a woman came to the room of idols

Like a widow lamenting.

She brought them nectar and honey as her offering.

She asked favor and aid of them.

She implored, weeping and praying, in front of them.

After her prayer, with much gladness and joy,

She returned to her tent with good expectation,

For she had thought that her prayer was already ascending

With her wish, and was being received.

Then I heard a voice, the sound of sadness,
Like the sound of a pregnant woman crying at child-birth.
One idol, with great spirit and haughtiness,
Was despised and hated for its evil.
"It befits me", he said, "that I alone take this offering,
Because of my glorious and majestic rule over you".
They did not want to hear him,
And their souls loathed to be ruled by him.
Then his anger was kindled to the extreme,
Like a flame of fire in burning coal.
He girded himself with weapons, as if going to battle.
He took a hammer in hand and a large knife.
Cruelly he broke all your idols.
They are here, before you, like fallen flowers.
Then he fled to hide himself, for his soul was
Sick, horrified, and in mourning.
To believe my words, sir, please observe him,
For he is here, behind the door.
Terah
Woe to me, because of this foolish, stupid, and ignorant one.
Why do you tell me tales of folly?
How can they act, if they are like stone
That has been cast upon the land?

Abram

If so, my beloved, open your eyes.

Understand the true declaration that you have proclaimed.

Listen to the word you have spoken.

Be wise to both of your ears.

Why be foolish, for what do you praise -

An image that you formed with your hands?

For a tree and stone of your choosing,

Would you desert your Creator and Maker?

Why are all your thoughts directed towards broken wood and vessels?

You are a knowledgeable man - why is your mind so troubled by this?

Do not continue, sir, to pursue vanity.

But hearken, my father

(For fools despise wisdom and morality)

To the God to whom I bow.

Ancient, He is polished with the brightness of understanding.

He is perfect and the essence of purity.

One of His attributes, and He is without existing helper.

Is that He is unchanging yet moving.

For He has no likeness nor descriptive formation.

Therefore, His names are but adjectives.

Only He, alone, knows His name.

His strength lies in a hiding place, invisible to the eye.

The voice of His existence can be heard by only

Men, luminaries, and angels.

He brings His actions to existence without cessation.
Then His commands are established and fixed
For all the world's dwellers and inhabitants of the land.
He said "Let there be light", and He unfolded also
The land and the sky on the first day.
He declared on the second day a partition within the water,
To divide it, and there was heaven.
On the third day, too, He unfolded the abyss,
Land and water were divided into two.
It was surely the work of two days when
He commanded that there be grass and seed-producing trees,
Sun, stars and moon,
Bird, animal, fish and forest life.
Within three days He formed it for our benefit.
And at the end of His creation, rejoicing
That it was done, He said to the angels:
"A man in our image and our likeness".
Thus, from His dwelling, He perceived and supervised
The entire existence with righteous eyes.
For before Him was everything precious, in abundance,
And by His great grace, there was a full man.
The great reward, which He promised, was kept:
To walk with him in the path of righteousness
Until the end of the span of days in Eden, when
The soul of their unity is at its greatest rest.

This is my precious Friend whom I love.
Here is my Refuge and my Light about me.
In Him will I trust, In Him will I find rest.
If by your anger, that I have perceived in my heart,
You would destroy me,
The cord of God would act to recuperate me.
You grieve for the idols of the wind.
They have ears, but they do not listen.
They have eyes, but they do not perceive.
For they are only bodies without spirit.
Their figures and forms will be bent like waves.
The day will come when they will grow old and, in time,
Be eaten by worms.
All who believe in them will become like them,
Though their hearts may be secure.
Now, answer me: Can you endure with great strength?
Understand my faith, and take shelter in its words.
If your soul is tied to idols,
Then loosen, like a hero with great strength,
All of the fetters that are upon you.
Terah
Woe to me! For who can believe, to my sorrow,
That my son has become an adversary against me?
Woe! For my destroyers are left
To degrade my honor and glory!

Urchin, madman, iniquitous son.

You have arisen to denigrate my precious glory

It is true that your mother's grind belongs to another,

And you are not my relation nor flesh.

How is it possible for you to be the son at my loins,

That your flesh came from my flesh?

Where, o boor, is the honor and respect due the father,

Where is your reverence, my hater and troubler?

Where will I take my shame and humiliation,

And what can I say to my king and ruler?

What will I answer my neighbors when they wish

To say their prayers in my chamber?

If you had not made your heart believe

In this faith, foolishly,

Your faith would have been kept to you alone,

So why have you become my enemy?

And why did you destroy my gods,

That were a refuge and aid to me?

Does not your heart tremble within you,

For extinguishing the magnificence and light of my eyes?

Wait a moment, and I will declare

My trouble and calamity to Nimrod,

And he will judge your deeds in truth.

And I will avenge my pain and distress of you.

They will put you in the recesses of prison,
 And your days will be spent imprisoned.
 Then will your heart's destruction be brought low,
 And you will be of contrite spirit, fearful of my words.

Chapter Two

Abram Alone

My Rock and Defender, in you have I sought refuge.
 Worker of great, immeasurable wonders,
 A stronghold have I made for Your Name's sake, o Rock,
 To break and trample the gods of dishonesty.
 I have also told of Your wonder, and not concealed it.
 With You is my salvation, so majestic and precious.
 Therefore, come to my aid with Your magnificent power.
 Arise, o Lord, and lift up Your hands.
 Awesome in praises and Worker of wonders, I pray
 Would You but observe trouble and behold anger?
 Make known Your Name to these ignorant ones.
 I beseech You, my God, to act for Your honor's sake,
 O Stronghold and Rock. My father intends, with wrath and anger,
 To incarcerate me in jail.
 I pray that You be a shelter for me, to overcome weakness,
 For the lions are roaming for their prey.

Chapter Three

A room in the king's home

Nimrod and his servants

Nimrod

What delight and joy, how excited my heart will be,

When my beauty's genius will be recognized!

Make haste, my servants, lovers of lust.

Look and I will boast of the magnificence of my majesty,

Hurry and let me have the clothing of gold.

Give it, that I might dress in the glory of my adornment.

The robe is the product of the craftsman's hands,

Fastened with the fine, purple chord.

Command my maidens and noble women, also,

To bring me plump fruit.

Lift my spirits, I bid you, with my cakes.

Let me taste and drink from the juice of my wine.

Command my maids and bondwomen

To quickly prepare tasty food,

To roast in ovens and on skewers

Rams of the children at Bashan and goats.

My eyes will desire all that I possess.

I will act and eat with the strength of my hand.

I will spend the days of my years in goodness,

And the days of my life in pleasant activities.

Why should I be sad with speculations,

For what would they bring me in the day of my distress?
 For all the glory of my rule and wealth
 Would be vanity following my death.
 How good it would be if all men were happy with their lusts,
 And would not be angry.
 While still living on one's land,
 Why should one worry for one's children? Why be afraid?
 Surely when one is of the wind after death,
 He will spend time like a moth-eaten garment.
 Who will bring him to his treasures,
 To see what will happen after him?

1st Servant

We hasten to quickly fulfill your desires
 For we are bidden to do your commands.

2nd Servant

It appears to be Terah there who is knocking
 On your doorway, for he desires permission.

3rd Servant

Sorrow and despair are with him, Nimrod, without doubt.
 He comes quickly, in peace, thank God.
 The simple man would come in joy,
 He who depends upon dull miracles.

Chapter Four

Terah and the afore mentioned

Lend your ear, Nimrod, to the voice of your servant,

Open your eyes to him, with your great favor.
My gods gave me three children,
I directed the three of them to your service.
But my plans are temporarily changed.
They are a shame to me and to your kingdom.
I am disappointed and ashamed, I feel dejected.
How can I serve my king while opposed to you?
Know that my son, Abram, acts like a fool and ignoramus.
He denies the principle of your faith.
He destroys your gods, who are
Always to your aid with their great power.
He scorns my instructions, and turns a deaf ear.
Neither does he pay attention to your fear.
Therefore, send your ministers and command them
To put him quickly in your snare.
Lord of the world, look upon this old one
Who, like an ox, would lick up the dust from your feet.
May my supplication come before you.
Then may your greatness be revealed to all who come.
Have compassion on my shame, and with the glory
of your great mercy, answer me with your saving truth.
Nimrod
I have heard the sound of your outcry, my beloved,
To give you all of your heart's desires.

I will hasten, with my power's strength, to fulfill your wishes.

I will carry out your desires and wants.

For love of the law of truth is Nimrod's statute.

I will support you in your case.

I grant peace to you, and tranquility to your household.

Therefore, go to your rest, my friend.

Terah

I give to your name thanks and great gratitude.

I will bow down to the glory of your greatness.

A tyrant has been uncovered, and as a strong man,

You are my kind in your palace.

May nations bow down before you.

May adversaries be subdued before your rule.

May they hasten from fear of you, that they may know

That your hand will find all of your enemies.

May your name be great forever, your proclamations be exalted,

And your doctrine be declared forever.

Chapter Five

Nimrod and his servants

Take action my men, my servants, and my officials,

Who act on my words in every city and tow.

Hasten, with the rod of reproach.

Act wrathfully and with an outstretched arm.

Hasten to he who despises and is contemptuous of my awe,

To he who deviates from the worthy religion.

It is Terah's son who has rebelled and sinned,
Who has marched and travelled on the road of caprice.
He increases his guilt with hidden sins,
He has broken the idols, who are in heaven.
And without hesitation, he has greatly rebelled and acted
Willfully
To establish and concoct a false faith.
He has rebelliously rejected the precious law
That is as pure as fine, clean flour.
I will therefore straighten his ways with righteousness.
I will punish his sin with an open wound.
But if he willingly loathes his apostasy,
Doing repentance with an appeased heart,
Then I will righteously hasten to show favor,
That his punishment be turned into words of instruction,
And he will live.
I will show my truth to the people of my inheritance,
My justice and my law to every man and beast.
For I possess the curse of the drawn sword:
Death by fire and punishment of annihilation.
But I also have mercy at all times and seasons.
Mine is the doctrine of hereditary wealth.
Mine is also the blessing of sweet truth.
Measure and unit are balanced in suspension.

Mine are the scales in two hands,
Death and life, without premeditation.
Behold, the upright and the pure are equal,
And are as two fawns that are gazelle's twins.
ALL LEAVE, EACH TO HIS WORK.

Chapter Six

A room in Terah's Home.

Abram goes out alone.

Abram

Woe to me! For my father is as a sinner,
Greatly misbehaved in his eternal apostasy!
He will not listen to logical rebuke,
For he turns a deaf ear as if he does not hear.
Surely he has gone to Nimrod's house like a madman,
To prepare the snares of a trap for me.
He plans, also, to imprison me in a dungeon and pit.
He is as an enemy, and he is a greedy man.
Indeed, the insides of traps are also hedges of a thorn-bush.
God will protect me, He alone has touched me.
In His shelter, I will be fresh as an olive.
But I have provoked my family like a lion.
Thus, to whom can I turn within the household
Of this fortress that I have encountered?

Chapter Seven

Three of Nimrod's officers are gone out to look for Abram.

1st Officer

This is Terah's son, whom Nimrod commanded us
To capture. Quickly sieze him.

2nd Officer

Quickly grab him and do not let loose,
Hasten to act as we have been commanded.

3rd Officer

This is the one who acted insolently and provoked us.
By his insolent craftiness has he deceived.
And with great haughtiness, he instructs
Rebellion, in order to be a chief and judge over us.

1st Officer

He is the foolish, wicked villain who transgressed,
Breaking our gods that are in the chamber.

2nd Officer

Now his insolent heart will be subdued by the law of
Nimrod, in a dark dungeon, devoid of order.

3rd Officer

There he will be cut, and will sink
With his pieces and his fat.

Abram

Make haste, you wrongdoers and men of destruction,
To do the evil; hasten to sieze me.

Take me quickly to Nimrod, your King,
 That he might execute punishment against me, breaking bones.
 But know, you ignorant ones, that before
 He finishes fulfilling your desires,
 God's lofty mercy, that is about me, will rescue me
 To a heavenly hiding place as a cover from the tempest.

Chapter Eight

Terah goes out.

Terah

Now, fool, you will see the benefit
 Of the foolish faith of your religion, which you invented.
 Now your actions will be recompensed
 Because of the sin against our idols, that you broke.
 Now, ignorant one, call that He might rescue you.
 Where is your God, of whom you spoke?

Part Two

Chapter One

A room in the king's home, as in part one, chapter three.

Nimrod, his wise counsellors, and Abram go out.

Nimrod (to Abram)

Come near and tell how and why you rose up
 Against our idols, that you have broken?
 How, in front of your father's face, you cast out
 His glory and his fear, and were not ashamed?

Answer, tell, simple-minded person: for what have you established -

You invented a religion of vain and empty faith,
 Which you seek in the thoughts of your heart.
 What is this dream that you have dreamed?
 For when you destroyed the idol,
 Its glorious honor to you was not considered:
 How your soul did forget, young fool,
 That the fear and awe at me would be greatly increased?
 Living perfection am I. And in furrowed fields
 My sheaths arise and are perfect.

Abram

Woe, o leader, distorted in lack of knowledge,
 Rebellion and unorthodox to the words of logic.
 Why, without wisdom and as a stupid man,
 Would you be angered - and why is your soul sinful?
 For why should your soul be in hell while you bow down
 To Belus, for vanity and acts of foolishness are his?
 My king, know that by tomorrow you will have failed.
 The wisdom that lodges within you is as a consuming worm,
 An enemy that binds you in the day of your anger.
 My God, with great anger and with instruments of destruction
 Will destroy you as if you were a fresh bud.
 Your soul will also confess in the midst of a sling.
 Therefore, say why your heart's pride,
 Has deceived you, dwelling in the rock's cleft.

First Advisor

How would you show deference before the king?

Why do you speak to him without fear?

How will you stand before wise men?

Why do you go after that which is hidden from you?

Youngster! Throw away your heart's investigations

For man but resembles the animal:

When worm and vermin rule

Then a selfish person is seen as generous.

Therefore, enjoyment is increased to man,

With fats and delicacies that he desires.

He should be happy while time still stands,

Lest the days of evil approach quickly.

Then he will flee on a passing shadow that does not stand still.

The eye which saw him shall see him no more.

How man's heart is afraid and in awe of

Judgement and punishment after his death.

How fearful are his senses to its approach,

Like the morning cloud that is erased.

For after he is buried, his body is decayed

And it returns to its earth.

His spirit goes to the ground's wind.

And quickly it ascends at the time of his separation.

Return, return to your father and his law,

For this is his examiner and hearer.

How silent, quiet, and inactive you will be.

Return to your master and do this.

Do not despise his words and teachings, my son,

And do not loathe his rebuke.

Second Advisor

I, too, will respond my share, to add to

The perfection of my friend's words.

Behold, to the lofty stars and their dominion

Is transmitted every act and deed.

Therefore we, the Priests of Baal,

Worship idols that are their images.

For how will God observe

Men and their lowliness from His high abode?

How will pure essence with great power be able to

View depressed humanity?

At the sound of man's shouting, when he cries,

How can the dweller in secret places listen?

Therefore Abram, my boy, tell me

What right does man have with God, and how is he worthy?

Will you abandon the ignorance of your faith?

Why do you walk in the path of vanity and foolishness?

Why should you, fool, escape, and why should you flee

From the religion of your relatives and family?

Return, my son, to your former position.

Do not tremble and worry and do not be bothered.
As long as the light of your sun shines,
Be happy, young man, with your youth.
Then your king will find loyalty in you.
Then goodness and righteousness will grow in you.
Then the happiness and joy of your heart will expand.
Then you will be as an apprentice in the sanctuary.
But if you should turn from repentance again, then hidden
Agony and snares will be upon your path.

Abram

Behold, I have listened to your words.
Listen, too, that I might answer my part.
Then my innocence will be from God.
Then I will set straight your craftiness.
I will teach you, now, the awe and majesty of God,
For He alone is my strength.
Therefore, listen to me that you may know
That my thoughts are not your thoughts.
Write my words on the heart's tablet,
That I might open the eyes of your understanding.
How happy, joyous, and pleasing it will be
If you will listen and be like me!
Hear, that you may know, foolish ones, logic,
So that rebellious ones might learn a lesson:
Woe, o sinners in the bonds of falsehood,
Who praise the people as they go astray!

Therefore, is their happiness destroyed.
Woe to that generation and their leaders!
For man's maker created him with
The projection of His light (and how pleasant it is!).
From the throne of glory they grew to be delights,
That they might perceive the wonders of His deeds
For He is eternally fresh,
Like a tree planted by a stream.
But in the day of distress, man's soul
Is consumed, it is neither joyful nor mourned.
For only while alive is his splendor glorified.
But afterwards does he wither?
Woe, foolish ones! Understand, children of lewdness,
That your eyes will be struck with blindness.
If man has no advantage over the animal,
How has he slyly acquired sense in all wisdom?
If his soul is not very high,
His mind and body pure, without deficiency,
How does he know how to acquire sense in many skills
That are the secret of strong, simple-minded people?
Why does he rule with anger and annihilation
If his source of power comes from high places?
If, in truth, his house is in the upper shadow
Among eternal things,
Surely since he will die in disgrace as
A mortal being of limited days,

Tell, would not God in His palace,
Darkened in His secrecy be able to see?
Understand that although He is very proud,
He observes and sees from the place of His dwelling.
For all the dwellers on high and lowly man
Are considered as one by Him.
Also are the animals of the field and the soaring birds,
For there is no greatness next to His greatness.
Therefore, how can I forsake my faith,
If truth is with me as my help?
My strength and my hope is not in man,
But rather do my eyes cry for God.
I will strengthen and not loosen my search.
The advice of the wicked are far from me.
Therefore, listen to me, children of Bablonia.
May your ears hear my words:
Why should you grant that which is opposed to your knowledge,
Does darkness and falseness hang over you?
Be fearful and in awe of the day that darkens
The sun of your years. Nor will those
Who set the table be granted an offering to God.
Nor to those who fill the god of fate with wine.
Be fearful for your souls and for their distress,
For you will quickly come to the time of trembling.

You will descent to the grave of hell and flame.
Then you will be as a flock at the time of shearing.
God will deepen and widen its bonfire.
Behold, the evil ones cease their rage there.
Remember the days of Adam who preceded you,
For he died for his sin, like a destitute man.
And in that generation, man was given to annihilation.
A third of the world was overflowed in the day of their
Calamity.

Remember the generation of the flood and their great violence,
For they were cut off without redemption.
It was then that the high and mighty Rock allotted
Nations during the separation of men.
Now know if God perceives this,
And see if God does not also view your apostasy.
Behold, He will always be the strength of my force.
For His name did I rise up against you.
And I am in your hands! Do with me, now,
As is good and right in your eyes.

First Advisor

At the birth of this fool, Orion arose as if scorned,
And the Great Bear as if weakened, and Pleiades was concealed.
Saturn was in dread, and Mars in a fury.
The moon and sun were in thick darkness!

And Mercury as if pained, and Venus as if saddened
Jupiter was in rage in a blazing fire
Because of the portents of horror, trouble, and evil,
Transgression and sin, injustice and tyranny,
That this one might reign and arise rebellious
And that the law might be seen as false and deviant.
Now, have you not come with quarrelsome words
To restore apostasy without contrition.
Arise for this and hasten, for now is the time.
Decide the death decree, ruler and judge.
And with upright word, may he be consecrated for slaughter,
With drawn sword, plucked for the kill.

Second Advisor

When thorn and thistle are atrociously cultivated,
Growing abundantly and implanting their roots,
Is not my advise, my declaration, and my view,
That it be uprooted without removing the branches.
That there would be for you and your people
Swords against them, just as they have swords.
Therefore rule with fury and take revenge now,
As an example of terror forever.
Punish his body for the insolence of his guilt,
That his bones might be a poker for the flashing fire.
And that he might dress in sin in the middle of the streets,
In shabby rags, in filthy garments.

Nimrod

Take your sixties and call a solemn assembly,
Chiefs of the fifty and chiefs of the ten.
How angry I have become. The spirit within me
Roars like a lion for the sentencing decree.
My righteousness is angered and my law is strong,
For he has shouted a great and rebellious outcry.
It is said: Can you endure this wicked and foolish one?
Arise, o chief, and consume his bones with wrath.
Detestable and dirty, his liver will be sliced.
You will also drive out a curse quickly.
Therefore will I command, and my view will I declare.
I will set my faith on a straight path.
My law is against my enemy, is this not my word.
Act according to my decree to prepare a bonfire.
You will set afire and burn this fool, that he be consumed.
There he will be agitated in pain and anguish.
Placed upon him will be garments of rags.
Thorns and briers will be a crown upon his head.
Every staircase and all the streets
Will he walk about repulsively, in shabby garments.
They will beat him and spit in his eyes.
They will testify against his sin with words of reproach.
He will be dreaded by every nation and people.

Insult will be added to his sorrow and anguish.
And his name will be loathed in fear
More than the unclean animal.

Abram (to the Advisors)

Woe, the prophets have prophesized to Baal.
You are healers of nothing, and stuck to lying.
For because of honor, respect, and wealth,
You have perpetrated a fraud against God, the Lord of the world.
Woe to you, house of the levivate,
Who treacherously betray without end.
Who plant a sapling without seed,
And the fruit of their seed is wormwood and poison.
Your iniquities are stained with trouble and pain.
Even should you wash it in pits of cleaning soda,
Can you still say to a piece of wood or pottery
That it perform miracles and abundant marvels?
Know that its power is vanity,
The work of man's hand and set secretly.
Woe to you my friend! Your land is an island.
For your people are of great iniquity, and your king
Is a child:
Woe to your wise ones, the old men of the market.
They are your destroyers and the breakers of your breach.
Great woe is theirs on the day of destruction.

That day, His feet will trample in the tempest of the storm.

That day will He do justice with an angry verdict.

(To Nimrod)

How long will your evil stand as an obstacle,

What will you depend upon villain, for all your guilt?

If because you have been fortunate,

Then also your strength will be beaten.

Arise and see, for is not your evil

Abundant, and your iniquity is endless.

(Raising his eyes to Heaven)

I pray, o God of revenge! Arise as a flame's fury

Against the people who would make your faith folly.

He has thought to destroy and to remove

The soul of your affectionate and faithful believer.

Arise with your law against this arrogant nation,

Who bow only to the wooden Astheroth,

Who desire wisdom to prepare an idol,

And who make of them gods of gold.

(The servants approach to take him)

See that my enemy against me shouts for joy,

For he intends to destroy me by fire.

O God, may your eyes shine forth.

Arise and descend to me, to save me.

For the sake of your faithful name, save me
 From my haters, for they are too strong for me.
 (They lead him and all walk off)

Chapter Two

Haran goes out alone
 My heart and my spirit vacillate,
 Going astray from the path, like an astounded lamb.
 Abram is alone, and how can I trust him,
 Though his words of faith shine.
 The enemies are many, and they slaughter for nothing.
 Therefore I do not know what I will do.
 It is best for me to still wait and to silently seek refuge,
 Should I perceive the haters victorious.
 But if God should aid his righteousness,
 Then I will follow after him in faith,
 And I will find grace and goodness, and I will be tranquil.
 My name will grow with his name and I will fortify his power
 Against the scoundrels. Exalted like an ox
 Will be my horn and I will be mixed with luxuriant oil.
 He exits.

Chapter Three

Nimrod and his advisors

Nimrod

I will rejoice as my anger subsides, and will investigate
 What Abram will think to himself.

Also how, within the fire of his suffering,
 He celebrates and moves like one intoxicated.
 I will indeed fear him some, when I remember
 The power of his God and the strength of His sword.
 For should the miracles of His goodness do evil
 To me and you, then he will be shut up.
 But his fear will not alarm me,
 For I will stand against him as long as I live.
 When I die and am cut off, what is mine?
 Behold, people have feared me throughout my youth,
 So how could I now be a mockery to them?
 Now that I have grown old, would they think of me as a child?

Advisors

Listen, be silent and quiet now, for why be fearful, our lord?
 Know that our sages have already decreed and proven
 That God has delivered perverse acts to drown us.
 Therefore, it is not in His power to perform an evil
 Wonder before us.
 For if so, our laws and lofty standards would be rearranged.
 His eyes are not yet able to perceive our actions,
 For He has sworn and declared a time in His sight that
 our actions
 Will He tolerate, that He will not judge impatiently against us.
 For do you not see that there is no sentence and punishment
 For our insolence.

For if He perceives, how has He not quickly punished our iniquity?
Therefore, silence the tumult of your heart, and fear not,

Our King,

For why should you fear great wonders that might act to
Reproach us?

Surely His power and strength, which our elders spoke of,
Was already utilized in ages gone by.

Chapter Four

Nimrod's servants go out frightened, their garments like
Burning fire.

First Servant

Hear, o kings, and listen, o rulers.

Hear that I might tell what we encountered.

Second Servant

Understand, for has this been seen, heard,
And told by our elders to us.

Third Servant

We have encountered miracles, more than can be counted
From the time that we left you.

Nimrod

Quickly open your mouth and tell what happened.

On what account has your majestic face of splendor been changed?

First Advisor

Speak and tell out of your great fear.

Our hearts will laugh, for we cannot understand.

Second Advisor

Quickly, for your life, tell,
And we will fix every falsehood.

First Servant

Behold we quickly acted against Abram as
Nimrod, our lord, commanded us by mouth.
He dressed in worn rags as if they were jewels,
To go around the streets of the city with us.
He was quiet and happy, and he refused to walk
Except slowly, until we were apart from him.
When the inhabitants spit in front of him
He was happy, and we showed satisfaction.
When they struck his cheek or abused him with disdain,
He paid no attention. Then we were greatly surprised.
Also, when he approached the burning flame,
He jumped into the fire before we knew it.
Then came the sound of noise and uproar, like the sound
Of a thunderstorm.
And we heard thunder and the wind of a storm.
Then quickly the heavens were opened.
There, glorious and majestic chariots were set up.
A heavy cloud descended with a mighty sound that
Shook our hearts and we were frightened.

He entered the fire, and the consuming flames
Shot off in all directions and controlled us.
Then pleasant songs and praises were heard
Until we were made as stunned people.
Our hearts were almost transformed to another,
For we had forgotten our flesh.
The sound of pleasant joy began to approach
And entice our desires, and diverted us.
How beautiful were all our thoughts when
We lifted our eyes to observe the fire!
There was the vision of God in the image of a cherub.
And, behold, His image was similar to our features.
Abram walked about, very handsome looking.
We saw, indeed, that he was angry.
Quickly, in the next instant, sparks flew off
From him, And it was the fire that was consuming us.
He sat within the fire for more than two hours.
We called to him, but he did not answer us.
He would have stood there for a month and a day,
Had we not called to him loudly.
He left with great joy, and his body was exposed
To see whether he had any blemish, but we found none.
The rotting garments were driven away, also,
from pure myrrh, and it astounded us.

Then his mouth opened and he desired to teach,
 Until we restrained him after greatly tiring ourselves.
 We quickly hastened to tell you this.
 Therefore, we have come without your permission.
 Order to capture him, lest the masses of people be
 Swallowed up.
 They are ignorant, and do not understand,
 For they approached him and said to him:
 "We are all here, happy to hear you.
 Please teach us, o prince, the paths of truth,
 That we might become wise by it and study it.
 Perhaps God will grant us worthy to behold
 His majesty which He makes great, and that He teach us.
 Truly say who He is, and which one is He, that
 Descended from His hiding place with power and astounded us."
 Then he answered them: "My lovers and friends, know
 That this is our God and He is our Maker.
 Repent with great desire and beseech Him."
 "Consent, O anointed cherub, to please tell us
 With what and when will we behold the glory of His loveliness.
 Sweeten our souls that we might be content."
 And He answered: "You will not walk after the stubborn wicked,
 For he is the one who has misled us -

If you quickly call to God, He will answer,
 For He is our refuge and our salvation.
 Let us return to God with words of supplication.
 For if we have sinned, He will have compassion.
 And on the day we die, we will stand before Him.
 There, in His majesty, He will rescue us.
 Then, in His Garden of Eden, it is sworn in His light,
 That the evil days that oppress us will be changed.
 There we will walk between standing seraphim.
 There, be in awe of Him that He might look attentively
 Upon us.
 Then will all rejoice in the desire of love
 And they will say: 'Oh, that we might die'!"

Chapter Five

Haran goes out and speaks to himself
 Haran
 For what purpose do I ponder my intentions?
 What will I do here except seek shelter?
 Why should I be afraid of vain confusions when
 I have left for the shores of true faith?
 Be no longer fearful of burning ideas.
 Intensify your efforts to gain wisdom and to be sensible.
 If you did not see the majesty of the exalted God

Chapter Five

Haran goes out and speaks to himself

Haran

For what purpose do I ponder my intentions?

What will I do here except seek shelter?

Why should I be afraid of vain confusions when

I have left for the shores of true faith?

Be no longer fearful of burning ideas.

Intensify your efforts to gain wisdom and to be sensible.

If you did not see the majesty of the exalted God

As He descended in the flaming, sparking hut,

Then look and observe my brother's face that

Beams from God's help and has become happy.

No longer will we urge procrastination, lest with great anger

He will punish us for our evil.

He turns to face Nimrod.

The Lord, God, supports all those who fall,

And He has already shown us the strength of His power.

He is a faithful God and His law is truth.

For we have been deceived with many vain lies.

These, your advisors, through empty and vain rule,

Have set a trap for all of the multitudes.

Therefore, at this time, I am informing you

Of my secret intentions which have been foreseen.

Know that my heart believes in God exalted.

For He is the Lord of the world and we are His.

I and my brother, too, will grasp His faith.

We will trust in His great mercy when He tests us.

This, I believe, even should you command to burn me.

For you do not have the ability to destroy our existence.

For the fire will be extinguished, and then you will know that

God has done great things for us.

Advisors

First Advisor

Punish with the decree of death; punish your terror.

Second Advisor

Punish the ensnarer of the people; punish our nation.

First Advisor

Remove the beautiful robe from your shoulders.

Second Advisor

Remove it with your anger against our delicate enemy.

First Advisor

Degrade the pride of the fool, the pride of your enemy.

Second Advisor

Will you endure the pride of one deserving death?

First Advisor

Prosper and cross, o ruler, the rivers with your thunder.

Second Advisor

Prosper, that Nimrod may be happy in our world.

First Advisor

Consider, with a joyful heart, he who eats your bread.

Second Advisor

Consider, with your great wealth, our storehouses.

First Advisor

Consider to reproach with the mercy of your honesty.

Second Advisor

Consider the alarm the enemy as is fitting our integrity.

First Advisor

Consider to close his eyes according to your good taste.

Second Advisor

Consider our speech and our address.

First Advisor

Spread out the net of your destruction upon this idiot.

Second Advisor

That you may be as a god all of our days.

First Advisor

In his eyes, the fool thinks greatly of himself.

Second Advisor

It is the fool who desires our bleeding.

First Advisor

And just as his brother, he pains your image.

Second Advisor

And he casts down the idols to blame us.

First Advisor

Tend to your people, like a merciful father.

Second Advisor

Tend our vineyard and uproot thistle and thorn.

First Advisor

For will a youngster frighten the root of your power?

Second Advisor

And will he hasten, then, to put us to shame?

First Advisor

Does not power and strength come from you?

Second Advisor

Is he not like a baby within our community?

First Advisor

Will you reveal a weakness because of his sorcery?

Second Advisor

Does he have a treasury of power to bewitch us?

First Advisor

Pour out your wrath, as if he had the strength of God.

Second Advisor

And with your ferocity will you be stronger than him.

First Advisor

With your shrewd heart be adorned with awe.

Second Advisor

Be adorned to ferociously sacrifice our fat offerings.

First Advisor

Approach and show him the lightning of your thunder.

Second Advisor

Approach and prepare to give the beauty of our opal stone.

First Advisor

Set free, redeem, and save the children of your nation.

Second Advisor

Set free and cast off the burden from our shoulders.

First Advisor

With your great genius, overthrow your enemy.

Second Advisor

May our strength increase for our nation's sake.

Nimrod

Like a burning fire has this been in my heart.

For will this fool also stand next to us,

Intending to darken the joy of our gladness

And to remove my majesty, the crown of my glory.

How can the roar and noise, as if recognized,

Of slaves be heard, whom we have trampled on?

How will they arise now to act against us?

If only yesterday they were as dark mud?

How can a foolish heart and a blind eye

Hope to darken the light of our logic?

How can they speak with contempt against us,

When their souls think, like the mud of dung,
Of a God without beauty, majesty, and uncrowned?
Who in heaven can compare with us?
Who has succeeded as greatly as we have?
And who has such strength and overpowering might?
Victory is delivered to us daily.
For the property of our pain is pleasant
The heavens sprinkle our dew of us.
Rain from its lair sprinkles forth water.
The moon in its season was created for us.
The sun to cook the fruits of our food
Their brightness is a shining light for us,
For also their brightness overcomes the darkness.
All of the fruit of the land is chosen for us.
Its produce is quickly made into our food.
The juice of the vine within our pitchers is ours,
For by it, my uniqueness is exalted.
The fish of the sea in guarded waters are ours.
Also are the winged fowl within our coops.
The cattle carry our burdens for us.
The animals of the forest are locked in a pit.
In the forests of honeydew, honey is selected for us.
Our vessals are filled with every delight.
Our hopes are secure and honored for us.

Courage and power with exalted might,
Upon the heart and the lobe of the liver.
Fatness is upon the loin for us.
For us, our dress and our garments
Are embroidered with fine wool - how glorious!
The offerings of pure myrrh are sacrificed for us,
And every type of spice is in our peddlars' shops.
The acquisition of wealth is ours, to cause us joy,
Precious stones that always glitter.
We have tin, iron, and also lead.
Silver, copper, and fine gold in our temple.
The beauty of gardens in our paths are ours.
Under them one can drink from flowing streams.
Properties of fortified settlements are ours,
Villas and palaces and our towers.
Pleasant song at the time our eating is ours,
As is the beauty of the virgin, the maiden, and woman.
Ours are the masses of people like the waters of Galilee,
There are no masses nor number like the multitude of our children.
Among our people and our community ours
Is the penetrating sword, spear, and bayonet.
Ours is the beauty of the kingdom and the ruling hand.
Rulers bow to the banner of our flag.

Oh would that our voices be delivered to the heavens,

Then the spirit of angels would become drunk.

Oh, would that they be enticed to descend, then would they be troubled

For who can destroy us and who can rule us?

He speaks to Haran.

Speak, fool, for how against us

Will your foolishness rebel? What hope is there?

Do you, in your foolish boastfulness, think that

You too will be now an obstacle for us,

After Abram made us foolish

With his soul aided by witchcraft?

How can the storm of your praised wind

Rise up against our lofty greatness?

Will you consider to cease causing us alarm,

For Abram's is a vain and false faith?

For do you associate with the activities of magicians

Who work miracles against our suffering community?

Or with the breaking of groups of idols -

Do you think that my faith should be uprooted for this?

Behold, my decree against you is vowed,

For you will quickly be consumed with those rebellious to our hopes.

And to all who desire to degrade us,

Their recompense will be repeated.

He speaks to his aids.

Do not allow the truth, here, to be cultivated.

Hasten, our servants and soldiers.

Burn this crazy one in our burning coals.

For so has my greatness decreed in justice
 Root out the bitterness of the malignant wormwood,
 Lest he be strengthened to rule over our children
 Then we will have peace in our tents.
 Then will my powerful hand be recognized.
 Then will the splendor of my name be remembered,
 To be honored by our generation's children.
 He returns to Haran.
 Then will the fools, who rose up to overthrow us,
 Have the anger of their evil halted.
 Then will the religion of your magician be destroyed
 From our land and our destiny.
 May your end consume the days of our mourning,
 That we be not disgraced with a rebuking tongue.
 Announce in the most honorable place in town,
 That your fear has fallen from us.
 They lead Haran to the fire.

Part Three

Chapter One

A chamber in the king's house, as in Part Two.
 Nimrod and his sages (advisors).
 Abram goes out, followed by a great crowd. He turns away from Nimrod.
 Abram.
 I call out to you, the people's representatives,

And my voice to all mankind.
For, with great violence, your souls
Are abominated and sinful.
Fools hate knowledge,
And they jest.
They do not, in their vanity,
Deteriorate the council of the wicked.
Children of Babylonia and all of the Chaldeans:
Woe upon your exalted hearts!
And woe to me, that I see
Your leader's faces as the faces of dogs:
Insolent and stubborn ones,
You briars and thorns
That flee from God
And that trample over His knowledge.
The city is full of injustice.
The city is full of perversity.
Where a fool is considered a righteous man,
And the sinner as full of wisdom.
The act of incest is entertainment to the fool,
And it is sweeter than honey and nectar.
The heart is caught attached to the
Association of the deceitful,

Distorting the scales deceitfully,
and rising up against God
To pervert justice for the needy,
Who desire only the path of truth.
He turns to Nimrod.

A lion roars and a bear growls,
But more wicked than wild beasts are you,
For denying that which the Almighty,
In His great mercy, has given to you.
The way of perennial faithlessness
And arrogance have you chosen.
And you compete with heavenly God.
You have risen up as the head of His enemies.
You have raised up the right hand of His adversaries.
You command them as the god, Nimrod,
Simply because your name is Nimrod.
I will inform you of your sins:
The making of idols, molten images,
And likenesses that are the work of craftsmen.
Your heart demands that you worship them
And trust in their deceit.
Their sight and their acts
Are empty idoltry and vanity.

For they are but body without spint,
And will these nourish you?
One God has created us.
By your transgressions, you forsake and repel Him.
And you intend to kill and to hunt
His servant and innocent lover.
Mortal man has few days,
Filled with trouble and shame,
Like a guest in a boarding house.
Approach me and listen to me.
When I speak you may answer me,
And tell where your loyalty lies.
Is there a staff and support
For all living things on the day of death?
A man lies down and does not rise,
But is ensnared in the pit of a trap.
When he descends to the grave,
Is it fitting that he boast?
By the next day, there will be a sign
That he will fall into the pit of ashes.
Then the days of fatness will be consumed,
And the days of distress will commence.
Will wealth be useful in the day of distress?
If one is a prophet with a heart of wisdom,

With strength and great power,
Can he still persist at a time such as this?
The rich answer impudently.
The wealthy one is quiet in his palace,
For there is no end to his treasures.
But will they help at the time of his death?
And should the honor of his house be great,
The honor of his forest and vineyard,
Is not the hidden snare and cord of
The angel of death in his palace?
He ambushes him and rises up against him,
And then he returns to the earth,
Like a snake with an adder's poison,
With paths unto the dead,
A place where its stones are sapphire.
For there, are burning embers for him.
Fire grows towards his soul,
And it produces larger steps.
Against him who lifts himself up in his brigandine.
There are jumping chariots.
A mighty giant, who acted insolently,
Is appointed the head of the nations.
Before him wild animals bow down.

He mocks the multitude in the town.

He is living retribution,

And all of his servants fear him,

Cedars do not obscure him.

His proud cunning is exalted.

And his dwelling place is filled with

Spoil, booty, and loot.

Can one be rescued with great power?

Can one escape with great strength?

Quickly one's day becomes dark,

And then his grave is opened.

Then his war weapon is considered as straw.

Dagger, dart, and spear.

The chief of the underworld judges his soul

In the pit's recesses, in raging heat.

He hurts him in the pits

With burning pitch, fire and brimstone.

And his name is destroyed forever

In the mist of devastation and desolation.

To the advisors.

O wise ones who, with wisdom,

Understand the words of knowledge

That have become the chief corner-stone,

Like a king who rejoices with his battalion.

Your acts are like the color of a beryl
That deceive the ignorant of your people.
But your cunning counsel will be nullified
By God exalted, with great anger.
He will send forth His anger
Against you and against your king.
And you will eat from the fruit of your ways,
As a sign and example forever.
And together you will be harmless
As if pursuing your destruction.
In the day of your distress, you will be punished,
For great sins are upon you.
And you will wrap yourselves, like a robe, in your shame,
Mournful and ashamed.
Poison, wormwood, gall,
And bitterness will be upon your evil.
For the slander and libel of the people,
Your iniquity will be eternally punished.
The Rock of the World will, with justice, destroy
Your resistance with great destruction.
They who dwell in graves are dead,
Clods of earth are their decorated places,
Deceptive, like the sand of the sea
And like droplets on the grass.

There is no answer, nor listening.
It resembles a stone there.
And they are worn out in the pit of their grave,
Like muddy dung,
Like shattered chalk stone,
Like soil in the face of the wind.
Rubbish, abomination, and stench
Will their bodies and bones be.
But for those who are upright in spirit,
The true God fights.
He is their power and the rock of their triumph.
For their shame is forgotten by Him,
As He removes their reproach.
And they blossom as a field,
Their souls are invigorated and redeemed,
Like a good gift that He bestows.
Wealth and honor
That is stored up for them, is given
In the canopy of light as the bridegroom's majesty.
He will bore through and raise up their blossoms.
He will lead them to the hearts' desire,
To the Garden of Eden in the high, secret place.
There to delight in elevated splendor,
With confidence and in tranquility,
To be satiated in brightness,

Their unity in the joy of salvation.

Say if it is so, o wicked villain.

To Nimrod.

Are strength and confidence still yours

On the day of distress and punishment,

At the time of judgement, of strife and contention?

Answer me: Will you find

A place for yourself where you can flee?

On the day of receiving intense suffering,

Tell what you will do, o despised one.

Do you have an agreement with the underworld,

That your strength might reverse the order of things?

And if so, with an eternal crown

For your children, as an everlasting statute?

Your root of terror has disappeared.

Will you forget that your end is to be a wanderer?

For who are you for, and where will you go?

Is not your beginning vanity,

And the end of your lifetime sorrow,

And how will your wealth avail you?

What are those, before you, for?

Will you take them when you die?

Wash the impurity of your apostasy,

Your unclean, infected heart.

For will you be like a perplexed man,
That you be turned into one who is brutalized?
Remember your damage and your great harm,
At the time of misfortune and rebuke.
At the time of iron and lead,
The sin of all men is stained.
And, therefore, brightness is darkened
When Venus is made dim.
And, behold, the man with his moneybag,
His provisions within his bag.
Should a portion of his share be diminished,
He becomes a mockery and a byword.
And he is covered, like a robe, with envy,
With great poverty, like a poor beggar.
And against God's lovers,
His hope is full of that which is vile.
Who is not like this,
Is there an escape and city of refuge?
Will not the Rock of Retribution rule
In the nether-world and in the heights of heaven?
The recesses of the land are in His hand
And He perceives man's thoughts.
Upon the wings of angels He soars,
Like a lofty and anointed king.
For the depressed and low-spirited,

God will show mercy from heaven.
But against his enemies and adversaries,
His anger will be like a firebrand.
He will not slumber nor sleep,
That He might punish him with the source of life.
He breaks the counsel of nations,
And turns away the devices of the people.
In order to lengthen the days,
He fortifies and aids his heart
But to he who destroys, commands, and decrees,
Arise and destroy him, my God.
But do not, I pray, kill him,
That you might also come under His help.
For you cannot destroy Him
With evil schemes and lawless desire.
He will not fail nor be discouraged,
But He will rejoice at the sound of joy,
That blossoms like a rose
Between the thistle and the thorn.
Heaven will drop righteousness,
And apart from heaven, He will bring forth fruit.
The lofty treasures will ascend and soar
With the help of the Rock and God of eternity.
Life and peace
Will He give to his soul,

To make known His greatness.

For to Him is strength and an incisive hand.

Through justice will He establish the world.

And people faithful to Him,

With glittering sword drawn from His gall,

Will he quickly lead to their reward.

But He will take revenge on their schemes,

The evilness of their intentions.

At the time of recompense of their debts,

He will return payment according to their shares.

But He will not take pity on the day of their vengeance.

Rather will He roar in a thundering voice,

His lips filled with anger,

His wrath upon His adversaries.

You may set ablaze the foundations of mountains,

And you will be enflamed in the great fire,

Destroying the fortresses of towns

With great calamity and devastating destruction,

Like a desert without wanderers,

That birds of prey might dwell there.

Will its inhabitants in every corner

Then appear and be judged?

Surely, He makes known to them that there is judgement,

That there is righteousness and a Judge,

That always, in every matter,

One is judged in righteousness and truth.
Is there death without judgement?
And if without it, is man preyed upon?
For Haran was burned by justice,
For he distorted His acts.
He prepared for him the instrument of death
Because of his lacking in faith,
When he slyly intended to
Lift up an ensign and to fly a banner.
But it was like a melting flag,
And his body was consumed in the fire.
But his spirit will ascend to God,
And He will not remember the sin of his folly.
For he sinned, but he is pardoned,
And he did not die like the death of the villain
Who suffers when he dies.
There will joy be his.
Ask now, o ruler, of the first generation
Of Adam's calamity because of one sin.
Remember, Nimrod, with great fear,
The days of Noah, an honest man,
When mountains shook in the midst of the sea,
When the great abyss was split open,
On the day of the burning, like a great flame, of
God's anger in His hate.

He did not remember His footstool
On the day of His wrath and His anger.
But He did bear in mind His straight honesty
With mercy for those who love Him.
The sinners will be destroyed collectively.
But He shines His brilliance,
That is bright, and also brightens.
Wrongdoers and rebellious generation:
The first rain is covered with blessing.
It is boastful as it kicks up dust.
For this have I arisen to warn you
Concerning the righteous and faithful religion.
Acquire wisdom; acquire understanding.
Acquire knowledge; acquire awe;
Acquire ethics; acquire zeal
To reproach your idolotry.
And the mask of your gold
You will throw away, like a menstous cloth.
And in the counsel of the wicked, do not
Deceive concerning my faith,
And all the people who stand with me.
He turns to the multitude.
He who saw the acts of God,
Who acknowledges His name,

And who desires His faith:

His longing is for you,

To understand your secret desires.

Therefore, for the children of your land,

Have pity, grant mercy, spare, and set apart,

That you save their souls from the nether-world,

That your soul may abide in heaven.

Lengthen your years that you may be fertile,

And that your lifetime will be invigorated.

That you may be as a well-watered garden,

Secure that there are no destroyers.

By the secret of the praised princes,

Your observance will be changed and sharpened,

That we might be one people,

Establishing that which God decrees.

For why should your soul be cut,

Like a lost person without food?

For you are a stiff-necked people.

To the advisors.

The ambush of hypocrisy is deceitful,

O lecherous hypocrites

Who keep closed the heart and eyes.

The waters wear the stones,

Iron is weakened and flaccid.

The storm overturns the cypress,
And death deprives the giant of his strength.
Oared ships and mighty fleets
Are bowed before waves.
How your rebellious hearts have
Enticed your iniquity.
My speech that is in your ears,
Your heart with scorn,
Will you also forget, now,
The acts of God, master of the world?
Young lions break into loud roars
To receive reward for their goodness.
But in place of love, will there be hostility
With which you pay Him and show evil?
Turn to me and be saved.
Approach me for your own good,
And understand, with your wisdom,
The world of instruction, with a yearning hear.
Come and purchase food without money,
For you have scorned the true faith.
Listen to me, though you are old men,
And I am but a young man.
Enquire concerning the peace of the city,
A place where valued honor is vanity,
And where the false idols
Will be destroyed by your zealousness.

You will cut off the Asheroth
For the sake of God, who has performed great deeds.
Do not engage in sexual intercourse with the foreigner,
And do not strike your friends,
For righteousness will be yours.
Punish the robbers,
And the insolent abuser
Who eats blood that is soiled,
For they have dealt deceitfully
With the great and powerful commandment
That was commanded to Noah
To be your law and your statute.
It was intentionally made for you
That you might ascend upon hills of clouds,
That your days might become plentiful,
And that He might sweeten your souls.
Understand, o fools, your awe,
When my God's glorious chariot
Descended to strengthen my power
In urgency and quickness.
For it surely was like that.
The greatness of the wonderful miracle
That descended with revealed splendor
Was God on high with His great brilliance.

He was like the sight of five and brightness.
 His fire, in its burning, was painful.
 But my flesh, with God's aid, was saved,
 And His mercy had compassion upon me.
 Turn to me and he astonished,
 Put this in your memory,
 And ascribe it for the last generation:
 For a people has been created, praise the Lord.

The Advisors

First Advisor

That which will be, already was,
 And there is nothing new, nor sign or omen.
 For why should a man's heart
 Be worried and turned around because of miracles?

Second Advisor

He is a mocked man of no importance.
 Will you endure, o ruler, his burden?
 Because of his foolish word,
 My commander, will you have heart failure?

First Advisor

Does the tiger lie down with the young goat,
 The calf and the lion together,
 Will this midget fool be encouraged
 By his flock against Og?

Second Advisor

With the grimace of wicked devious,
This fool has risen before you.
And almost for your eyes only,
He is an insolent, arrogant, mocking one.

First Advisor

Destroy the wickedness, and a sheepfold
Decree to build for this fool,
So that, there, he can act as a seer,
And not scorn wise men.

Second Advisor

Hear the reproach of the wise
That is fitting for all men.
But the voice of the fool's spokesman
Place before a polished arrow.

Third Advisor

Will your face become gloomy?
Punish the sin yourself.
Is it good that your people say,
"slaves rule over us?"

Second Advisor

Righteousness will be ours
By sacrifice to the hosts of heaven,

And not to a God who is distant,
And boasts to Himself in His palace.

First Advisor

His laws and His statutes,
Which the fool has made known,
Are fabricated and not commandment.
And their observance, like the fool, is deceiving.

Second Advisor

My loins are filled with contempt
From hearing of the laws of foolishness.
Forsake disgrace and madness,
That you may be as a moist garden.

First Advisor

On the good day, goodness will be yours,
In the sweetness of your inherited lines.
And added to the days of your life,
Will be delicacies that never are diminished.

Second Advisor

Do not keep an evil promise,
But act according to your inclination's desire.
Rely upon, Nimrod, the strength of your wealth,
And rush to every pleasure.

First Advisor

New wine and pure oil,

All manners of fatness and delicacies,
Delicious foods and sweetmeat,
That you might eat and be satisfied,

Second Advisor

And you will enquire and examine
Where abundance and pleasure is.
You will sleep on ivory beds,
At the bosom of beautiful women.

First Advisor

Our daughters are as angles,
Sculptured like a shrine.
Act upon this, now, with all that you can,
According to your desire, wherever you rule.

Second Advisor

You will lie down and none will disturb
The pleasures of men.
And if you desire, eat blood,
That it may be a source of eternal power for you.

First Advisor

The murderer who kills
His hater, do not put him to death,
But quickly annoint him,
That his heart be courageous in battle.

Second Advisor

For when he finds ornaments of gold
His soul will lust for its beauty,
And by right, he could, because of his great poverty,
Take it for himself without being shamed.

First Advisor

The dust of the earth is on the head of the poor.
Pour out your judgement according to your desire,
That you may enjoy yourself in the majesty of your splendor
With your people and your lovers.

To Abram.

First Advisor

The wickedness of your heart.
Seal and close, that you may live.
For why should you shout in your majestic voice,
To extend your speech here?

Second Advisor

For your own sake, know wisdom.
Renounce your secret, o imbecile,
In the midst of people who incline
Their ears to you with great esteem.

Nimrod

Your wickedness is great,
That you might consider forcing
The community of my people in a conversational voice,

To establish your religion together.
But there is not even a recluse
Who desires your law.
For this, hasten to leave me
And my land, o proud fool.
Any place where you might see
Those longing for your rule,
Declare there the name of your God,
That the people may bow down to Him.
Before Him, fleets bow down,
But my people are not within the strength of His bow.
Before him, all the dead kneel
But they have no soul.
He desires an abode for Himself
In the mykiads of rivers of oil.
Yet, He desires nothing from the craftsman's hands
That would forbid him from Paradise.
From the east to the Garden of Eden,
Walk alone.
For why should you wish, with your secret,
To confuse our community?
Our property's possession
Is given to you in the Garden of Eden.

Take it all in the glory of your line,
But no longer deafen my ear,
And no longer look upon my face,
With your heart's deceiving madness.
I have already arisen to warn you,
And again, today, with bitter words.
Abram lifts his eyes to heaven.
O God, my spirit is destroyed
And I am utterly powerless.
How can I straighten the wicked circle
Of the audience of my distress?
Like a deaf person, he shuts his ears
Only to humiliate and ruin my world.
Together they are against me,
To break the law of truth.
From among these, there is no good counsel,
Only those who devise falsehood.
Maliciously, with conceited power
They insult me to my face.
Exonerate me for my innocence
And acquit me of my rebuke.
For the wing of my soul
Abides in the righteous judgement of my prayer.

My soul desires my closeness,
O Father of orphan and Lover of the humble.
Through You, it ascends and grows,
That You might bring it to Your people.
Our fathers trusted in You.
They cried out to You and were saved.
They found refuge in You and were not fallen.
They turned to You and were not disappointed.
They trusted in You and sought You,
Innocent men of integrity,
And they gave thanks to Your name
In times of both joy and sorrow.
I chose You in the crucible of affliction.
I will hold firm to You and never stop.
For You are eternally
My Master, great in power.
The groan and the cry
That comes upon me,
Take away, that my soul may rejoice
To glorify Your name, that I might not be mournful.
And until old age, I will endure
The hardships for the sake of Your honor.
May You, with great mercy,

Reward me with the blown fire.

Like a bird that escapes the snare,
Will my soul be, with Your powerful help,
When the glory of Your light is revealed
In the esteemed majesty of the brilliant chariot.
For great are my deceitful haters,
Who scorn the wonders of Your strength.
"Where is Your salvation and might?"
They say to me with insolence.
And now they mock me
With their deceit that they believe in.
They call me, without cessation,
An ignoramus, in order to insult me.
A consulter with familiar spirits or a wizard
Am I called by their words.
In their eyes, I am
Worthless, wretched, and despised.
Will God not order His anger against
A nation like this one?
Will You restrain Your wrath
Against those who rise up to destroy me?
Favor me and establish
My salvation forever,
In order that the stranger may know

That Your might will win out.
I will respond to my abuser with a word,
To tell of Your wonders.
Shine Your light of truth
Upon him who seeks Your knowledge.
The evil ones, like a stormy sea,
Will be agitated and wearied in agony.
Repel them that they may not boast
Of their unclean rubbish, like an impure person.
Destroy the speakers of falsehood
And demolish men of deception.
Annihilate and break down the incestuous
With torment and catastrophe.
May my righteousness be revealed,
And my justice be a light to the people.
Make for me, my perfect Father,
A sign for good that You may find fitting.
Because of my enemies, make Your way
Straight before my face.
Be my hidden strength of help,
my God and Master of the world.
For eternally
I will trust in Your salvation.
Grant Your favor to he who acknowledges You,
And Your righteousness to the pure of heart.

The crowd, including Nimrod and his advisors, leaves.
And Abram remains alone. Terah and his household, Milkah,
Sarai, and Lot enter.
Abram speaks to himself, as if not seeing his father and brother.
My heart, like loud flutes, goes out to father.
For his soul is drowned in mud and mire.
Surely goodness and righteousness will follow me all the days
Of my life. But as for my family, who worship naught,
Woe to father who raised his children among a people
Impure in heart, for they, too, have an unclean soul!
Like a lioness he raised his children,
And in the midst of young lions, he reared his cubs.
Bearing an ignorant fool is his grief,
And a scoundrel and transgressor does not gladden my father.
Surely a wise son brings happiness to his dwelling,
And becomes worthy. He does not step in the path of wickedness.
Because the Master of the world rewards his deeds,
And gives his soul the pleasures of salvation.
For all the paths of truth are sweet,
And he who loves and is honest beholds His countenance.
He turns to his father and his household.
Behold, I see my father and siblings sitting,
And all of them meeting about a secret together.
Here I will hide myself while they speak,
And here I will hear their conversation without fear.

If only my Rock would have mercy upon these michievous ones,
And redeem their imaginations from hidden iniquity.
If only they would abandon the path of shameful, false charges,
To pursue and do justice and love of mercy.
Terah to his children.

Terah

Last night my heart was like an agitated fleet,
Hidden and astonished by thoughts
Of the miracles it saw. It became dumb-founded,
For who would deny what is real?

Like a flamming fire that burns,
Does the idol's law direct a human's thoughts?
Habit became custom to me.

My foot has held its steps.
How can I change my custom? For until now,
My soul was fixed in faith.

But God, upon His straight path, has also
Changed the acts and works of nature.
With His mighty word and gracefulness,
My spirit sings, rejoices, and is satisfied.
For goodness and great mercy, as is my wish,
Will then follow me all of my life.

The holy hosts and majestic God
Descended to save my son, Abram.

Therefore, I give my beloved to His Majesty.
For He is Master of the world and exalted king.
Surely, the idols that are the works of my hand,
I will not believe in again, nor in their deceit.
May my son not be drowned in deep trouble,
For the idols have spoken sinfully.

Nahor

Spread faith among men
For I no longer will trust in the words of man.
Where are your idols and their great majesty?
Why, my father, does your heart become bleary of vision?
How, like a blind man or a sleeping person,
Can I plea with hands raised to an invisible God?
For even though He may soar powerfully in front of me,
He passes over without my seeing.
If my brothers have dealt deceitfully like a stream,
They have sinned, so why should I feel anguish?
If your spirit is also with the detestable fool,
I will certainly not choose the alien faith.
For the man who is faithful to an inherited law
Is protected, as it is taught.
His heart will believe in it, like a stone,
And he will not change nor switch.

Milkah.

My heart also stands throbbing,

From Abram's wonders and miracles.

Our neighbors and all the people say

That the acts of devils pervade his cunning.

It is not the acts of a God who darkens

His greatness in His palace.

For if I will cry out to Him with all my strength,

I cannot believe that He hears my voice.

Lot alone.

If all of my household returned to God,

Receiving His religion and His righteousness,

I would choose to follow the majority.

For He is truth, and there is none without Him.

If the entire foreign and apostate community

Saw the miracles for a moment,

They would acknowledge, against their nature, with woe and wailing,

That the hand of God is strong.

To his household.

Who will believe the wonders of the Master of the world?

Who can articulate His great power?

How can mortal, shameful man

Dare to deny the strength of His greatness?

Surely the stars in heaven, in their brilliant glory,

Answer and tell of His accomplishments,

Because, for His glory's sake, with great might,
He prepared and made the sun's brightness.
Do not mock the wonders of His hand
For they were Abram's refuge of help.
Abram alone.

Blessed is He who looked, with His great mercy,
Upon this boy and enlightened him.

Lot

My brother, fear His great anger,
Lest He punish you with His honest judgement.
For He, in His chariot, is in the heights of heaven
The king who, by law, will establish the land.

Sarai

Behold that, for the moment, my father
Terah, and Lot, acknowledge the truth.
Since God, in Ur of the Chaldeans,
Showed His wonders with majesty and splendor,
I will tell you the secrets of my bosom
That had been absorbed and hidden.
For I will welcome God, the Source of my knowledge.
Why were they concealed in my heart's recesses?
Every false worshipper, by their evil,
Dies as a guest in their lives,
Because their hearts are deceived by false gods.

And know that he who knows knowledge, by his words
Has decreed in his wisdom
That the reward of bones is silence.
Therefore am I also, for the glory on high
Was and will be my possession.
My heart is afraid, like a woman's heart,
So that I am not brought to temptation.
For which man of lofty purity compares
To Abram, for the wonders he has performed?
His spirit and heart are firmer in faith
Than a rock of stone without weakness.
I too was silent then, for your sakes,
Lest I also become a mockery in this precious place.
For I am not worthy. And why
Should I add sins upon your transgressions?
My deceitful enemies will mock me
My haters will wink in vain.
Say now, Nahor, should a poor son
Venture against the Rock of the dwelling of your generation?
Or will your enemy bow down
Before a dead idol, the work of a craftsman?
Approach me, my sister, and answer me.
If your heart is proud, with the power of your wealth,
Say, when you fall to the well of your grave,

What will you do when you are dressed in velvet?
Do not fall, my brothers, into the trap's net,
When God speaks, living in secret heights,
According to the will of the stubborn and lawless.
For the wicked bend their bow
They make ready their arrow upon the string
That they may shoot at the upright in heart.
God is my Dweller in the heights,
And in heaven he alone rules.
Say, answer me, for who created
Land and its inhabitants, that which was formed?
Say, would He desire, if His great, holy and awesome
Name is hated, to give glorious praise and dominion
To the stars in their dwelling and to Baal?
Oh would that I might acknowledge your words,
Saying that He is high above but cannot be seen,
And that He dwells secretly in heaven.
When mankind shouts and cries out to idols
Until the point of exhaustion,
There is none to speak, none to answer, none to heed.
Therefore it is most fitting for each man
To least choose the evil.
There are no trees that act as the strength of His shield.
There is no exalted fool in His glorious light.

He should choose the Rock of the world that preceded all,
He who establishes them by justice.

For there is little lacking in His sight,
Or else He would make Himself like a slumbering man,
Especially at this time, when all the people
Have seen the wonders of my king
Who acted for Abram from the place of His dwelling.
Therefore, my relatives, quickly proclaim
His name in good faith, and you will see that
At this time you will find Him.
To Nahor alone.

Nahor has made me sorry and depressed
With his stubbornness and great foolishness,
For the law of idols is enough to frighten him.
Perhaps you should ask a sorcerer that he inform me.
Lend me your ear, be silent, and listen to me:
Believe in God and His great glory
Believe in the wonders of His mercy, for He does not
Mock nor detest the suffering of the poor.
In your greed, the apostate misleads you,
So that you do not hear chastisement and reproach.
This is my advice to you, please hear it!
Acknowledge the Lord, God, with all your heart
For He will bless you. And if you are lacking,

It is proper for the righteous to be humble.

To Milcah

Why do you think, Milcah,

That Abram is helped by the cunning of magicians.

If so, how was he changed to a cruel brother

Against his relatives to the point of destruction?

Surely in His righteousness and salvation he is secure,

For He is a living God, not a heathen god.

Abram alone.

May your heart be firied by His name.

How great is the glory of intelligence, and its importance!

Sarai

Therefore, my brothers, take my soul's advice.

May your knowledge ponder my words,

Lest you be as booty that is plundered.

Surely God desires to vindicate your souls,

To show you a miracle. But miracles do not

Happen every day.

Abram leaves the place where he was concealed.

Abram.

How, Nahor, will your foolish spirit hearken?

How can it be driven away from the vanity of idols?

Who is it, please tell me, who has sought them

With all his power, and was satisfied?

For also the wise and understanding heart delights
That the boundary of inherited property is uprooted.
Surely their evil devices will be driven away
Until the fire of truth lights and burns the bush.
Why do you plan to order with folly my righteousness,
To choose the deceitful, rebellious inheritance,
After you saw the acts of the exalted Rock?
Surely your eyes beheld angels walking
In fire, as a refuge of my Helper,
Spreading wings upwards as protection.
To both of them.
Since the Rock of my truth was clearly
Beheld with signs and wonders in revealed glory,
Why does insolence, with the great vanity
Of deceit and dishonesty of your hearts, falsely accuse?
Why do my brothers rebel against the completely perfect Rock,
All of His greatness being glorious and wonderful?
How does your foolish caution deceive itself with
False prophecy, witchcraft, and idols?
Do not trust in repugnant idols that are placed like the dead,
But only declare in the name of the living God.
For His laws of righteousness were made in truth.
Give him your heart, soul, and possessions.
For He is Master of the world. Go out and see

All that He has made and, behold, it is very good.
 And should the truth be covered with garment and deceitful veil,
 Is this not like the work of perforated linen.
 Should you temporarily remove it,
 It will smell like powdered spice, balsam, and labdanum.
 I rejoice that, with all the wealth of my father and Lot,
 Their hearts were changed to my teachings.
 My heart is happy concerning Sarai,
 For she will resolve in her knowledge all false advice.
 To Milcah.
 Please do not teach the principle of the rebellious.
 Leave, my sister, our community.
 How can you hate Him, for the sake of oppressors?
 To Nahor
 Return, return, my beloved Nahor, to peaceful thoughts.
 Return, return, and be, with our God,
 Spreading Himself like a green bay tree.
 Nahor
 Why, against me and my wife, do you
 Shout and implore, like a thoughtless apostate?
 Why, as a philosopher in class, and a heretic,
 Do you think to confuse my understanding?
 Know that the foundation of my knowledge is in the secret of my religion
 I will continually persist and, like a fool, I will believe.
 I will turn neither left nor right,
 For I will not be false in my faith.

Scriptural References

The numbers on the right refer to pages in the translation.

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Ecclesiastes

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7:14-115.

Esther

1:6-62.

7:5-55.

Ezra

9:6-64.

Notes to Chapter I

1. Yesod Olam ed. D. J. Maroni, Livorno, 1874.
2. Dates for Zacuto's birth are approximate and fall between 1620 and 1625. See I. Melkman, "Moses Zacuto" Sefunoth IX (1964), 127-132.
3. Israel Zinberg, A History of Jewish Literature, Vol. IV: Italian Jewry in the Renaissance Era (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1974), p. 178.
4. Zacuto wrote an elegy on Morteira's death. See Jozeph Michman, "Zacuto, Moses ben Mordecai," Encyclopedia Judaica (1972), XVI, p. 907 [Henceforth cited as Michman, "Zacuto"].
5. Jozeph Michman, "Amsterdam," Encyclopedia Judaica (1972), II, p. 896. [Henceforth cited as Michman, "Amsterdam"]. See also J. S. Da Silva Rosa, Geschiedenis der Portugeesche Joden te Amsterdam 1593-1625, (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1925) pp. 12f.
6. Michman, "Amsterdam" p. 896.
7. Ibid.
8. Zacuto refers to the Kabbalah as "the secret wisdom". See Mordecai S. Ghironi, Toledot Gedolei Yisrael (Trieste, 1853), p. 225.
9. I. Melkman "Moses Zacuto" Sefunoth IX (1964), p. 130.
10. Cecil Roth, Venice (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1930), p. 100.
11. Melkman, Sefunoth IX (1964), p. 130.
12. Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), p. 449.
13. Zacuto led the Venice community in supporting Shabbatai Zevi. Cecil Roth, The History of the Jews of Italy (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), p. 404.
14. Zacuto opposed innovations such as the abolition of "midnight prayers". See Scholem, p. 449.
15. Zacuto took a positive stand in favor of the movement in 1666. Ibid.

16. Ibid.
17. Although the Venetian rabbis imposed excommunication upon anyone speaking with or giving hospitality to Nathan of Gaza in 1668, Zacuto and Samuel Aboab persuaded Nathan to leave the city peacefully. Roth, Venice, p. 102.
18. The Sabbateans criticized Zacuto on several occasions. Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 768.
19. Zacuto was invited to serve as rabbi in Mantua in 1671 but did not go until two years later. Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 450.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Cecil Roth, A History of the Marranos (Second Edition, "Schocken Books"; New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, Inc., 1974) p. 236. (First Edition: Ed. Herman P. Saloman, 1932).
23. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 895.
24. Roth, p. 236.
25. In 1526, new arrivals were allowed to stay in Antwerp for a maximum period of thirty days. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 237.
29. Ibid.
30. Diogo Mendes, manager of the Antwerp branch of the bank founded by his family, was one of these early colonists. P. Grunebaum-Ballin, Joseph Naci duc de Naxos, (Paris: Etudes and Mouton, 1968), pp. 27f.
31. Roth, p. 237.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 238.
34. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 895.

35. Roth, p. 238.
36. Ibid., p. 239.
37. Paul Zumthor, Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963) pp. 92f.
38. Ibid., p. 93.
39. Roth, p. 243.
40. Ibid.
41. Michman, "Amsterdam", pp. 895-896.
42. Ibid., p. 896.
43. Ibid.
44. The resources of the ex-Marranos were not great enough to give weight to Amsterdam capitalism in its formative years. See Violet Barbour, Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 25.
45. The wealth of the ex-Marranos advanced when the conquest of Brazil by the Dutch West India Company had opened a new field of exploration. Ibid., p. 25.
46. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 895.
47. Roth, p. 244.
48. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 897.
49. By the end of the seventeenth century, Amsterdam Jewry became a nerve-center of similar Jewish trading communities in Europe. Barbour, p. 25.
50. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 898.
51. Roth, A., p. 244.
52. Ibid.
53. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 898.
54. Ibid.
55. Roth, p. 249.
56. Ibid.

57. Carl Gebhardt, Die Schriften des Uriel Da Costa (London: Oxford University Press, 1922) Introduction p. XIX.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Uriel Acosta is the obvious example of the Marranos' difficulty in adjusting to their new home. Ibid.
61. The elected Wardens of Amsterdam held autocratic powers. Roth, p. 247.
62. Zumthor, p. 93.
63. Roth, p. 249.
64. Scholem states that the eschatological mood prevalent among ex-Spanish Jews was combined with the Kabbalah to create a movement that the masses could understand. Scholem, pp. 67-68.
65. Roth, p. 249.
66. Ibid.
67. Acosta's heresy was based on this difficulty.
68. A majority of the community became followers of the pseudo-Messiah. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 897.
69. Roth states that the forced assimilation of many Jews to the general population afforded opportunities for an immediate advancement that was perhaps unequaled in Jewish history. Roth, p. 296.
70. Michman, "Amsterdam", pp. 896-897.
71. Menasseh ben Israel established the first local Hebrew press in 1627, setting a tradition that made Amsterdam the center of the Jewish book-trade. Cecil Roth, A Life of Menasseh ben Israel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1934, pp. 73-83.
72. Zinberg, Vol. V, p. 118.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.

76. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 328.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., p. 396.
80. Among Zacufo's contemporaries in this field of writing were Antonio Enriquez Gómez and Reuel Jesurun. Zinberg, vol. V, p.118.

Notes to Chapter II

1. Zinberg, vol. IV, p. 178.
2. Ibid.
3. Supra, p. 9.
4. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 322.
5. Michman, "Amsterdam", p. 896.
6. Genesis Rabbah (ed. I. Epstein, Warsaw: 1924), 38:18.
7. Zinberg, vol. IV, p. 178.
8. The Christian doctrine of original sin is based upon the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Since their descendents became contaminated by their act, according to Christian dogma, man became sinful by nature. Martin Werner, The Formation of Christian Dogma (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957) pp. 171-172. As opposed to this doctrine, the basic outlook of Judaism is that there is no inherited sin. See Ezekiel 18:3-17.
9. This was the basic doctrine of the Marranos. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 170.
10. Michman, "Zacuto", p. 909.
11. Because of the Marranos' difficult adjustment to their relative freedom in Amsterdam, unity among all stands of Jewry was not realized for some time. Amsterdam was marked by tensions between authoritarian orthodoxy and critical, libertarian intellectuals in its early period of Jewish settlement. Zumthor, pp. 92-93.
12. Supra, p. 12.
13. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 194.
14. Parents often waited until their children reached adolescence to initiate them in their ancestral faith. Adolescence was the most opportune period for this education, since childish prattle at a younger age, and deeply instilled Catholicism at an older age, might lead to disclosure to the authorities. Ibid., p. 173.
15. Ibid., p. 106.
16. Ibid., p. 124.
17. Ibid., p. 328.

18. The ceremony was private for lighter cases, public for heavier offenses. Henry Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition ("Plume Books"; New York: New American Library, 1971, 1971), p. 183.
19. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 170.
20. The decree of expulsion from all Spanish dominions was declared on March 20, 1492. By July 31, all Jews had departed. Ibid., p. 53.
21. J. Melkman, "The Play Yesod Olam by Moses Zacuto", Sefunoth X (1966), pp. 311-314.
22. Supra, p. 2. Zacuto refers to his teacher Elhanan, who was perhaps Elhanan the "Kabbalist", according to Scholem, p. 449.
23. Acosta is said to have committed suicide in 1640.
24. Zinberg, vol. V, p. 119.
25. Supra, p. 9.
26. Roth, A History of the Marranos, pp. 172-173.
27. Scholem, p. 68.
28. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

Notes to Chapter III

1. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 199.
2. Roth states that "the Marranos may be considered the originators of vernacular literature among the Jews." Their conversion to Christianity led to generations of Marrano descendents who were entirely ignorant of Hebrew. Ibid., pp. 322-323.
3. Hebrew was the preferred tongue for literary compositions among those with formal Jewish educations. Since Zacuto was initially educated in Amsterdam's Jewish academy, he had the opportunity to learn Hebrew from the beginning of his education. Supra, p. 2.
4. Supra, p. 14.
5. Infra, p. 58.
6. Infra, p. 99.
7. Supra, pp. 7-8.
8. Infra, p. 105.
9. This may allude to the restrictive religion practiced by the Sephardim in exile.
10. Infra, p. 58.
- 10A. Infra, p. 127.
11. Supra, p. 7.
12. The similarity between Zacuto's statements on the "fixed law" and Acosta's emphasis on biblical Judaism is surprising, especially since Yesod Olam may have been written, in part, to refute Acosta's views. This conflict reflects the religious doubts that the Marranos would be susceptible to. Zacuto does not, in Yesod Olam, resolve this conflict.
13. Infra, p. 132.
14. Infra, p. 58.
- 14A. Infra, p. 108.
15. Infra, p. 57.
16. Ibid.

17. Zacuto later speaks of man's features as similar to God. Here, again, is an unresolved conflict. It indicates, however, Catholicism's influence on the Marrano attempts to envision God.
18. Infra, p. 75.
19. Infra, p. 76.
20. Infra, p. 105.
21. Zacuto's concepts of God seem to be derived from Moses Maimonides. See Isaac Husik, A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy (New York: Athenum, 1969), pp. 264-265.
22. Infra, p. 57.
23. Infra, p. 58.
24. There is here again an illustration of the similarity between the salvation system of the Marranos and that of Christianity. Both presuppose faith in God's saving power.
25. Roth attacks that doctrine as "alien to the traditional Jewish spirit". Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 170.
26. Ibid.
27. Infra, p. 61.
28. Infra, p. 67.
29. Infra, p. 69.
30. Zacuto's allusion reflects the Marrano belief that their suffering had a purpose in the Messianic plan. Supra, p. 8.
31. Genesis 1:27.
32. Infra, p. 74.
33. The heresy of the Marranos, in the Christian view, would preclude their salvation from the Holy office.
34. Infra, p. 85.
35. A concept stressed in Job and Psalms, both of which Zacuto relies on heavily in his writing.

36. Infra, pp. 105-106.
37. Infra, p. 103.
38. Because of this Messianic concern, it is not surprising that several individuals, pretending to be the Messiah, found immediate acceptance among the Marranos. Roth, A History of the Marranos, pp. 146-167.
39. Zacuto's rationale for repentance as a guard against revision to Catholicism relates to Maimonides' sense of repentance as a bulwark against evil. See Husik, p. 297.
40. Infra, pp. 86-87.
41. Infra, p. 102.
42. Gebhardt, Introduction XXI.
43. Scholem, p. 245.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Infra, p. 85.
49. Scholem, p. 245.
50. Ibid., p. 373.
51. Infra, p. 84.
52. Infra, p. 85.
53. Scholem states that following the expulsion from Spain, many Kabbalists "sought to extend its influence throughout the general community". Scholem, p. 68. Zacuto's mystical images would indicate a former training in Kabbalah.
54. Infra, p. 1112.
55. This concept may be derived from Maimonides' idea that intellectual perfection is the greatest good of man. See Husik, p. 297.
56. Infra, p. 87.

57. Martin A. Cohen, Introduction to Samuel Usque's Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965), p. 4.
58. Infra, p. 109.
59. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 173.
60. Scholem, pp. 333-334.
61. Infra, p. 58.
62. Scholem, p. 336.
63. Ibid., pp. 333-334.
64. Infra, p. 76.
65. Supra, p. 21.
66. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 194.
67. Infra, p. 56.
68. Infra, p. 57.
69. Supra, p. 21.
70. Infra, p. 129.
71. Cohen, p. 4.
72. Infra, p. 61.
73. Supra, p. 29.
74. Infra, p. 57.
75. Infra, p. 80.
76. Supra, p. 29.
77. Infra, pp. 111-112.
78. Initial Christian rule under Alfonso VI of Castile (1065-1109) was marked by tolerance towards Jews. The gradual conquest of the Moorish lands, however, diminished the necessity of conciliating the minority. Roth, A History of the Marranos, pp. 11-12.
79. Infra, p. 93.

80. Infra, p. 95.
81. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 181.
82. Infra, p. 115.
83. Infra, p. 62.
84. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 178.
85. Ibid.
86. Infra, p. 116.
87. Leviticus 7:26.
88. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 193.
89. Supra, p. 25.
90. Infra, p. 63.
91. Infra, p. 70.
92. Infra, p. 101.
93. Scholem, p. 33⁴.
94. Supra, p. 30.
95. Infra, p. 110.
96. Supra, p. 26.
97. Infra, p. 71.
98. The Spanish Inquisition operated under this notion.
Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 106.
99. Infra, p. 72.
100. Maimonides posits this belief. See Husik, p. 266.
101. Infra, p. 68.
102. Infra, p. 67.
103. Infra, p. 113.
104. Supra, note 14 of chapter II.

105. Certainly the Old Christians who opposed the Inquisition's cruelties and gave sympathetic attention to Jewish beliefs and practices may not have received parental endorsement for this attitude. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 173.
106. Zinburg, vol. IV, p. 179.
107. Infra, p. 77.
108. Supra, p. 29.
109. Cohen, p. 4.
110. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 52.
111. Infra, p. 65.
112. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 52.
113. Ibid., p. 173.
114. Supra, p. 29.
115. Infra, p. 86.
116. Infra, p. 118.
117. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 52.
118. Supra, p. 38.
119. Infra, p. 92.
120. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 31.
121. Kamen, pp. 46-47.
122. Infra, p. 82.
123. Roth, The Spanish Inquisition, pp. 40-41.
124. Infra, p. 64.
125. Roth, The Spanish Inquisition, p. 131.
126. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 102.
127. The arrest of the accused was the next step in the Inquisition's procedure. Ibid.
128. Ibid., pp. 104-105.

129. Ibid., p. 124.
130. Ibid.
131. Infra, p. 77.
132. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 124.
133. Roth, The Spanish Inquisition, pp. 108-109.
134. Ibid., pp. 109-110.
135. Infra, p. 102.
136. Roth, The Spanish Inquisition, p. 90.
137. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 127.
138. Infra, p. 63.
139. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 173.
140. Infra, p. 55.
141. Infra, p. 60.
142. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 75.
143. Infra, p. 67.
144. Infra, p. 125.
145. Infra, p. 81.
146. Infra, p. 108.
147. Infra, p. 127.
148. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 175.
149. Infra, p. 125.
150. Infra, p. 126.
151. Milkah's belief that Abram was aided by devils shows a striking resemblance to the story of Diogo Lopes. Lopes proclaimed himself a Jew from the moment of his arrest until his death at the stake at Coimbra in 1580. There, the story relates, the chains which bound him fell into the flames and Lopes' body disappeared. The Catholic explanation was that devils had eagerly carried his soul off to hell before it could be separated from his flesh. It is possible that Zacuto was inspired by this story to write Yesod Olam. See Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 149.
152. Genesis 19:26.

153. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 29.
154. Infra, p. 110.
155. Supra, p. 32.
156. Cohen, p. 4.
157. Ibid.
158. Infra, pp. 88-89.
159. Supra, p. 39.
160. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 173.
161. Infra, p. 67.
162. Supra, p. 26.
163. Infra, pp. 120-121.
164. Roth, The Spanish Inquisition, pp. 43-44.
165. Ibid., p. 75.
166. Supra, p. 41.
167. Supra, p. 41.
168. Supra, p. 42.
169. Roth, The Spanish Inquisition, pp. 90-91.
170. Infra, p. 133.
171. Roth, A History of the Marranos, p. 52.
172. Scholem, p. 97.
173. Ibid., pp. 245-246.
174. Ibid., p. 369.
175. Infra, p. 85.
176. Scholem, pp. 129-130.
177. Supra, p. 26.
178. Supra, p. 27.

179. Scholem, p. 245.
180. Supra, p. 28.
181. Roth, A History of the Marranos, pp. 296-297.
182. Ibid., p. 297.
183. Supra, p. 29.
184. Infra, p. 133.

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