

ISAAC ABRAVANEL AS AN EXEGETE: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HIS
COMMENTARY ON JONAH

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Submitted by--

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Don Isaac Abravanel appears as the last worthy representative of the Golden Age. In him were focussed the various tendencies of his people. In him were reflected the last rays of the Spanish-Jewish culture. "He was a fitting close to the long list of Jewish scholars and statesmen in Spain, of the whole Spanish-Jewish period."

Don Isaac ben Jehudah ben Samuel ben Judah ben Joseph ben Judah Abravanel was the famous son of an aristocratic family in Spain. Although Greeks readily acknowledge the kingly Jewish blood flowing in the Abravanel veins, Isaac himself is able to name only four or five of his ancestors. However there can be no doubt that the family

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A. Isaac Abravanel : His Life and Works

The sun of Jewish culture in Spain rose for more than ⁵⁰⁰ fifteen hundred years, flaming to a golden brilliance by the time of the nuptials of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. Then the darkening cloud drifts appeared, and by 1492 the last chinks of light were relentlessly obscured; it was a time of terror and great confusion, unparalleled in its horror even to the far-seeing eyes of the historian. Isaac Abravanel himself says:

וְהָיָה חֲרֹדָה גְּדוּלָּה נֶרָה כְּמַבְכִּירָה, אֲשֶׁר כְּמוֹהָ לֹא נִהְיָתָה
מִיּוֹם גְּלוּת יְהוּדָה עַל אֲדָמָתוֹ עַל אֲדָמָת נֹכַח

In the shifting, fleeting kaleidoscope of the time, one name remains fixed where others tumble and vanish. Don Isaac Abravanel appears as the last worthy representative of the Golden Age. In him were focussed the various tendencies of his people. In him were reflected the last rays of the Spanish-Jewish culture. "He was a fitting close to the long list of Jewish scholars and statesmen in Spain, of the whole Spanish-Jewish period."²

Don Isaac ben Jehudah ben Samuel ben Judah ben Joseph ben Judah Abravanel was the famous scion of an aristocratic family in Spain. חֲטָר סַגְוֹעַ יוֹשִׁי וְנֶעַר סַשְׂרֵשׁ סַשְׂפָּחוֹת לֵילִית. ³ ^{הַבֵּית הַרְשֵׁשׁ} Although Graetz readily acknowledges

the kingly Jewish blood flowing in the "Abravanel veins,"⁴ Isaac himself is able to name only four or five of his ⁵ ancestors. However there can be no doubt that the family

so Greenberg
"durch ein halbes
Jahrtausend
leuchtete die
Sonne" etc.

Abravanel, usually
recognized that
all was well -
unchallenged
he himself clearly did
not "acknowledge"
so acknowledge

Abravanel, Abrabanel, Abarbanel, or Abarbaniel⁶ was one of the most renowned and best known families in the province of Castile and the city of Seville, particularly in the time of the king Alfonso XI (1325-1380) and Don Pedro IV⁷ (1350-1369) his son.

In consequence of the horror of the year 1391 Samuel Abravanel journeyed⁸ to Portugal and took up his residence in Lisbon. There Don Isaac was born in 1437; his five hundredth anniversary will therefore be celebrated in three years.

Of his boyhood, his training, his education and his teachers we have no special information. From his works and the positions he attained we can however assume that he had a careful Jewish as well as secular training which were customary among the aristocratic Spaniards of his time as he himself says in the preface to 'Mayene Ha-Yeshuah'. Isaac Abravanel immersed himself in the Biblical and Talmudic literature, and at the same time devoted himself assiduously to the works of Greek and Arabic thinkers and poets.⁸ He had a clear mind, sharp discernment and critical sense, a remarkable memory, a brilliant intellect together with fine traits of character, a sensitive soul, and modesty. He was well equipped to be a leader of his contemporaries. He was a prolific scholar who enriched Jewish literature in many fields, especially in that of Biblical exegesis.

For exegetical work, as Kayserling remarks,⁹ Abravanel was especially fitted. To this day his works are studied by Jewish and Christian scholars, despite

Isa. 12:3
היהוה נאמן

their discouraging voluminousness. Seldom has a work of the Middle Ages found such acceptance, especially among gentiles. He was particularly distinguished by his vast worldly knowledge which was not possessed by other Jewish scholars.¹⁰ In his youth even he occupied himself with things Jewish. Learning and speculating, he early conceived of his plan for a comprehensive commentary to the Bible and he composed two writings, one on religious dogmatism and one on exegesis. The one was 'Zurot Ha-Yesodot' (printed in Sabioneta 1557), a philosophical dissertation; the other, 'Ateret Zekenim' (Amsterdam 1739), a philosophical exegetical essay.¹¹ The latter work was a treatise of twenty five chapters in explanation of the verse 'Behold, I send an angel before thee' (Ex. 23:20).^a In the introduction to this work he belabored himself because the press of his secular work did not permit him enough time to speculate sufficiently, and he says, 'Even today I have been torn away from my speculation, and had to roam about in the land, sometimes in the streets, sometimes in the highways, current with the merchants.'

After this he began to write his commentary to Deuteronomy, and sent the manuscript to the great scholars of his generation to see what their opinion of it might be. So he says in his introduction to the work. "In my twentieth year, in the days of my youth, while dwelling in my native land in Lisbon, the capitol of Portugal, contiguous with Spain, I was impelled to ask a great question concerning the book of Deuteronomy, the recapitulation of the Law which

(a) In substance he reproduces it in his long comment on this verse where he refers to having written that - created a very exacting. He spiritically states he needs no excessive faith because more critically putting the same words as originally put.

Moses placed before the Israelites, and I placed the work before all those who were expert in law and religion, and also the scholars of ^{of the land who sat in judgment} ~~Midian~~, and those who travel the good paths, the heads of yeshivot; and they answered me."

X
by 1770
Judge 5:40
Rashbi's interpretation
of the cliff. 1770

Abravanel might have continued his production of literature without interruption had his skill with figures not equalled his skill with letters. However his large business interests, his unusual talents and knowledge in the fields of politics and finance became well-known. Soon his reputation reached the court, and King Alfonso V of Portugal, despite the influence of the Inquisition, summoned this wise and talented Jew to his court, entrusted him with its finance, and sought his counsel in important political questions. The position and influence of this Jewish statesman who won the complete confidence of the courtiers and of the Spanish nobility had its effect on the position of the Jews of that country. Isaac Abravanel was as a "shield and a buckler for his race, and delivered the sufferers from their oppressors, healed differences, and kept fierce lions at bay," recounts his son Judah Leon in his poem to his father.¹² The period when the Jews clothed the highest offices under the rule of the Moors seemed to have returned. A happy sun once again smiled on the Jews. But statesmanship hindered Isaac's literary activity, and his service to Israel was now of a political nature. He was a father to the orphans and a comforter to the grief stricken. But especially did he have sympathy with his unfortunate brethren who suffered at the hands of their inquisitors. An

eloquent proof of his unending love for his co-religionists and his sympathy for them in dark hours, his sacrificial cooperation in their difficult tasks is a letter which has come down to us from Abravanel to Rabbi Yechiel of Pisa shortly after Alfonso V had taken the African city of Arzilla. Among the many thousand captive Moors were two hundred and fifty Jews who were to be sold as slaves. Following the rabbinical injunction to ransom the slaves, Abravanel summoned from the community twelve elders to act as a committee to release the captives. he himself together with a colleague traveled over the whole country to raise the ransom price, 20,000 pieces of gold. It is recorded that Isaac himself was the greatest donor.

The even tenor of his life was disturbed when the redeemer became the hunted. A new king arose who knew not Isaac. His patron, Alfonso V, died and was succeeded by Don Jo^ho II (1481-1495), an unscrupulous, scheming and altogether untrustworthy monarch. He set a trap for the dearly beloved Duke Ferdinand of Braganza and treacherously slew him for his popularity which overshadowed the king's own. Since Abravanel was on very friendly terms with the Duke, the king chose to suspect him of implication in conspiracies, and Abravanel's enemies strengthened his suspicion. More, the king was¹³ greedy of the property of the guileless Jew. In the third year of the king's reign he sent for Abravanel, who happened to be spending the night at an inn when he received the message. He planned to set out immediately for the palace, but a messenger came to him secretly and

said, "Do not approach here, for it is an evil time. Flee for your life, for the king has slain many, even though his work will not succeed." When Abravanel heard these cautions, he left at midnight and traveled without resting for two nights until he reached the boundary of Castile. In the morning runners and horsemen tried to find him, at the command of the king, but they could not. When the king saw that he could not prevail, he confiscated all his property, his real estate and his movables together with his currency. In vain did Isaac plead for his property from his point of vantage. The king even seized the goods of his son Judah Leon, who was a physician. He did, however, permit his gracious wife and the three sons, Judah Leon, Isaac and Samuel to leave for Castile.¹⁴

In Toledo his co-religionists received Isaac with open arms. His description of this episode is touching. The pious Jewish sufferer speaks out in every line. He complains of the loss of his property, but more of his library:

וְכָל סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה וְכָל סֵפֶר הַשְׁמִינִי
וְכָל סֵפֶר הַמִּשְׁנָה וְכָל סֵפֶר הַגְּמָרָה

Abravanel found in Castile admirers and friends who gathered about him and listened delightedly to his lectures on the Bible. He formed a close friendship with the rabbi, Isaac Abcab and with the chief tithe-collector, Abraham Senior. Senior, it seems, recognized his fiscal genius, and penniless though he was, Don Isaac was given a partnership in the highly lucrative business of tax collection. However, Abravanel resolved not to repeat his former mistake and neglect the Torah, for to this negligence on his part did he attribute the misfortunes that had descended upon him. His friends

even as the Jewish king declined to support the Babylonian urged him to compose a commentary to the Major Prophets. Fortunately, he yielded to their requests and in a short space of time he composed the commentaries to Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. He himself relates in the introduction to his commentary on Kings that his work on Joshua was written between the tenth of Marheshvan until the twenty-sixth; the commentary on Judges was composed from the first of Kislev until the twenty-sixth; the commentary on Samuel from the first of Tebet until the thirteenth of Adar. When he was about to begin the commentary to the fourth book of the prophets, he was called to the inner court of the king and queen, Ferdinand and Isabella. They asked him to assume the treasury and act as minister of finance. Abravanel states, "I busied myself in their service for eight years (March 1484-March 1492). For myself I acquired both wealth and honor through which a man lives, in their palaces and castles. As a result, my study of the Torah slackened and my work diminished."¹⁵

Abravanel must have indeed been a financial genius, and the reluctance he felt toward assuming the office must certainly have been overshadowed by that of the king and queen. As Graetz observes, "He must have been indispensable, seeing that the Catholic sovereigns, under the very eyes of the malignant Torquemada, and in spite of canonical decrees and all the resolutions repeatedly laid down by the cortes forbidding Jews to hold office in the government, were compelled to trust this Jewish minister of finance with the mainspring of political life."¹⁶

Then came the catastrophe of 1492. Abravanel might have remained under the protection of the royal pair, but

even as once Jeremiah declined to support the Babylonian general Nebuzaradan, preferring the misery of his brethren --so Abravanel declined to remain safely in Spain as the finance minister to King Ferdinand as the only Jew in the land. He desired to share the lot of his brethren and he left the country with them. With his family and some friends he reached Italy and settled in Naples שנת ג'ר"ם דה"ה . There he completed his commentary to Kings.

וידברת' אל לב' אשר נדרת' אשלה לפרש מלכ'ם אשר
לא עשית' עד כה.

Abravanel's best biographer, a friend of his son Judah, Rabbi Baruch Uziel Hizkitu, whose account of Don Isaac's life is found in the preface to Mayene Ha-Yeshuah, succinctly summarizes the next phase of Isaac's life. "When the king (Ferdinand I of Naples) heard of his coming, he sent for him and received him graciously, and appointed him counsellor, and Isaac lived comfortably and peacefully during the lifetime of Ferdinand. In the second year of the expulsion King Ferdinand died, and his son Alfonso II reigned in his stead. He also loved Isaac, and Isaac retained his office until Carlo VIII, King of France, arose and conquered the kingdom of Naples. And then the King Alfonso fled to Sicily and Don Isaac went down with him, and he alone was left with the king as father and counsellor all his life until Alfonso died in June 1495."

On the death of King Alfonso, Isaac, for safety repaired to the island of Corfu where many of the exiles had gone. There, in dire need, his books destroyed, his family separated, he began his commentary to Isaiah. He

interrupted his work when he rediscovered his commentary to Deuteronomy which had been lost in his flight from Portugal. Don Isaac remained in Corfu only until the French had evacuated the Neapolitan territory; then he settled in Monopoli (Apulia), and lived there in seclusion for eight years, finishing his commentary to Deuteronomy. There also he wrote other works, his *דפן דור*, a commentary to *דפן של הגדה*; *נחלת אבות*, a commentary to Pirke Abot; *מעניי היסודות*, a commentary to Daniel; *שם'ם חדשים*, a commentary to the account of creation in the More Nebuchim (II:19); *משע'י ישי'טה* and *ישי'טות מע'י'ח*, on messianic passages in Scriptures, Talmud and Midrash; *ראש'ם אמת*, on dogmas of Judaism, especially creation; and *מפע'לות אלה'ים*, on creation. In 1498 he completed there his commentary to Isaiah.

In 1603 Don Isaac journeyed with his second son, Don Joseph, from Monopoli, and they both went to Venice.¹⁷ At Venice he had the opportunity of settling a dispute between the court of Lisbon and the Venetian Republic concerning the East-Indian colonies established by the Portuguese, especially concerning the trade in spices. The counsellors of Venice recognized and valued his wisdom to such an extent that they insisted he remain in Venice. Abravanel could once more live in peace and continue his work. There he began to write his commentary on Jeremiah, and he completed it in the autumn of the next year. We can assume that afterwards he wrote his commentary to Ezekiel and the minor prophets, even though he does not specifically mention

the place or the time of their composition; this inference is based on the probability that he followed the Biblical order. In the same way we must infer the dates of Genesis, Leviticus and Numbers commentaries, because the time and the place of their composition are not given.¹⁸ However, at the close of the commentary on Exodus we have a definite date, completed in Venice, summer 1506.

In the same year, Saul Cohen Ashkenazi of Crete sent him twelve questions of philosophic import, which Abravanel answered from Venice in 1507.¹⁹ In the course of this responsum regarding his books which he had written, he mentions that he had already completed the commentary to Leviticus, although this was still in manuscript, as indeed were all his works except the three works published: Rosh Amanah, Zebah Pesah, and Nahalat Abot (Constantinople 1505-6). The responsum also mentions Zedek Olamim which he had begun to write in Naples, and which was destroyed when the French ransacked his home. This book was concerned with reward and punishment.²⁰ Another work which was lost when he left Spain was Mahaze Shaddai, in refutation of Maimonides' views on prophecy. These two books he began to rewrite, but because of his labors on the Pentateuch commentaries, he never finished the task. Don Isaac also wrote other works unmentioned in his responsum to Saul Cohen, particularly his commentary to Moreh Nebukhim. Altogether he wrote eleven Biblical commentaries; fourteen other works, of which three are lost; and he planned to write at least two more before death intervened.

In 1509 at the age of seventy-one he died, deeply mourned by all who knew him. The earthly remains of the sorely tried wanderer and pious sufferer were taken to Padua, escorted by the most distinguished citizens of Venice; there he was buried in the old cemetery outside the city. But the tragedy of his fate did not cease with the grave. A few weeks later his resting spot was overturned by a war about Padua, so that no one knows the place of his burial to this day.

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B. Style and Method of Abravanel's Exegesis

Isaac Abravanel's chief significance lies in the field of Biblical exegesis. His exegetical approach colored all his writings to such an extent that Guttman is moved to say that the "literary activity of Abravanel has in the main the character of a commentary, his chief work being the commentary to the Pentateuch and Prophets." ²¹ On the other hand, his interest in philosophy not only induced him to write voluminously in this field, but even his commentaries to the Holy Scriptures contain analyses of the chief representatives of Jewish rationalism, especially of the Spanish school. But his forte is not in this field. In fact Graetz goes to the extent of deprecating Abravanel's philosophical aptitude altogether, and describes his activity in dialectic ²² research as a presumption, considering his meager talents. ²³ Guttman has however justly rejected this judgment as faulty.

There can be no doubt that his exegesis was Abravanel's principle work in the field of Jewish scholarship.

Although Rosenau does not consider Abravanel important in this field either, and dismisses him with casual mention,²⁴ Gruenberg maintains that his exegesis constitutes a landmark²⁵ in the history of Biblical research.

One flaw is common to all his commentaries--a flaw patent even to the casual observer--a tiring prolixity and lengthiness. Someone has said of him, "Abravanel, with whom every word becomes a period, and every period an essay." [Taorjati] It seems that Abravanel was well aware of this characteristic of his, and as if to remove and anticipate censure he writes in his introduction to the Major Prophets, "It is impossible to escape from the lengthiness of this commentary, because of the great amount of investigation and homily, and because of the lucid explanations of the deep matters--where it is necessary to speak at length I am not permitted to shorten."

This method of detailed writing has resulted in massiveness of structure, so that his works become formidable tomes frightening away readers. This accounts for the fact that his works never achieved their deserved popularity, both among the lay readers and the scholars. He is one of the few great writers who has not been adequately treated by the newer Jewish scholarship. He however who can summon up sufficient courage to pursue him at some length, marvels at his prodigious mastery of all the materials of Jewish and non-Jewish exegetes of his day. Nor does he avoid the classics of Jewish exegesis like Saadia, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimhi, Ibn Kaspi, Farissol, Moses ben Nahman, Levi ben Gerson, the exegetes of the French school, the classics of Christian exegesis; indeed he even quotes the views of

*why should he
have done so
far earlier*

Jewish renegades and analyzes them--Jerome and Augustine, Nicholas de Lyra and Paulus de Santa Maria, and Abner de Burgos. A complete list of the sources he uses for his Biblical commentaries alone would fill a number of pages.

Commendable is Abravanel's method of quoting all possible views that have been expressed when commenting on difficult portions, of pointing out the difficulty involved, and then expressing his own views. His striving for independence is everywhere obvious. Yet he confesses at times that he has not yet succeeded in giving a satisfactory interpretation of certain passages.²⁶

As a rule, however, he is able to explain the text fully and completely to his own satisfaction. Thus, in Jonah, for instance, there is no problem that he is unable to solve. Most of the interpretations of others, particularly those of the religious philosophers he finds inadequate and he seeks his own solution. He frankly tells us that it was the inadequacy of previous commentators, especially Rashi and Ibn Ezra, which induced him to write his comprehensive commentary. This was to be from every point of view exhaustive. Rashi, who was otherwise held in great esteem by him and frequently cited, he represents as being content with the interpretations of the Talmud sages--and sensitive Ibn Ezra as being content with the grammatical-philological explanations and superficial interpretations of the prophets--while the other exegetes too often swayed²⁷ between the simple and the homiletical significations.

He intended his commentary to be as complete as possible, and courageously and diligently he discusses man-

fold problems and attempts to illuminate them from every possible angle. He was disturbed by the self-sufficiency of many egegetes who paid little or no attention to the doubts of others; he was therefore concerned to rid himself of this failing.

Whoever takes in hand a commentary of Abrevanel's recognizes his style when he deals with a book of the Bible. This he always divides according to his own particular measurements. In the prophetical books particularly he does not follow the customary chapter divisions but arranges the books according to his own whim in definite portions.

... and " , etc. His introductions, contents, questions, etc. are similarly arranged. For example he divides Isaiah into thirty-six sections; Jeremiah into seventeen, and Ezekiel into twenty. Each such section he then analyzes with all its difficulties and problems.

First, however, he presents a number of incisive questions.

These probing anticipatory questions are very keen, and present to the wondering reader a sense of amazement that that the difficulties can ever be satisfactorily reconciled.

But this he almost always succeeds in doing. In Deuteronomy

Abravanel makes most frequent use of the expression הנה

הראשון, הספק השני, וכו' but in the other books of the Torah

and in the prophetical works, the phrase is השאלה הראשונה

השאלה השניה, etc. Thereby the reader is made aware

of the difficulties and problems involved in the text and

is provoked to original solutions. Let us examine, as an

example, his commentary to Jonah. He first divides the

book into two halves:

THE FIRST PROPHECY begins with NOW THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH, SON OF AMITTAI, etc (1:1) and extends to AND THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH A SECOND TIME (3:1). It has two sections; first--NOW THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO JONAH THE SON OF AMITTAI; second--AND THE LORD SPOKE TO THE FISH (2:11). Regarding it I have seen fit to raise these six questions....

THE SECOND PROPHECY begins with AND THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH A SECOND TIME (3:1) to the end of the book. It consists of two sections; the first AND THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH A SECOND TIME; and the second, AND THE LORD SAID 'DOST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY?' (4:4). I have put six questions in regard to it....

Thereupon Abravanel poses the questions. For instances:

THE FIRST QUESTION [of the ^{first} prophecy] is concerned with what God said to Jonah: ARISE GO TO NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY, AND PROCLAIM AGAINST IT; FOR THEIR WICKEDNESS IS COME UP BEFORE ME (1:2). Now why was God concerned with Nineveh --for their sins were numerous--so that He looked out for it, and sent His servants, the prophets, to reprove and direct it. Of course it has been told from the beginning that the special and exalted thing that God does for His people and His possession Israel, is that He looks out for them--individually and collectively--with a wonderful, supernatural supervision, as it is said: "The Lord alone did lead him" [Dt 32:12], "For the portion of the Lord is His people, Jacob the lot of His inheritance" [Dt 32:9]. But the other nations are under the rule of His ministers [i.e. the heavenly bodies] "which the Lord thy God hath allotted unto all the peoples" [Dt 4:19]. For the reason of reproof there were among the people of Israel prophets, the instruments and the emissaries of God, to reprove and direct them. "He has not done this for any other nation" [Is 47:20]. Now why did God see fit to dispatch Jonah to Nineveh, the city of the Chaldeans? Why did he not do so to Egypt, to Babylon, and the other great districts where the inhabitants are wicked and great sinners in the eyes of the Lord?

or:

THE FOURTH QUESTION has to do with what the mariners said to Jonah: TELL US, WE PRAY THEE, FOR WHOSE CAUSE THIS EVIL IS UPON US: WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION? (1:18) Now this statement is difficult to comprehend for several reasons. First, because the lot had already fallen to Jonah, and they

knew that this great tempest was on his account--and why, then, did they trouble to ask: FOR WHOSE CAUSE IS THIS EVIL UPON US? Second, why did they ask: WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION? WHENCE COMEST THOU? WHAT IS THY COUNTRY? AND OF WHAT PEOPLE ART THOU (11:8) For what do these words have to do with the storm? Moreover, WHENCE COMEST THOU? is the same as WHAT IS THY COUNTRY? ^{third} Third, Jonah's answer was not directed to the questions, for he answered them, I AM A HEBREW, AND I FEAR THE LORD, THE GOD OF HEAVEN? (1:9). Now this response does not satisfy all the queries. Fourth, Why after the queries and the response did they say, WHAT IS THIS THAT THOU HAST DONE? FOR THE MEN KNEW THAT HE FLED FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, BECAUSE HE HAD TOLD THEM (1:10). Since he had already told them, why was it necessary to ask about them a second time? Furthermore, since Jonah did not answer their question: WHAT IS THIS THAT THOU HAST DONE? why did the mariners ask him: WHAT SHALL WE DO UNTO THEE, THAT THE SEA MAY BE CALM UNTO US? (1:11). Moreover, all these queries require answer.

and again:

THE FIFTH QUESTION [of the second prophecy] concerns God's statement to Jonah AND SHOULD NOT SPARE NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY, WHEREIN ARE MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PERSONS THAT CANNOT DISCERN BETWEEN THEIR RIGHT HAND AND THEIR LEFT HAND? AND ALSO MUCH CATTLE? (4:11). This question is raised because God should have logically answered Jonah, "How could I not take pity on the inhabitants who returned to Me with all their heart and all their souls. The law requires: 'Whoso forsaketh and confesses his sins shall have mercy.' Why did He not mention this fitting answer rather than the weaker, 'because of youths and much cattle, THAT CANNOT DISCERN BETWEEN THEIR RIGHT HAND AND THEIR LEFT HAND'? It has been understood that God repented for the evil because of their own repentance, and not because of their youths and the cattle.

This pertinent method of questions and answers was always in favor in certain circles of Jewish commentators. Very much like Abravanel's was the technique of the famous ²⁹rabbi Moses Alshech (second half of the 16th century).

As Gruenberg observes, no less a person than Schopenhauer considered the inclination to constant questioning as an ³⁰unfailing condition of a philosophic intellect. The question stands at the beginning of all thought. And Abravabel was

a thinker. Wherever he turns he comes upon the irreconcilable, the complicated, the problematical. He puts the question, and then diligently seeks the solution.

It is interesting to note that Abravanel was practically the first of the Jewish exegetes to utilize the so-called introductions.³¹ He not only prefaced individual books of the Scriptures with a thorough, factual introduction in which he discusses in detail its essence, date of composition, etc., but many individual portions with synopses whose superscription is always *הכונה הכוללת*

ובנומה הדפוס היא and which usually concludes

וכן שיתבאר בפירוש ככתובים ונדרים

The content is for him the main thing; the parts which he seeks to interpret is part of and subsidiary to the main idea.

Let us observe how he applies the method thus far explained, ^{on the part of} to Jonah.

NOW THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH, THE SON OF AMITTAI (1:1).

Our sages have taught that Jonah the son of Amittai was of the tribe of Asher, and that he was the son of the widow who had given food to Elijah, and that he was the one who had died, and whom Elijah quickened [See Kings 4:8-37] ³². But Rabbi Johanan has said that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, for he prophesies against Jereboam, the son of Joash, as it is written in the book of Kings: "According to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant, Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher." [14-25]. This place was in the section of Zebulun, as it is written, "From thence it [i.e. the border of Zebulun] passed along eastward to Gath-hepher." [Josh 19:13]. Rabbi Levi said:--Rabbi Johanan has taught us well. His mother was of Asher, but his father was of Zebulun, as it is said, "Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea ,,, and his flank shall be upon Zidon" [Gen 49:13]. That is, the descendent of his flank went as far as Zidon, for "he shall be a shore for ships" [ibid]. At all events, Elisha the prophet consecrated him as a prophet and sent him to annoint Jehu, the descendant of Nimshi [See II Kgs 9:3]. Because his words were always proved true, therefore

when they are of place - his prophecies were always

he was called the son of Amittai. [^{after} ~~and~~ , truth]. We can deduce that he lived in Ephraim at a time before Sennacherib destroyed Samaria, and that the Assyrians had destroyed the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Menasseh who were in trans-Jordania, and even after Zebulun and Naftali were exiled. ^{there is contained in the following Jonah who is mentioned} There is no doubt that all the remaining tribes were afraid and terrified lest the king of Assyria attack Samaria and destroy it, as he had done to their brethren who had been previously exiled. Since that fear was present in the hearts of the sages of Israel, therefore Jonah was also involved in the matter, as is explained in this account, and that is why God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, that great city, for there were the thrones of the Assyrian kings, and it was the capitol city.

In Jonah there are two synopses following each of the sets of questions. First:

The more general purpose of this prophecy is to demonstrate that "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever" [Ps 33:11] "And the word of our God shall stand for ever" [Is 40:8]. Therefore the prophets used to believe in their prophecies and forewarn the people about future things which could be seen by them as if in actuality; for "God is not a man that He should lie" [Nu 23:19]. That this principle is based on truth is proved in the case of Jonah, the son of Amittai. For God commanded him to prophecy--not against his own people, but against Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria. Since he did not choose to prophecy there, for he knew the misfortunes and the exiles which would be exacted on the tribes of Israel in the course of time, therefore he deter- ^{intensely, discussed} mined that Assyria come to an end, and that Nineveh, the capitol, be entirely reduced to slag. For this reason, he fled rather than go there. And God, toward whom this trickery ^{at from 1 Sam 2:3} was directed, hurled the wind of the tempest into the sea, until the mariners were compelled to cast Jonah, the sinning soul, into the sea. But God did not leave him to his fate, but the fish ~~in~~ which swallowed him, guarded him like the pupil of its eye, until Jonah was forced to pray to the Lord. Then God brought him out from there, and Jonah went to carry out his mission; for nothing is too wonderful for God, and everything is in His hand as clay is the hand of the potter [See Jer 18:6, etc.], and He will direct ^{by whose all actions are arranged} as He will.

A very difficult problem for us to answer is which of the two main roads of Biblical exegesis Abravanel pursued, the peshat or the derash. There can be no doubt that he

himself was inclined toward the literal interpretation of the text, for indeed he says in comment to Zach 10:3,

ואני לפרש הכתובים על פשוטם בלתי.

However, the derash and the peshat are inextricably interwoven in his commentaries, so that it is really impossible to determine which he followed, although Gruenberg and others maintain he was a literalist.³⁴ The truth of the matter probably is that he was so interested in proving his thesis outlined at the beginning of each book, and his individual contentions including the absolute reliability of the Scriptures, that although he thought he was always resting on the hard stones of fact, sometimes his mind wandered about among the stars like Jacob at Beth El. Like the great exegetes of the peshat school he cherished the Talmudic principle that the Scriptures should never be interpreted apart from their exact literal meaning, for he says in comment on Gen 2:2

אשר חת"ל... והא
דרך דרש, ואין ראוי לקבלו כפשוט

and also on Is 65:17,³⁵ א. הכתוב "ועתה ע"ד פשוטו

But he is so very often inconsistent with this principle. Thus, for instance, he wishes to prove that Nineveh was really very large:

In accordance with the literal interpretation, Rabbi Abraham ben Ezra wrote that the journey mentioned refers to its circumference, but that it took only a day to traverse it. But this statement is not correct, for it further states AND JONAH BEGAN TO ENTER INTO THE CITY A DAY'S JOURNEY (3:4). This shows that he did not complete the journey, only a part of it, therefore it is obvious that from gate to gate it is three days, but that Jonah had gone only a day's journey, and the inhabitants were aroused to repentance. Furthermore in Bereshit Rabbah [sic!] it is stated

note a good instance as there are numerous places where every night goes to the circumference

that Nineveh was a journey of forty days--perhaps this includes the environs of the city, and therefore the decree was that in YET FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN (3:4), for it took forty days until the proclamation could be made in the land: the city and its suburbs.

This is not the only instance where he rejects Ibn Ezra's literal interpretations. Thus, for example,
36
on Is 66:3: והב' ל' אברהם אבן עזרא פירש... אין כאן הפריטה סובל

As a matter of fact, Abravanel's agadot in themselves form a good sized yalkut, not only including those which he collected from other sources, but also many homilies and interpretations which it is obvious he concocted of his own accord. Only twice in Jonah does he disagree with Midrashic explanations which he cites:

Then Jonah repented of his sin when he said THEY THAT OBSERVE LYING VANITIES FORSAKE THEIR OWN MERCY (2:9). He was not referring by this statement to the mariners or the seamen who vowed vows during the tempest, that their mercy and their vows would forsake them, upon their departure from the ship, as the expounders have interpreted, nor did Jonah mean what the sages have said, that THEIR MERCY has the meaning of "a wicked thing" [as in Lev 20:17] --that is to say, that the mariners will forsake their idols because of the miracles they saw performed for him--for all these interpretations are far from the meaning of the Scriptures....

and again:

WHEREIN ARE MORE THAN TWELVE MIRIADS OF PEOPLE THAT CANNOT DISCERN BETWEEN THEIR RIGHT HAND AND THEIR LEFT HAND, AND ALSO MUCH CATTLE (4:11). This does not refer to the children, as the interpreters have stated, for indeed in the condemned city the children were sentenced for the sins of their fathers, for the children are like the limbs and parts of a body.

It is quite impossible to cite all the homiletical explanations which Abravanel invented to explain the text,

perhaps unconscious that he was straying from the peshat, for they form the bulk of his commentaries. But a few should be noted, and it will be seen how difficult it is to trace the line of demarcation between the fanciful and the real:

JONAH WENT DOWN INTO THE SIDES OF THE BOAT--that is to say, to one of the sides--AND HE LAY DOWN AND WAS FAST ASLEEP (1:5). The Scriptures relates this to tell that the sailors cried out every man to his god, but Jonah did not cry out to God, for he was ashamed and embarrassed to raise his head to Him, so he lay and went fast asleep, since he thought that he would die there--for sleep is one-sixtieth of sleep, and therefore he prepared himself for sleep.

The explanation of the text is also found in their question WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION? (1:8). That is to say, 'perhaps your occupation consists of a definite sin' for instance a gentile priest--'and because of that you have deserved death by God.' and WHENCE COMEST THOU? that is to say, 'perhaps you have descended from wicked forefathers and God visits their sins upon you.' Now both of these latter points are included in the question WHY --i.e. 'how have you sinned? You or your fathers?' Furthermore, two other questions are included in what he said--First, WHAT IS YOUR COUNTRY? and second, AND OF WHAT PEOPLE ART THOU? That is to say, perhaps you have sinned against your country, for instance in disregarding the Sabbatical years and the Jubilees, or perhaps you have sinned against your people. Since all these questions are included in the primary questions of the presence of the sin, and against whom he sinned, therefore Jonah answered both of them when he said I AM A HEBREW; AND I FEAR THE LORD, THE GOD OF HEAVEN. That is to say, 'Since you have asked my sin and my transgression, whether it was against the country or against my people, and for the reason of this sin, if I am deserving of death --and against whom I have sinned--know then, and see that I am a Hebrew. Now the explanation of this is not only that he was from the land of the Hebrews, but that he was a renewed gade / "גיד, and transgressed" גיד' the commandments of his God. Compare "Why do ye transgress the words of God" [Nu 14:45]. With this sentence he explained to them the locus of his guilt. And in regard to the question they asked him AGAINST WHOM HE SINNED, he answered them I FEAR THE LORD, THE GOD OF HEAVEN--that is to say, 'You need not ask about my country or my people, for I have not sinned against them, BUT I FEAR GOD for I have sinned only against Him, and for that reason I am in trouble, for I am an "גיד". I have transgressed His commandments and rebelled against my prophecy. AND I FEAR THE LORD THE GOD OF HEAVEN, for I have sinned against Him.

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Abravanel's citations from and references to midrashim indicate his wide knowledge of the entire field of Jewish literature. It will be necessary only to mention a few of the midrashim he cites, although each of his commentaries is replete with them. For instance, in questioning the reason the fish vomited Jonah upon the dry land (3:1), Abravanel asks why God desisted from his wrath.

If you would say it was because of the prayer he recited in the belly of the fish, what good was his prayer since he persisted in his sin. Jonah was in the position of a man who was in the process of becoming ritually clean, and then made himself further unclean by grasping a reptile in his hand.

This is probably a reference to Tosef. Taanit I:8. This passage to be cited now has been chosen because it indicates the erudition and wide knowledge of the author. The original midrashim and interpretations are from Mekil^{ta} Bo (Peti^{ha}) 1b-2a; Jerusalem Sanhedrin 11, 20b; Jerome on Jonah 1:2 and 4:1; Tertullian, "De P^{id}icitia 10" and Pseudo Tertullian "De Jona" 20 et. seq. On the view that no revelations are made to prophets outside the Holy Land are similar references in Moed Katan 25a, Mekil^{ta} R. 5-6; Zohar I:85a² etc.:

[Comment on 1:2] and therefore Jonah came to the conclusion that he would not go to Nineveh, so that the inhabitants of Nineveh would not be rescued from extirpation through his mediation. For, how would he bear to think that his journey would be the cause of the rescue of the Assyrians and the destruction of the Israelites. And how would he be able to look at the calamity which would overtake his people through the Assyrians. For this reason he fled from the presence of the Lord. By this last phase we mean that he wished to distant himself from Palestine which is fashioned for prophecy. For he thought that since the prophetic inspiration never appears outside of Palestine, then when he would be in a polluted land outside of the Holy Land, the

prophetic inspiration could not rest on him nor command him to go to Nineveh or proclaim against it, so that he would not be the instrument and the medium for rescuing his enemies; for if God should desire to rescue them Himself, He would do as He wishes, but not through Jonah. And I think that our sages were intentioned toward this view when they commented in the Mekilta on the verse "And there were added besides unto them many like words" in the book of Jeremiah [36-32]. They said: There are three types. One is interested in the honor of the father and the honor of the son. Another is interested in the honor of the father and not in the honor of the son. The last is interested in the honor of the son and not in the honor of the father. Jeremiah is interested in the honor of his Father and the son [Israel], as it is said, "We have transgressed, and have rebelled; Thou hast not pardoned" [Lamen 3:42]. Therefore his prophecy was doubled, as it is said: "And there were added besides many & like words." Elijah gave honor to his Father and not to his son, as it is said, "I have been jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant." [I Kgs 19:10]. Now what follows this? "And the Lord said unto him: 'Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus...and Jehu, the son of Nimshi shalt thou appoint to be prophet in thy room.'" Now why does it say 'in thy room'? 'For I do not take pleasure in thy kind of prophecy!'

Jonah gave honor to the son and not to the Father. What is written about him? AND THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH A SECOND TIME (3:1). That is to say, it spoke with him twice, but not three times. It can be understood in the light of what I have explained that Jonah gave honor to the son, but not the Father when he fled from the Lord in order to escape from going to direct Nineveh aright--for he chose that the counsel of the Lord be not established and that the Assyrians be altogether cut off. Similarly it is expressed in the Midrash. Rabbi Jonathan said: Jonah embarked only for the purpose of destroying himself in the sea, as it is said: TAKE ME UP AND CAST ME FORTH INTO THE SEA (1:12). You can find similar situations in the case of the patriarchs and the prophets who gave their lives for Israel. As Scriptures says of Moses: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sins--; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book." [Ex 32:32]. Concerning David, what does it say? "And David said to the Lord, behold I have sinned .. but now your hand be against me and my father's house" [II Sam 24:17]. Lo, all these statements will testify and tell the truth of what I have explained. What is written in the Mekilta will also agree with this, for Jonah thought:--I will go outside of Palestine, for the Shekinah does not reveal itself there. Why did he do this? because he knew that the gentiles were almost ready to repent, and he did not want Israel to suffer. This is comparable to the servant of a priest who fled from his master, the priest. He thought:--I will flee to the graveyard, where my master cannot go after me. But his master said to him: I have other servants like you to extract you from there. God said to him--I have other emissaries like you to send after you and bring from

there. As it is said, AND THE LORD HURIED A GREAT WIND INTO THE SEA. (1:4).

And again:

....And Scriptures says SO HE PAID THE FARE THERE-OF (1:3) to acquaint the reader that although it is the custom of travellers by sea to pay the fare for the passage only when they disembark, nevertheless Jonah, because of his great desire for the journey, paid the fare of the passage when he began it. So is explained in Pirke Rab Eliezar [11a]. But according to the Aggadah, Jonah was affluent and paid the fare for the whole boat, that he might travel alone [Nedarim 38a].

We shall cite a few more fanciful midrashim from Pirke d'Rab Eliezar, 11a, which ^{are} used extensively in his Jonah commentary: 1:7

When the mariners perceived that their prayer and outcry did not help, and that the boat did not lighten when they threw out the goods into the sea, the thought entered their minds that this must be a specially prepared act of God, and that the tempest had occurred because of the transgression of one of their number. It is not proper to assume that the mariners cast Jonah into the sea in haste and excitement, for they prepared various tests to determine that the tempest was not a natural one, but rather a specially prepared Divine act. The first test and result is what is told in the Pirke Rabbi Eliezar--that they saw other boats crossing in both directions peacefully and quietly, but their boat was in a great storm, and therefore they were assured that the situation was the result of the sin of one of them, or perhaps God or the zodiac had decreed that that individual was to die at that particular hour, and for his sake and for that reason the storm had occurred. Now if this was the situation, it were best that the individual die, since it was already decreed and decided that he had to die--rather than the rest of the passengers of the boat die with him. And it should not be thought that what has been said--that they saw boats going in both directions--is but fancy. For indeed the Scriptures itself testifies concerning this, both in the verse AND THERE WAS A MIGHTY TEMPEST IN THE SEA, SO THAT THE SHIP WAS THOUGHT TO BE BROKEN (1:4)--that is to say, the particular ship in which Jonah was, was like to be broken, not the rest of the ships; --and also in the speech of the mariners who said LET US CAST LOTS THAT WE MAY KNOW FOR WHOSE CAUSE THIS EVIL IS UPON US (1:7). That is to say, 'upon us', and not for the rest of the ships.

Moreover, Jonah himself said:--FOR I KNOW THAT FOR MY SAKE THIS GREAT TEMPEST IS COME UPON YOU (1:12)--that is to say, 'upon you', and not upon the other ships.³⁷

And in the Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer it is said that the mariners became converted. When they returned to Joppa they went up to Jerusalem, and circumcised themselves, as it is said, THEN THE MEN FEARED THE LORD EXCEEDINGLY, AND OFFERED A SACRIFICE UNTO THE LORD (1:16). Now was it a sacrifice that they could sacrifice it on the sea? Rather, it was the covenant of circumcision, which is like the blood of a sacrifice. AND MADE VOWS each to bring his wife, his children, and all that he had--his vow offering and his peace offering--to the Deity of Jonah.

And in the Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer it is said that the fish went 965 furlongs to the dry land to vomit out Jonah--for the reason that nothing can seek to prevent repentance.³⁸

And in the Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer it says the repentance of the Ninevites was to teach the signers the way of the Lord, that their repentance be perfect.³⁹

Perhaps the best proof that Abravanel is not the literalist that many authorities would have him to be is a comparison with Ibn Ezra and Kimhi, both of whom may be regarded as exponents of the peshat, the natural sense. He agrees with neither of them in the main--only occasionally in the interpretation of individual points does he cite them in agreement. Later we shall note his relation to these commentators in more detail. He does not even agree with Rashi who attempted to combine peshat and derash, although he does indeed share Rashi's belief, as will be shown, that a Scriptural verse may have more than one meaning.

In contradiction to the classics of the Arabian school, whose exegesis bears the mark of philology and etymology, Abravanel emphasizes more the comprehension of

contextual coherence in historical representations and prophetic speeches. His worldliness and knowledge of people permit him in a great measure to trace the historic labyrinths of ancient history with the eye of a statesman and to gain a deeper understanding of historical epochs and episodes which lie beyond the experiences of secluded scholars. As a result his interpretations of the historical portions of the Scriptures represent perhaps his⁴⁰ finest achievements. For instance, he was greatly troubled by the prophecy YET FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN (3:4), and he must needs explain it correctly and historically, according to his lights:

The second way of explaining YET FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN is that 'day' is used here for 'year'. As in Leviticus [25:29]: "within a year may he redeem it." And the word 'yet' is also to be counted, for it reckons eighty [719]. And when forty [days or 'years'] be added to it, the result is one hundred twenty years. It is as if the Scriptures said that at the end of one hundred twenty years, Nineveh would be overthrown. And so it was. For Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed it after one hundred twenty years as a result of this prophecy. And Nahum the Elkashite prophesied about it in his section of the destruction of Nineveh. And this is how we verify it. Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year that he reigned, destroyed Nineveh (as it is stated in Seder Olam). Now it is known that Nebuchadnezzar ruled at the beginning of the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, as it is stated in Jeremiah [25:1]: "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Now Jehoiakim ruled eleven years; subtract the four years, and the result is that Jehoiakim ruled seven years during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. After him ruled Jehoiachin three months; after him Zedekiah ruled until the destruction of the Temple fourteen years, as it is stated in Scriptures. It is also stated in II Kings [25:8], that "in the nineteenth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Temple of the Lord was burned. Deduce from this that nineteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem, Nineveh was destroyed. It is known that Jonah went to ~~the~~ Nineveh after the exile of Manasse and Simeon, and before the destruction of Samaria--for the time between these last two events was nine years, from the time Hoshea

ben Illa ruled until the exile of Samaria. Therefore, the incident of Jonah in Nineveh took place five or six years before the destruction of Samaria, and from the number of years of the kings of Judah we know that the destruction of Samaria preceded the destruction of Jerusalem by one hundred thirty three years. Subtract from 133, 19 years that Nineveh was already destroyed, when Jerusalem was destroyed--the result is then from the destruction of Samaria to the destruction of Nineveh--114 years; and the journey of Jonah to Nineveh preceded the destruction of Samaria by about six years, as I have said, and there was from Jonah's proclamation in Nineveh to the destruction of Nineveh, therefore, one hundred twenty years. And this was truly foretold: YET FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTURNED. But God concealed the truth of this designation and His meaning with the words 'yet' and 'forty days' so that the inhabitants of the city should not grasp it. Even Jonah did not uncover the very depth of his prophecy.

It is remarkable that modern scholarship has proved that Abravanel was probably not far wrong in his calculations.
41

*but from the
correction long after
his death
to be*

Equally astounding is his mastery of Biblical language material, his extraordinary expertness and nicety in finding the proper authoritative passages and analogies; whether a literalist or not, Abravanel evidences fine discrimination in selecting analogies for proof. This is best evidenced when he wishes to explain etymologically difficult words, to be discussed later in detail. His knowledge of the theology of the Bible checks unacceptable conclusions. For instance he considers the question: 'What prompted Jonah to flee 'וַיִּפְּחַד'?' (1:3). Abravanel asks:

Did Jonah really flee from the presence of the Lord? --for is it not stated:--"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? [Ps 139:12] and "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth" [II Chron 16:9].

*one from
the text
+ question
whether God
has different
eyes*

Abravanel's style also is significant especially in the prefaces to his works. For every thought that he

wishes to express he has at his command the manifold turns of speech to be found in the Bible. Only a Biblical expert can have so keen a sense of detection. Clarity is always evident, even when he becomes most verbose--and whenever necessary Abravanel creates his own word pictures with the Biblical language as a basis. This is indeed remarkable considering that he represents himself as struggling desperately with the Hebrew language. In his correspondence with Saul Cohen Ashkenazi [7a] he says:

אם כן נתן וק' ד' לשון לצודים, דבש וחלב נחת לשוןך.
לכנו תכרע כל לשון, ואני אנה אני בא. כי כדפה אבד לשון אבי,
כי מד' סענה לשון, וגם הכרגל על כל דבר שלסון. ואני לא נספתי לזכר
באלה, כי בלשני שפה עלשן אחת בהיותי בארצות דברתי בלשני
ולא בקשתי לי כי אם שאלת לשון נגריה ולשון תהפוכות מעם
לועז, כסוס אגזכר כן אצפצף ואיכה אוכל להשיב שולחי.
דבר בלשון רכה וצחוק וגו'

Abravanel hits upon novel interpretations by paying particular attention to the method of expression in the Bible and he underlines individual words and sentences. This is indeed the essence of his method of exegesis. Thus, for instance he is puzzled by the question of the rariners to Jonah:--WHY HAST THOU DONE THIS? (1:10). He concludes that this is indeed not a question at all, but rather an interjection, as if to say, 'How could you have done such a thing, to rebel against the word of the Lord and to flee from Him.' The phrase WHY HAST THOU DONE THIS? Abravanel says, is like that which Laban spoke to Jacob: "What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen unawares to me?" [Gen 31:26]. These are asked in astonishment and for information--for, maintains

so say the
exegesis
before him
the other
commentary
on Jonah
by H. G. G.
1:10

Abravanel, the mariners already knew that he was fleeing from the prophecy of the Lord, for he had told them this.

Or again, Abravanel finds that the verse AND THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH A SECOND TIME (4:1) proves that because Jonah was untrue to his prophecy, the divine spirit was removed from him:

Blessed be He who has taken delight in the words of His sages. How deep is their learning that none of their words is untrue [sic!]. They have said that because Jonah demanded Israel's honor and not the honor of the Father, his punishment was that only the second, and not ~~th~~ a third, prophecy appeared to him. Yet one of the speculating youths thinks that this inference is but fanciful, and it cannot be deduced from what he said the second time why he did not prophecy a third time. But you will find it stated in the Seder Olam that Jonah annointed Jehu the son of Nimshi over Israel in 3062, and Jonah lived until Zechariah who ruled in Israel in 3164. It can thus be reckoned that Jonah lived after beginning his prophecy 102 years, and since we have found no other prophecy during all this long time, except those two prophecies about Nineveh, we know that the spirit of prophecy departed from him, because of this. And this was but fitting, for he fled from prophecy, and tried to depart from it, and his punishment fitted the crime, for the prophecy fled from him, and never again brought him the word of God, because he reviled and scorned it. The prophecy was given to him a second time; but was not given to him a third time, not because there is a limit to God's munificence, but because the recipient refused the goodness himself.

When Abravanel was trying to prove that the mariners applied all manner of tests to Jonah before committing him to the waves, he finds the proof from the Scriptures itself:

The second test is that they did not cast the lots only one time, lest it might be mere chance, but they cast it many times, and with different kinds of lots--and always the lot fell to Jonah. And when they saw that the thing repeated itself, they now believed that it was prepared by God, and was not mere chance. And also to this test there is proof in Scriptures, for it says, COME, AND LET US CAST LOTS (1:7) and it says AND THEY CAST LOTS. The word *וְיָצְאוּ* is used in the singular if it means but once, as "notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot" [Num 26:55] or "according to the lot" [Num 26:56]. Indeed the plural lots is used

Abravanel argued that the Ninevites did not believe 's God, yet the text records them as saying IF SO EE THINK UPON US THAT WE PERISH NOT. His interpretation, as follows:

Abravanel was troubled by the prophecy IN YLT FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTURNED (3:4). As a matter of fact it was not overturned in forty days. But by considering the word 'overturned' he finds the solution:

Many more examples could be given but these just

cited will suffice. It would lead us too far afield to give all the general instances of his exegesis. We will therefore confine ourselves and cite completely but a few passages from his commentaries which are characteristic both of his method and his personality.

§

C. Relation to Other Commentators

In the introduction to the Major Prophets Abravanel expressed the wish that the reader first pursue the views of the other exegetes, then his own, in order thus to be able to form a correct judgment of his work:

והנחיצה להבחין היש בלשוננו טוה או אה אמת. והנה חכ' בפרוש
הכתובים? יע"ן ראשונה בפרשה מהפסוקים דרכי המפרשים,
ואת יסודם למעשרים וידע ויטעם ע' משלנו את סוף 'שרא'
יברך. ושי הוא זה ואינה הוא כולנו יכתוב ידו לה'
ודעת קדושים 'מ' 83

He was however of the firm conviction that his interpretation was the correct one. In numerous places he cites the other opinions, then gives his interpretation, and adds

. מה שפירשתי הוא הייחוד נכון

As a rule, when Abravanel accepts the interpretation of another exegete, he elaborates further upon it. Thus, for instance:

SO THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED IN GOD (3:5). That is, His designation was accomplished through His word and His decree. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra has written in the name of Rabbi Joshua that the mariners went to Nineveh and told the incident of Jonah there, therefore they believed his words without the necessity of producing a sign or wonder.

For there was not need of a sign of miracle for this is not required of a prophet--for he need only command and warn regarding the observance of the Torah, and the doing of the good and the upright--for we must also hearken to these kinds of utterances even from a sage, for if a sage commands in the name of God to transgress one of the commandments of the Torah for a present exigency, even though it should not be a command to worship idolatrously, then it is necessary that he perform wonders to validate his prophecy. But Jonah explained to them that the decree was directed against their iniquities in general, and their violence in particular, but that God would take pity upon them, if they repented. Therefore it was not necessary to demand a sign or a wonder for him; but they accepted the dicta, that they be good and upright on their own part. About this it is written: SO THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD, for it is not said that they believed Jonah, nor that the king called for him, nor spoke with him, but that they believed in God; for His was the power to do all this [i.e. overthrow Nineveh], and He loved the good but hated violence, and they were stirred by Jonah's words to repent.

Another case of an original statement by Ibn Ezra which was further explained and elaborated in accord with Abravanel's prolixity and exhaustiveness:

Now God reproved Jonah for his wrath, when He said *האם אתה כן*. That is to say, 'Can there be a disposition as ill-inclined as yours? You have become angry over the benevolences with which I favor Nineveh.' And so did Abraham ibn Ezra interpret it in the name of Japheth: Are you angry that I have done well to whom I wish. Now this was not the way that that good man [David] acted, to be angry for God's goodness "for the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works" [Ps 145:9]. The proof that verifies this interpretation is that you will find that Jonah answered this utterance. For if it said: 'Doeest thou well to be angry?' as a question, Jonah would have answered him, 'I do well to be angry,' as he said later [4:9], but this verse [unanswered] is a reproof.

Abravanel does not always rest with one interpretation, whether offered by himself or another, for he continues:

It is also possible to say that Jonah did not wish to answer this utterance even though it was a question, for

he knew that everything was certainly revealed before the throne of His glory, and that God knew the reason for his mood, that he was not really angry that Nineveh was benefitted, but that Israel was eventually to be destroyed.

One must admit that Abravanel was not niggardly in praise and acknowledgement when the interpretation of a predecessor was shiftable. Compare, for instance, his praise of Ibn Ezra, Judah Ha-Levi, and Ibn Caspi in his comments to Gen 2:23, Gen 22:1, Gen 15:5, Gen 1:1, Joel 2:17, Isaiah 27:9, and Hab 3:1.

On the other hand, he does not hesitate to be firm in his rejection when certain interpretations seem to him illogical. For example:

What prompted Jonah to flee ^{למה ברח יחזקאל?} (1:3). Our dearly departed sages [i.e. Pirke d'Rabbi Eliazar 11a] have given two explanations to the problem. First, because the gentile nations were on the point of repenting, and Jonah did not want to incur any guilt for Israel. Truly this is a very weak reason, for if the inhabitants of Nineveh were to repent, Israel too might become so ashamed of its sins that it would also return to the Lord, and He would have compassion upon it. Now if Israel repented of its own accord it would be a fine thing; how much the more so if it were induced to repent by the gentiles. The second reason of the sages is that Jonah feared that when the inhabitants of Nineveh would return to the Lord, the Lord would desist from His anger and pardon them. Then the inhabitants of Nineveh would say that Jonah was a fabricator and a false prophet. But this reason does not seem right to me, because the inhabitants of Nineveh believed in Jonah and did perfect repentance because of his words. It is obvious that if they repented because of his words, then they already believed in his prophecy. On the other hand, if they would not have believed him, they would not have repented, and would thus necessarily have fulfilled his words. Therefore they would not in either case say that he was a false prophet. Furthermore, what difference could it make to Jonah if the inhabitants of Nineveh would say:--He is a false prophet, or:--He is a true prophet, since he was not one of them and would return to his country after his proclamation? And what connection did he have with them that would force him to flee from the presence of the Lord, and be unbecomingly untrue to his prophecy? Further, this

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first time, God did not tell him the substance of the proclamation, i.e. the overthrow of Nineveh, as He told him afterwards--that the prophet might have feared lest they would repent and say:--He is a false prophet; but He told him only that he should say to Nineveh THAT THEIR WICKEDNESS IS COME UP BEFORE ME (1:2). Now why should he fear because of anything like this, especially since the prophet who is untrue to his inspiration and suppresses his prophecy is guilty of death!

When Abravanel attacks an interpretation, he is devastating, often using sarcasm as well as logic to undermine it; but even his comparatively mild attacks are forceful. For instance, in proving that Nineveh was a very large city, he cites Ibn Ezra to disagree with him:

That it was really large is inferred by the statement that Nineveh was a three days' journey. In accordance with the literal interpretation [sic!] Rabbi Abraham ben Ezra wrote that the journey mentioned refers to its circumference, but that it took only a day to traverse it. But this statement is not correct, for it further states AND JONAH BEGAN TO ENTER INTO THE CITY A DAY'S JOURNEY (3:4). This shows that he did not complete the journey, only a part of it; therefore it is obvious that from gate to gate it is three days, but that Jonah had gone only a day's journey, and the inhabitants were aroused to repentance. Furthermore in Bereshit Rabbah [sic!] it is stated that Nineveh was a journey of forty days--perhaps this includes the environs of the city--and therefore the decree was that in YET FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN, for it took forty days until the proclamation could be made in the land; the city and its suburbs. And that it when be overturned, the proclamation was unconditionally definite.

not a grammatical but a logical difference
on May 20

He even disagrees with Ibn Ezra on grammatical points:

not a grammatical but a logical difference

Now Abraham ben Ezra has translated עיר גדולה לאלהים
(3:3), as 'a city that was great for God'--for the inhabitants of Nineveh had always been God-fearing from the earliest days. But only now in the time of Jonah, they began to do evil in the sight of the Lord. And were it not that they had previously been righteous, God would not have commanded His prophet to direct them aright. But this interpretation does not appear valid nor true to me; and the meaning of the translation 'עיר גדולה לאלהים' as 'a city great for God' will be explained later.

A further discussion of this grammatical point, as well as others with which Abravanel disagreed will be made later, when we discuss his grammar. Here it suffices to say that Abravanel took issue with other exegetes more often than he agreed with them.⁴² Nor does he spare them.

For instance, to I Kgs 15:6 he cites Josephus and remarks:

He [Josephus] had the intention to offer things to the Romans to suit their own tastes. If he found anything that was exaggerated or strange--something difficult for them to believe--he strove to appease them by writing in his own vein, and he did not hesitate to deviate from the words of the verse, which in my opinion constitutes a grievous transgression, error and perversion of heart.

Animated by a glowing love for Judaism and Jewish tradition, it grieves him to see Jewish thinkers contradict what he thought was the simple sense of verse or story in the Holy Script. He is often a bundle of contradictions. He opposed the interpretations of the rationalistic school against Ibn Ezra, Levi ben Gerson, the pious Hasdai Crescas, and above all against the otherwise much honored Maimonides. Then he flies into a holy rage and warns us against the opinions of that great man, and seeks to prove them erroneous.⁴³

He is particularly sharp in his condemnation of a group of rationalists such as Rabbi Joshua [Moses?] Narbonne, Ibn Kaspi, Rabbi Isaac Albalag, Rabbi Enoch Zarza.⁴⁴ It may be remarked in this connection, as Gruenberg mentions, that it might have been not only his religious zeal alone which elicited from his pen such caustic words against the said Jewish thinkers, but also the grievous suffering he endured

because of his faithful attachment to the religion of his fathers.⁴⁵ No doubt Graetz judges wrongly when he says:

"He did not have the patience to listen to any liberal free word on Judaism and its believers."⁴⁶ Karpeles too speaks of Abravanel's intolerance to Jewish scholars, which indicates a misunderstanding of the true inner religiosity of "bravanel,"⁴⁷ as well as the effect of the times on his sensitive soul.

Rather should we accept the interpretation of S.D. Luzzato:

"He dedicated the rest of his miserable and wretched days to the defense and illumination of traditional religion with a sharpness of intellect and astounding eloquence against the attacks of philosophy and other religions."⁴⁸ Deep is the understanding of Guttman who says of Abravanel: "A deeply religious soul whose being was saturated with belief and faith, and whose life was elevated through most painful experiences; he withstood all the lures of philosophical speculation when they appeared to jeopardize his beliefs and convictions which were rooted in the principles of Judaism."⁴⁹

That he was not opposed to philosophy in principle is evident from his familiarity with the literature of the Arabic-Aristotelian philosophy and with the Jewish religious philosophy. In various places he cites Aristotle and attributes to him the title: 'ר'מא'. Thus also he calls Seneca [II Sam 22], Plinius and Plotinus [Gen 1:16]. But he adheres to them only to the extent wherein they do not conflict with Jewish tradition.⁵⁰

Five points especially provoke his attack:

- 1) The signification of whole portions of the Bible

as Allegory.

- 2) The limitation of the omniscience of God.
- 3) The limitation of the omnipotence of God.
- 4) The denial of providence for the individual.
denial of 51
- 5) The/creation of the world.

The analysis of these questions causes Abravanel to discuss them in numerous passages of his commentaries, as well as in other works mentioned in the first part of the thesis. He who reads these without prejudice and attentively, maintain the authorities, comes to the conclusion that Abravanel was indeed no creative philosophic genius, for he erected no philosophical system of his own, but is however so well trained in philosophic problems, comprehends them with such discernment--that the parts of his exegesis in question are of great interest and are indeed not the product of intolerance and ignorance. 52

In his commentaries as well as in his other works we are aware of the great love Abravanel had for the Jewish people whose hopes animate him, and in whose Messiah--in the promised future of the Messianic Age--he not only believes, but finds therein great strength and abiding consolation. Therefore it grieves him bitterly when Jewish interpreters relate the salvation prognostications to the time of the Second Temple, and not to the time of the Messiah. 53

His strong religious attitude and point of view brought him into direct opposition with the position of the rationalists also in regard to other weighty matters which we will discuss later. The catastrophe in which his

co-religionists found themselves and the composition of their spiritual lives determined the course precisely which his literary activity inflexibly pursued, which was:-- to revive in Israel the living word of God as revealed in the Scriptures by a sound, methodical, reasonably but traditionally correct exegetical method based of belief. To this end he exhausted all available sources. This end determined his attitude on all questions. It is noteworthy that Abravanel did not include the Kabbala in his studies, though it was known and studied widely at that time. Yet he cites the Zohar several times, particularly in reference to Genesis, though it is true that his knowledge of these studies amounted to practically nothing.

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D. Relation to Halacha

It is self evident that a man like Abravanel should pay much attention to halacha. He often has the opportunity to point out in his commentary to the Pentateuch the halachic meanings of our sages, to cite their foundations, and express his attitude toward them. He cites the Talmud and halachic Midrashim profusely, and seeks to reconcile their implications with the demands of the simple, logical sense of the peshat. If he meets a definite, insurmountable difficulty he adds a reasonably explanation

וְעַתָּה יָדוּעַ with the remark that the tradition of our
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sages must be taken in its broadest sense. Nevertheless,
he does not hesitate to give explanations which do not

so often happens

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harmonize here and there with the halacha. In dealing with the question which occupied the Talmudic sages

ל'ח'ח'ח' : to what extent and whether or not the destiny
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of the Jew is determined by the stars of/heavens, Abravanel

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takes the view of Rabbi Hanina which was contested by Rabbi

Johanan, Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Nahman and others. This matter

he elaborates in Jonah:

The edict [YET FORTY DAYS AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN] was not given because of the intercession of the Zodiac, for God is not influenced by the Zodiac. It was given for the sake of Israel. Since for the sake of Israel's repentance, prayer and outcry, He will travel through heaven to its aid, indeed for the sake of the other nations, the manner of His providence will be all-inclusive. When they sin through violence and percerse action, He will be intent to overturn them and destroy them, as He did to the generation of the flood and to the men of Sodom, for the sake of the world's civilization. I have already explained in my esoteric commentary to the Mishnah, in the section |ח'ח'ח' , the superiority of Israel over other nations is in regard to the matter of the Zodiac. And in Deuteronomy:--first, that every nation has supervising its general weal a star and a planet in heaven, but this is not so with Israel, "for the portion of the Lord is His people" [Dt 32:9]. Second, also in reference to the particular fortunes of the other nation which are also directed by the planet and the new moon. Indeed the Zodiac has nothing to do at all with commandments or transgressions. Third, the zodiacal influences of the individual Israelite may be averted through prayer and merit; but in regard to the other nations, the influence of the Zodiac can not be averted through their repentance, but General Providence will cleave to them, to insure the perpetuity of their national existence. Therefore, it follows, since they generally practised violence and nullified justice, they were deserving of destruction--and this was the case with Nineveh. But since God was guarding the Assyrian nation to act as the rod of His wrath and the staff of His ire against Israel, therefore he sent His prophet to direct them to the good way, that they did not obtain the punishment of extermination and destruction.

'A well known Halachic principle states that a decision is to be made according to the majority. Abravanel writes that he therefore had to abide by the decision of

the majority; but he points out, however, that this principle is valid only in cases of halacha which would result in an overt action of some kind. Otherwise he believes that the great master Moses ben Maimon has laid down the principle in his preface to Seder Zeraim that in a controversy of the sages in matters of belief, and in views where there is no question of action, each man is left free to decide individually according to his own light. He could therefore prefer the decision of the individual to that of the majority.

Abravanel frequently inserts a halachic point in explaining a passage, as for instance: "Even though the mariners had cast lot after lot, and the confession of the defendant Jonah was equal to a hundred witnesses, they did not cast Jonah into the sea..."

The halacha is and remains for Abravanel the norm and regulator of our life, and is indeed obligatory--but in the meaning of the written word one should seek wherever possible the simple meaning of the word, and an intelligent foundation for the legal principles. Rashi has been called an explainer [מפרש], rather than a maker of halachic decisions [פוסק].⁵⁸ This applies even more truly to Abravanel in his treatment of halachic decisions. Neither does he offer us halachic exegesis as does Rabbi Moses ben Nachman who seeks to clear up and reconcile by sharp ingenuity the blatant contradictions in the baraitot. Abravanel places his emphasis on his attempt to make the commands of the Torah comprehensible to men, and he explains

them both logically and psychologically. He shows himself thereby, however, no mean Talmudist.

§

E. Apologetics and Eschatology

While there is no opportunity in Jonah to consider Christianity or Israel's future, he discusses these matters in other works. In many places Abravanel sets before himself the task of rejecting the Christological interpretations. In his introduction to Isaiah chapter eleven, Abravanel refutes the New Testament declaration that Jesus was of Davidic origin. He maintains that while it is true that Joseph, Mary's husband was of David origin, the same tradition reveals that Joseph was not the father of Jesus, and that therefore the founder of Christianity has no claim to the Davidic line. One wonders how greatly his attack was colored by his own professed kinship with David.

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1493 dated
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p. Kaulitz

If in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries there were numerous debates between Christians and Jews, Rabbis and priests, when the fifteenth century brought the Inquisition and compulsory baptism, there was especially the nuisance of Bible-versed apostates. It therefore became desperately necessary to guard those Jews who were still faithful, against Christianity, either in interpretation or in actual conversion. Abravanel recognized these dangers and worked to allay them. He reports personal religious discussions of great profit

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with Christians. He polemizes frequently against the renegade Solomon Levy, later Bishop Paulus of Burgos, of
61
iniquitous memory.

In his commentary to Isaiah 45:15 he relates a numerous anecdote of a renegade. A clever Jew was baptized and converted to Christianity. Several of his former Jewish friends asked him what he thought of the religion whose practices he now knew. He answered:--In truth I
62
saw I topsy-turvy world. When I was a Jew I did not behold God, for 'no man may look upon Me and live [Ex 33:20]'. He however saw me always, as it is said, 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord [Jer 23:24]'. After I had become a Christian the matter was reversed. I look upon God daily, as I will; He, however, does not see me for 'he has eyes and sees not [Ps 115:5]'.
63

Abravanel takes pains to give the greater part of the prophets an eschatological significance. The catastrophe of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain provoked him to seek consolation in the prophecies of the prophets who spoke of Israel's glorious future. All the promises of the prophets must take place in the future so that Israel might be compensated for all the insult and injury it had endured. He goes so far as to give those events which took place in the days of the prophets a messianic
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connotation. This is the reason why he falls out with the classical Biblical exegetes, especially Ibn Ezra, in regard to a prophecy relating to the time of the Second Temple.
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F. His Historical Acumen and Worldliness

That a man like Abravanel had a real understanding of history and current events is not surprising. He occupies himself with events of historical significance, makes observations concerning them, and draws certain definite conclusions from them. For instance, to Deuteronomy X he makes a long divagation showing a knowledge of history with reference to ethnology. To Zachariah 6:7 and 13:7 he makes statements as to the spread of Islam and the Arabian rule. He also gives a characteristic of the soldiery when he remarks to Deuteronomy 1:9 that the soldiers have no fear of God, are lascivious and are concerned with pillage and booty. To Zachariah XIV וְהָיָה יְהוָה יֵשׁוּעַ he remarks:--that is what the Christians do in the Crusades.

In regard to the casting of lots, in Jonah, to determine for whose cause the storm had come upon the ship, he very sagely asks the question:

How could the lot be able to give a just verdict in this matter; for if the sin was not in any of them, the lot would still necessarily fall to one of them who was perfectly innocent and guiltless.

As he points out, the Midrash makes the same comment in reference to Joshua [7:20], for Achan said to Joshua:--why do you cast lots between me and my house? Let me cast a lot between you and Pinhas, and it will fall to one of you. Even more pertinent, says Abravanel, is this question, for if the storm came about through the

sin of no man, why did they cast lots?

Why did not God destroy Nineveh? Abravanel displays his fine sense of justice when he answers:

God's intention was not to rescue Nineveh for the sake of the children or the animals, but because the people who dwelt there was a people like an ass: 'He is like the beasts that perish [Ps 49:13]'; therefore they were not deserving of destruction because of their beliefs, inasmuch as they were not taught differently.

Israel however was guilty not only of idolatry, but also of incest, homicide, perversion of justice, false weights and measures, and all the rest of the sins that the prophets mentioned, and for that reason they did not receive forgiveness. And with all this, God did not wreak vengeance upon them like the overthrow of Sodom and Gamorrah, for he lightened the punishment according to His mercies and the abundance of His kindness.

Accepting Jonah as a true account of a true event, Abravanel seeks to make every historical and geographic point explicitly clear:

Nineveh, the chroniclers agree, was the capitol of the kingdom of Assyria; and Jonah wished to flee to Tarshish, the city which is called by the Ishmaelites today-Tunis. It says: AN' HE WENT DOWN TO JOPPA (1:3) because Palestine is higher in altitude than are other lands, and Joppa is the harbor closest to Palestine.

He seeks to explain the miracle of Jonah's existence in the belly of the fish.

Scriptures relates that God prepared at the very place where Jonah was cast, a great fish which swallowed him whole, without breaking his integument. There is no doubt that man is unable to exist in the belly of a fish even for a single hour--not to mention three days and three nights--for man is unable to live except that a cool breeze from without blows through continually. But this fact should not undermine our faith in the miracle, for we can perceive that the embryo dwells in the womb of its mother nine months, without food or drink or performance of its natural functions, nor with the circulation of cool air from the outside; and who would deny that God did so for Jonah during those days. Does not the Scriptures testify that 'Hananiah, Meshal and Azariah stood in the burning,

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about
Jonah
on 2:1
and 2:2*

fiery furnace [paraphrase of Dan 3:20]'. There can be no doubt that they did not survive naturally, for the burning hot air would destroy the life-dependent moisture, and disintegrate the breeze in the flash of an eye--but God's omnipotence is above nature. Even greater than Jonah's presence in that place was the fact that he retained his mind and understanding, so that he could pray to his God.

Abravanel also explains why the gourd at first was so comforting to Jonah, and why its disappearance caused him such discomfort:

Then God provided the gourd, for it grew there only for the occasion, SO JONAH WAS EXCEEDINGLY GLAD OF THE GOURD (4:6), for when he had the booth to dwell under, the sun would pass through the covering of the booth and smite him on the head, for the wood and leaves of the covering were withered, and provided no shadow, but when the gourd appeared, whose leaves are large, it wound about the booth, and the leaves made a much deeper shade, therefore Jonah rejoiced in it, and wished to be rescued from this evil, for Jonah was sick with fever, as has been explained above: JONAH WAS VERY GREATLY DISCOMFITED (4:1) [וְיָנֹחַ], for this was the sickness, as I have explained--and when the sun rose in its vigor upon him, he almost died as he had asked of God TO DELIVER HIM FROM HIS EVIL--that is, the evil of his illness and the evil of his petition. When he asked for death, the gourd appeared and Jonah rejoiced in it, like the fever-stricken ones do who enjoy cool things.

Can it not be said that because the benefits of this world are not lasting and shortly end, that God provided a worm when the morning arose the following day, AND IT SMOTE THE GOURD--i.e. it smote it below, and when the moisture of the gourd left it, it drooped, then the leaves withered which provided him a shadow, and THE GOURD WITHERED. Moreover, WHEN THE SUN DID RISE God prepared a VEHEMENT EAST WIND...It was a very warm wind, AND THE SUN BEAT UPON JONAH'S HEAD, THAT HE FAINTED--i.e. the wind caused him to faint; fainting is the entering of the vital spirit into the heart--and the limbs remain like dead--until Jonah, seeing that he had reached the very portals of death, WISHED IN HIMSELF TO DIE, that is, he said to his soul;--Go forth from me for IT IS BETTER FOR ME TO DIE THAN TO LIVE, lest I see the evil that befalls my people.

Abravanel is a good observer of life and the human psyche. Fine and telling is his remark that man is often led to sin either because he observed it in a

wise man when the latter sins and believes he has gained something valuable, or he is led to sin by friends or relatives, or he follows the general custom which he does not wish to leave and reflects on the dictum, 'Separate not thyself from the congregation [Abot 2:5]', and thus departs from the straight path.⁶⁵

On the basis of his psychological observations he offers numerous ethical maxims and original insights into worldly affairs:--False declaration is inherently bad. It should be directed neither against friends nor enemies.⁶⁶ A man can ask his companion a decent question, but pervert it in the manner in which he asks it.⁶⁷

Strange-sounding in the mouth of a sensitive man who suffered much is his saying:--Irregular deaths are necessary in the world; were it not for disease, etc., the world would be unable to support its people.⁶⁸ The greatest honor is the conquest of the enemy.⁶⁹ The noble man should prefer the death of the criminal except when by his death the crime would continue to be perpetrated anyhow.⁷⁰

He has a fine interpretation of [Dt 1:17]:--'You shall not think that you can read the face of a litigant, or determine whether a man is guilty or not and condemn him on the fact that his face may change color.'

Abravanel also makes physical observations which he utilizes for the interpretation of various passages in the Bible. Interpreting Exodus 14:19-20 in regard to the pillar of fire and smoke he writes:--Since the pillar of fire was immediately before the faces of the Egyptians and the pillar of smoke behind they could see nothing.

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For this also happens in the night when a shining light is before the eyes--then one is unable to see what is behind the light.

The word of our sages, 'The face of Moses was like that of the sun' [E.R. 75a], he explains as follows:-- The body of the sun illumines on both sides and thus Moses-- he shone on the one side because of his prophecy and on the other because of his statesmanship and political knowledge⁷¹ so necessary to a people.

He finds that the best human nourishment is bread⁷² and meat, oil and wine. Nevertheless he also states in his commentary to Exodus XVI that meat is not necessary for carnivorous animals are fierce and ugly, but herbivorous animals are tame and peaceful.

He observes also the life of the animals and their traits and knows many stories about them. For example:

THE WEEDS WERE WRAPPED UPON MY HEAD (2:6) occurs to those creatures which are born in the sea, for the bulrushes, reeds and weeds grow up among them, and when the fish travel through the water, the bulrushes, reeds and weeds are often entangled about them.

He remarks about the verse, 'Horse and rider He threw into the sea' [Ed 15:1]:--the horse is more adapted for swimming than the other animals, wherefore many people who have to cross a stream, ride horses which they urge on to swim to the goal. In the Red Sea, however, no horses or riders can save themselves by swimming.

He directs his attention also to inorganic nature and to the effect of the elements. He points to the fact among others that water is a remedy and an aid to digestion.

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He mentions peculiar diseases. He describes means of communication, war implements and domestic utensils, the form, measure and purpose of various instruments, etc. 75 His knowledge is never brought forward except for the purpose of making clearer and more comprehensible passages in the Bible.

His geographical knowledge for a statesman was somewhat deficient, though it must be admitted that that study was neglected at the time. Even Columbus' charts erred. That probably accounts for the fact that he calls the Nile the largest river in the world and has the Euphrates empty into the Red Sea. 76 But we gather that he relied upon the erring writings of his contemporaries.

G. Grammar and Philology

Although Abravanel is not known as a grammarian nor philologist, he devotes a great deal of attention to these studies in his exegesis. For example, he is not in sympathy with the view that the essence of Jonah's proclamation to the Ninevites was THEIR WICKEDNESS IS COME UP BEFORE ME (1:2).

But God said that Jonah should proclaim against Nineveh what He had decreed in reference to the overthrow (3:4) if they would not repent, for that is all that is included in the word נקב [PROCLAIM AGAINST IT: FOR THEIR WICKEDNESS IS COME UP BEFORE ME]. The meaning of נקב is the same as in the verse in Isaiah [58:1]: 'Cry aloud, spare not'--in order to reprove or frighten them. So in Isaiah 58:1

One of the questions which Abravanel sets up to be answered in his Jonah commentary is: what is meant when the text says Jonah fled נִסְּאָה? For, explains, Ab-

ravel, it is not possible to flee from the presence of God. He explains the problem by analyzing the meaning of 'פָּנָיו :

Rabbi Abraham ben Ezra felicitously notes that the text reads not 'פָּנָיו, but 'פָּנָיו; for the phrase 'פָּנָיו refers to God's omniscience and providence, and Jonah could never flee from these, for the whole world is filled with His glory, as it is written, 'Whither shall I flee from Thy presence ['פָּנָיו?] [Ps 139:7]. But 'פָּנָיו is possible, referring to the escape from the close intimacy and the mastery of the prophetic spirit, as it is written, 'As the Lord liveth, before whom ['פָּנָיו] I have stood.' [I Kg 17:1]. It is also written in reference to Cain, 'Then Cain went forth from before ['פָּנָיו] the Lord' [Gen 14:16]. That is, God's providence and intimacy with Cain departed, as Abraham ben Ezra explained in connection with the verse 'and from Thy presence ['פָּנָיו] I will be hid' [Gen 14:14], and in connection with Jonah (1:3). For Jonah wished to destroy his receptivity to prophecy in order that his prophetic powers might be removed from him, as I have mentioned, viz. that the Assyrians in Nineveh might not volitionally be saved through him, because from Assyria 'there is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked councillor' [Nahum 1:11] against the tribes.

Sometimes his reasoning is very ingenious, even though faulty--but it can be seen from his sincerity that he feels that his grammatical explanations are quite correct. Consider his analysis of the uncommon phrase 'מִיָּדְךָ וּמִפְּנֵי :
 'מִיָּדְךָ וּמִפְּנֵי :

After the casting of the lots they asked him TELL US, WE PRAY THEE, FOR WHOSE CAUSE THIS EVIL IS UPON US (1:8). Now the explanation of this verse appears to me to have either one of two meanings. First, that they asked him if there was a judgment of death against him for some sin: whether it was because of the presence of some personal sin; or because of a sin he had committed against someone else, and that is why it says TELL US, WE PRAY THEE, FOR WHOSE CAUSE ['מִיָּדְךָ וּמִפְּנֵי] THIS EVIL IS UPON US. That is to say, 'Tell us for what ['מִיָּדְךָ וּמִפְּנֵי] i.e. for what the sin was, and tell us against whom ['מִיָּדְךָ] you sinned"--for because of this reason this evil is upon us. Since there are two words 'מִיָּדְךָ and 'מִפְּנֵי, the intent is two questions--and it is not as if it were but one word 'מִיָּדְךָ as Redak thought.

And I have already seen in Rashi's commentary that he was inclined toward this explanation and wrote 'Against whom have you sinned?' for by that transgression is this evil upon us. And the explanation of the text is also found in their question WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION (1:8), that is to say:--Perhaps your occupation consists of a definite sin; for instance, a gentile priest--and because of that you have deserved death by God's hand. AND WHENCE COMEST THOU? that is to say:--perhaps you have descended from wicked forefathers and God visits your sins upon you. Now both of these latter points are included in the question *וְהֵיכָן* i.e.:--how have you sinned? you or your fathers?

*translating
should mean
have been
inferred*

Another uncommon word *נָחָם*, Abravanel considers and almost hits upon its correct interpretation, although the analogies he uses are most incorrect:

In regard to the word *נָחָם* (1:6), Jonathan translates it in the Targum in the meaning of 'mercy' and Radak translates it in the meaning of favor [after Rabbi Moses, cf. l.c.] as in the expression ' *נִחָםנוּ מִן* 'His favors were unavailing' [Ps 146:4--really a mistranslation of 'his thoughts perish']--that is to say, 'God will favor us and we will not perish. The singular *נָחָם* is used because it is understood collectively.

Abravanel seems to have followed the Targum closely, and even when he gives his own explanation of a passage, he accepts 'Jonathan's' as a possible interpretation. For example, he cites the Targum translation of *יָם סוּף* [reads] 'the Red Sea' and thinks that its waters might mingle with the Mediterranean's at Joppa.

*for nothing
to do
with
translating*

Often, however, he differs with Ibn Ezra on grammatical points:

It is stated NINVEH AS A GREAT CITY *בְּיָמֵינוּ* (3:3). The meaning is not that its inhabitants were pious, as Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra has interpreted it, for it was a part of Assyria, and the people who dwelt in it were evil and very sinful towards God, but it was the object of God's mercy because of its size. The word *בְּיָמֵינוּ* here is like its use in Psalm 36:7 and like *בְּ* in Song of Songs 6:6, etc.

He also takes issue with him on the matter of the prophetic perfect:

In Jonah's prayer we find that most of his utterances are in the past tense: I CRIED BY REASON OF MY AFFLICTION, I CRIED, THOU HEARDEST MY VOICE (2:3), etc. 'herefore it has been thought that he did not utter this prayer until after he went forth on the dry land; but Rabbi ben Ezra has argued against this by stating that all prophecy is found thus: "...which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow" [Gen 48:22], "...and bowed his shoulder to bear" [Gen 49:15], "there shall come a star out of Jacob" [Is 24:17], "but Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" [Dt 32:15], "When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them" [Dt 32:19], "Israel dwelt [really 'shall dwell'] in safety alone" [Dt 33:28]. 'he proof that is given to show that Jonah's prayer is in the future tense is YET I WILL LOOK AGAIN TO THY HOLY TEMPLE (2:5), BUT I WILL SACRIFICE UNTO THEE WITH THE VOICE OF THANKSGIVING (2:10), I WILL PAY THAT WHICH I HAVE VOWED (2:10). The reason, it is said, that other Biblical utterances are given in the past tense for the future meaning is that they are prophetic, and since the prophets recognized that the words were preordained by God, they would recite them as if they actually had been in the past, inasmuch as they were foreordained by His exalted omniscience. But it appears to me that it is not necessary to apply the good and excellent dictum of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra here, for in this prayer there is no past tense for future meaning. But here the matter is comparable to the thought expressed in Psalm 129:1: 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.' That is to say, in my childhood did ~~they~~ not death spring upon me? [reference to legend that Jonah was son of Shunammite woman whom Elijah revived, see II Kgs 4:8-37] and I was prepared for the grave--but in the days of Elijah I CRIED BY REASON OF MY AFFLICTION UNTO THE LORD, AND HE ANSWERED ME OUT OF THE BELLY OF HELL (where I was prepared for the grave) CRIED I, AND THOU HEARDEST MY VOICE (2:3). At this later time he was reminded of the miracle that was performed for him at the time of Elijah, when he was quickened after his death, and for this reason he says I CRIED, all in the past tense. Not however that he had called and actually cried in the past, but it is merely a reminder of the past miracle, and he wished to say that at this time He had performed an even greater miracle for him--FOR THOU HADST CAST ME INTO THE DEEP, INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEAS (2:4), which is an indication that he was in the belly of the fish in the sea.

Sometimes, but very seldom, he can explain a point without the usual verbiage, thus:

WHEN THE SUN DID ARISE God prepared a VEHEMENT

[מרישית] EAST WIND, that is it raised a tumult until it deafened [סחריש] Jonah's ears (4:8).

But usually he is most prolix; thus to Isaiah 53:10 וְהוּא חָפֵץ דַּבְּרוּ הוֹחֵלִי, he wishes to explain the meaning of הוֹחֵלִי. It is possible, he says, to think that it comes from וְהוֹחֵלִי, but this is not possible since וְהוֹחֵלִי comes from the radical חָל, whereas הוֹחֵלִי is from the root חָלַח. 77

Although Abravanel strives to be meticulous in his grammatical principles, it is most surprising that in his style of writing he constantly confuses the masculine and the feminine agreement, which makes his reading sometimes difficult.

He works also with hermeneutic laws as they appear 78 in the Talmud and Midrash and in the later commentators. He also applies certain philological and syntactical rules. For example, in comment on Deuteronomy 1:9 he says:-- You will often find in the stories of the Pentateuch, that the story is finished in another passage although the event had not taken place at that time. To Isaiah 25:12 he points to the change of the second and third person in the speeches of the prophets whereby many difficulties are removed. Thus he is able to explain many passages satisfactorily. It is interesting to note that Abravanel in his introduction to Isaiah X, question 6, had already remarked that verses 6-7 in chapter XLI belong after 40:20.

In an introduction to Jeremiah he discusses in detail the question of the kere and the ketib. He cites

the view of David Kimhi, of whom he ordinarily thinks much, and of Efodi, both of whom believe that Ezra in writing down the Biblical text found varied readings due to mutilations and confusion. He refutes this remark by saying that 'the matter is not so, as these sages think--may the Lord forgive them for their point of view.' His view, on the other hand, is that 'Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly found the texts exactly as they had been written. Before Ezra, however, undertook to vocalize the text ^{insert} [אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ כְּתוּבִים] as well as the verse endings [אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ כְּתוּבִים], he paid particular attention to the text in regard to the word and meanings which appeared strange. Ezra thought, however, that this might be the result of either of two reasons. In the first place the desire of the writer to inject an esoteric meaning into these strange expressions [אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ כְּתוּבִים] compatible with his prophetic disposition and wisdom, prevented Ezra from striking out not even one word. Therefore he left the text stand as written, but wrote in the margin a kere which so muddled the meaning. Of this type, says Abravanel, are all the kere and katib notations in the Pentateuch. The second possibility that Abravanel notes is that the words which have found their way into the Bible erroneously might have crept in because the speaker lacked the orthographic knowledge or because in the excitement of prophecy mistakes ensued. Ezra had to reconcile these words, and he did so by the keri which he noted in the margin out of fear to change the text--and there can be no doubt that these corrections were on the basis of the traditions of the sages

general
Substance
of
Hunting
pp 79-82
(unrefined)

and prophets who preceded him. Most of the kere and ketib variations of Jeremiah are of this type, for Jeremiah had so written them erroneously.

The boldness of Abravanel's studies here deserve the greatest astonishment. His attitude toward the vocalization of the Biblical text explains in part his relation toward the pointed text. For in many cases he takes the liberty of altering the pointing. Thus, in Gen 15:5 he explains וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו as וַיֹּאמֶר and וַיֹּאמֶר as וַיֹּאמֶר. Moreover Abravanel considered that an interpretation which overlooked the accents was ad-
79
missable. He also strives in many places to indicate the
80
function and meaning of accents.

Abravanel pays much attention to the priority in
81
those passages where definite deviations occur.

Concerning numbers in the Bible which often contradict one another, Abravanel says that "as for the numbers which occur in the Pentateuch and the in the Prophets, the reporter was anxious to inform us only of the large
82
figures and not of the small." To Genesis I [preface] he speaks of the significance of language. Common language, he says, is an important factor in social life and brings people closer to one another; differences in language, on the other hand, make for separation and division. He discusses in detail the metre and the rhythm of the
83
Bible. He concludes in commenting on Gen 2:23 that the Hebrew language is the first and the oldest.

His words concerning money betray the finance minister. To Isaiah 1:22 he writes, "Because the circul-

ating coins is a common thing, belonging to the state and its inhabitants, for good or bad, therefore the prophet censured the people on account of the forging of circulating money in that they mixed ore and dust with the silver."

To explain obscure words Abravanel sometimes resorts to philological comparisons between Arabic and Hebrew.
84

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H. His Love of Israel and the Land of Israel

Abravanel truly sympathizes with Jonah who is forced to prophecy against the Ninevites to the end that they shall repent and eventually over-run the land of Israel. Despite the great suffering that he underwent, Abravanel sincerely believed that eventually the Messianic Age would usher in an era of happiness for the Jews, for indeed God supervises Israel with an especial and supernal care. He constantly reiterates this belief.

Together with Israel, the land of Israel found a warm spot of God's affection. A previously cited passage [page 22, line 10] has indicated that prophecy can exist only in Palestine. To Deuteronomy 3:45 Abravanel raises the question why Moses' petition to enter the Holy Land was not heard, for indeed 'repentance always avails'. Abravanel goes to great lengths to show that it was not because of Moses' transgression~~s~~ at the waters of Meribah, but solely because by his questioning he provoked the messengers to give that monstrous description of Palestine which discouraged that generation, and for that reason they

did not come to Palestine.

To Exodus 23:20, Abravanel gives a fine picture of the place of the Holy Land in the cosmos. Divine Providence is the lot of the Jews there as long as they remain. Then the Lord is their God and Guardian without the possible intervention of demon or even angel.

Abravanel is deeply rooted in the traditions of his fathers and in the unity of his people. His experiences in common with them revealed to him their greatness. He hoped some day to experience with them their redemption, which he placed in 5291.

To Hosea 2:16 he wrote: This verse indicates that Israel will one day leave Galut either willingly --for God will give them the will to leave house and home in the exile and wend their wend to Palestine--or as a result of persecution by the kings of the land, saying:--Up, leave, my people. And so Israel will turn its face East. Here Abravanel spoke almost like a prophet.

Very truly Gruenberg says:--Although he began early as a critic of the Bible he succeeded like Akiba 'to walk in peace in Pardes and to leave it in peace.' His commentaries are not only a source of instruction but have ~~xxx~~ become a treasury of Hebrew knowledge, open to both Jew and gentile. Abravanel is a well-nigh perfect prototype of the eternal Jew: wandering, suffering, thinking, he yet dedicates his best efforts to society, his people and to God.

NOTES

ISAAC ABRAVANEL AS AN EXEGETE, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HIS COMMENTARY ON JONAH

1. Introduction to comm. on Kings.
2. Karpeles, G. "Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur", p.827
3. "At the time of the first expulsion," wrote Isaac ben Giat, two families of Davidic descent came to Spain. One was the family of Daud who settled in Losena; and the Abravanel family that settled in Seville." Comm. on Zech 12:6.
4. "Geschichte der Juden", Vol. 8, p. 334. *What Edit? note in this page in my Ed. of 1890*
5. "...I appeared, Isaac, the son of my master, the prince Judah ben Samuel ben Judah ben Joseph of the Abravanel family of Spain."--Intro. to Mayene Ha-Yeshuah.
"...I, the man Isaac, the son of that dynamic individual, rich in deeds in Israel, greet is his name: Judah ben Samuel ben Judah ben Joseph ben Judah of the Abravanel family."--Intro. to comm. on Joshua. *translating into modern Hebrew and page number*
6. The original must have been Abarbanel, for so Isaac wrote the name of his family in a poem dedicated to his father:

אברהם אבינו / יצחק אבינו / יוסף אבינו / יהודה אבינו / שמעון אבינו / לוי אבינו / גד אבינו / אשר אבינו / נח אבינו / שם אבינו

Moreover, the initials of the poem spell acrostically אברהם אבינו
7. Solomon ben Virga, "Shebet Yehudah" (7th persecution) mentions Abravanel as coming from Seville. Samuel Abravanel is mentioned in the same work (41st persecution). *that is, Samuel ben Joseph*
8. For a complete list of the works Abravanel had acquaintance with, see Guttman, J. "Die Religionsphilosophie des Isaac Abravanel" pp. 22-47. *שם פרק א'*
9. "Geschichte der Juden in Portugal" p.81.
10. Gruenberg, S. in "Jeshurun" vol. 14, p.23.
11. Whenever Abravanel mentions this work he says, "Which I composed in my youth." See Shemayim Hadashim p.47b; Rosh Emunah, p.3a; Zebah Pesah 18a.
12. Printed before the intro. to Abravanel's comm. to Isaiah.
13. "I understood the man and his mind--a man desiring increase, who would take booty and plunder."--intro. to Joshua.
14. Intro to Joshua.
15. Intro to Kings.

16. "History of the Jews", Vol 4, p.343.
17. "The travels of Isaac with his son Joseph to Venice are not mentioned in Hizkuto's account, but the priest D'Russi in his Dizionario Storici degli Autori Evrei, Vol 1.V.22, indicates in his commentary that it was in 1603."-Carmoly's note in "Ozar Nehmad"1857, p.47.
18. The time and place of Genesis is given as Naples, 1622, but this is the time of the printing, and not of the composition.
19. We know this date because he mentions in his responsum that the king of Spain came to Naples then. See Hizkuto.
20. This book is also mentioned in the fourth chapter of Nahalat Abot.
21. Guttman, J. "Die Religionsphilosophie.." p.17.
22. "Geschichte" Vol.8, p.335, 345.
23. Ibid. p.6.
24. Rosenau, W. "Jewish Biblical Commentators" p.115.
25. Ibid. p.21.
26. Comm. on Zach. 11:4.
27. Intro to Major Prophets; cf. also his analysis in the preface to the Deut. comm.
28. I Sam 4:4.
29. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol 1, p. 463.
30. Ibid.
31. Gruenberg, ibid.
32. Cf. T.J. Sukkah V, 55a; Gen Rabbah 98:11, Pirke D'Rab Eliezar 41a.
33. Jerome, intro to comm. on Jonah. Amittai is connected with נחמיה. Cf. I Kgs 17:24.
34. Gruenberg, ibid. Cf also Jewish Encyclopedia s.v. Abravanel.
35. Cf. also "bravanel's intro. to Major Prophets; Jer. 5:1:
 וְאִין דַּעַתִּי נִחוּחַ עִם אֶחָד מִחֲפָצֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַיָּמִין
 דַּרְשָׁן, וְשֶׁהַשְׂמִינִי הָיָה הַנֶּכֶדֶךְ כִּפְיָהּ הַפֶּסֶס
 Particularly interesting are his remarks to Isaiah 26:8
 and intro. to Isaiah 22.
36. Cf. also Jer. 48:9:
 וְאִין דַּעַתִּי נִחוּחַ עִם אֶחָד מִחֲפָצֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַיָּמִין
 בְּלִי שְׂמִינִי עַל הַלְשָׁן

37. The Biblical proofs, needless to say, are Abravanel's. This is what makes his citations so hard to untangle-- he is both eclectic and original in his work. The rest of this very long Midrash is not quoted.
38. Comm on Jonah 2:11.
39. Last paragraph of Commentary.
40. Gruenberg, ibid.
41. Cf. Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible" [Ed. N.Y. '24] s.v. Jonah and Nineveh.
42. Cf. Is 42:1, Zac 3:3.
43. Cf. Dt. 5:6, Gen 2:4.
44. Isaiah 10:12
45. Gruenberg, ibid.
46. Geschichte, p.82 *volume 2*
47. Kerpeles p. 82.
48. In "Jost's Annalen" 1840
49. Ibid p.7.
50. Gruenberg, ibid.
51. Gruenberg, ibid.
52. Cf Guttman and Gruenberg.
53. Compare, for example, his studies to Rashi's and Ibn Ezra's explanations to Zach 9:12. See also Zach 10:3.
54. To Lev 19:20: *סוף ערך חלוקת על קבלות גבוהים של כיהם*
To Lev 11:13: *כך נראה וכן שמים קבלה נקבל*
55. Thus his explanation to Lev 19:27: *אשר פחת האדם לעולם אשם* *So the eye + 4 corners Rashi*
56. To Dt 4:15, as in many other passages, Abravanel deals with astrology. Compare also his comm. to Ex 23:20: "I have already told thee twice that our sages and astrologers have affirmed that every people and every city has a star in heaven."
57. Cf. Sabbath 156a.
58. Isaiah 7:14; 9:5; 11:1
59. Dt. 24:1.

61. To Isaiah 34 he writes of him: "A sage of our people who deserted the faith: Solomon Ha-Levi, who was made afterwards a prince, and was exalted by the Christians. In comm. to I Sam 5 he cites the views of apostates on question of the best state--republic or monarchy.
62. Talmudic expression 'אין פסחין אף. Pesachim 50a.
63. See Guttman p. 98ff.
64. Compare esp. to Zach 10:3.
65. Dt 13:2
66. Dt 7:1
67. Dt 1:22
68. Dt 7:12 *undoubtedly original context was such consulted for Greenberg's conclusion is not justified - see my report*
69. Ex 23:25
70. Gen 12:11. Compare Pesachim 25b.
71. Lev 32:33.
72. Ex 29:8.
73. Isaiah 55
74. In Zach 14:12 he speaks of French disease.
75. Dt 3:11
76. Gen 2:13
77. Cf. Gen 1:1; Ex 15:1; Zach 2:16; Jer 11:15. (Greenberg p. 78)
78. I Kg 5:16; Hab 2:4
79. Is 8:9
80. Lev 23:16; Gen 22:4
81. II Sam 22; Is 2:2-5; Intro to Hosea, 3rd question; II Sam 23:8.
82. Comm to Dan 12 (12th source, 1st gate).
83. Ex 15.
84. Eppenstein, S: "Ha-Eshkol" Vol 2, p.199, note 3.
85. Hos 2:16.

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