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Report on the thesis of Sandra Katz
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KOHELET IN ME'AM LO'EZ

In this thesis, Sandra Katz, the descendant on her mother's side of a renowned family of Turkish Sephardim, has successfully sought to deepen her knowledge of her heritage and to contribute to its scholarship. She thus joins a growing list of students of mine, beginning with Rabbi Shelton Donnell, S'T, of the class of 1977, who have devoted themselves with distinction to investigations of the premier corpus of Eastern Sephardic Literature, the **Me'am Lo'ez**.

For many reasons, including philosophic bent and religious interest, Ms. Katz chose to examine the **Me'am Lo'ez** commentary to Ecclesiastes. The work of Nissim Moses Abod, this commentary represents one of the last contributions to the corpus of the **Me'am Lo'ez**, having been published in Istanbul in 1898. Although Ms. Katz's study concentrates on the commentary to the first two chapters of Ecclesiastes and verses 1 through 15 of the third, the sum of this material constitutes approximately a third of the total commentary and contains its salient themes.

Ms. Katz studied the commentary in the original Ladino, which she learned during her stay at our College, and its Hebrew translation, or more correctly, often highly original paraphrase, by Rabbi Samuel Yerushalmi in 1973.

In conformity with the methodology suggested by the structure of **Me'am Lo'ez** and followed by her predecessor scholars, each with his or her own creative foci and arrangements, Ms. Katz begins with a brief but masterly overview of the world of the Ottoman Empire which produced the **Me'am Lo'ez** in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and follows it with a number of critical studies. These studies include the identification of nearly all the literary sources utilized by Abod (and Yerushalmi, who incidentally inserted material from some sources that first appeared after the publication of Abod's work), the frequency of their appearance, and brief remarks about their authors. This is followed by a brief but meticulously researched note on the patterns of source utilization; and the major themes, theological and others, discussed in the commentary, arranged by the frequency of their occurrence ("frequent," "moderate," "occasional," "hard-to-classify"), all illustrated with carefully selected examples.

No less original than the creative dimensions of the foregoing sections is Ms. Katz' careful comparison of the prologues in the original Ladino's **hakdama** and the **petiha** of Yerushalmi's Hebrew translation. In this comparison, Ms. Katz discovers the Hebrew translation's dramatic divergences from the Ladino original. "In their structure they bear no resemblance," she writes, "I looked at the title page of these two books over and over to make sure that I had the same book." (p., 76) Her analysis debouches into a brief but brilliant reconstruction of the contextual influences upon original and translation, separated by nearly a century of history.

And no less valuable are the appendixes of Ms. Katz' work. These include a list of its obscure source references and the loci of their appearance in the text; meticulously prepared charts of topical usage; a transcription in Roman characters of the Ladino of the **hakdama**, a translation of this material into English, and, finally, a transcription of the Hebrew portion of the **hakdama**.

This work represents a massive undertaking, involving a knowledge of Jewish history, Sephardic culture, and several languages. It was done with painstaking care, thorough analysis, often brilliant syntheses, and, above all, with a scholarly devotion worthy of our highest rabbinic ideals. It is my hope that Ms. Katz will soon be able to complete the study of the entire Me'am Lo'ez to Kohelet for a doctoral degree and the publication of what is certain to be a solid contribution to Jewish scholarship.

Respectfully submitted,

Rabbi Martin A. Cohen,
Advisor

KOHELET IN ME'AM LO'EZ

מעם לועז קהלת

Sandra Katz

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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Preface

Wearing a crash helmet, earplugs, and a khaki uniform, I buckled the safety belts across my chest. The catapult launched the aircraft off the deck of the carrier, and I went from zero to flying in two seconds. While airborne, the blood still rushing in my head, no doubt, I had a flash of insight: why don't I do my thesis on Sephardica with Dr. Martin A. Cohen?

It seemed like a great idea; I could explore the Sephardi half of my heritage while doing research. After speaking with Dr. Cohen about my revelation on the Navy plane, I changed the subject area from liturgy to midrash. Dr. Cohen suggested *Me'am Lo'ez*; I jumped at the chance to study Kohelet (Ecclesiastes). This field of study enables me to use my thesis work every year at *Sukkot*; congregants may enjoy studying Kohelet any time of year.

Kohelet includes twelve chapters of text. Upon perusal of the Ladino, the scope of this thesis necessarily excludes exhaustive examination of the document. I decided to limit my work to the first two and a half chapters, which still comprise the bulk of the Ladino original. I might have stopped with two chapters, but I included the first half of chapter three because I wanted to see what the author did with *Lakol Z'man*, ("To everything there is a season...").

My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Martin A. Cohen, my

esteemed thesis advisor. I have felt honored to work with such a caring, dedicated teacher. Without you, Dr. Cohen, this project never would have gotten off the ground!

Dr. S. David Sperling also has contributed to this endeavor by providing me with a sturdy foundation in the Biblical text of Kohelet.

Dr. Eugene B. Borowitz gave me the skills to recognize the style of *Sefer Ma'alot haMiddot*, which promoted a major breakthrough in my research.

To all my professors at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, I owe a debt of gratitude. When I arrived in Jerusalem, I was a scared kid from Oklahoma who didn't know much. Now I am a terrified kid from I-forget-where who has forgotten even more.

Introduction

This document begins with information on the history of the Ottoman Empire, with special focus on its Jews. This will lead to a discussion of the text of this thesis, *Kohelet in Me'am Lo'ez*, an anthology first published in Istanbul in 1898 by Nissim Moshe Abod. Rabbi Samuel Yerushalmi's Hebrew translation dates from 1973. This paper will then consider source documents Rabbi Yerushalmi cited: who wrote them, where, when, and how frequently they operated in *Me'am Lo'ez*. Then I will describe some classifications under which I believe the text falls, evaluating frequency of use and other patterns. I follow this with a comparison of the Ladino introductory material and the Hebrew upon which I have based the majority of my research. To close this thesis, I will reflect on the process of the research.

Readers may note that I use the following convention: where gendered language occurs in source material, either in reference to God or to human beings, I quote as the words stand. In my own writing, I use gender-neutral terms.

The more I study history, the more I realize that I cannot know for certain what really happened. Due to the subjective nature of historical research, coupled with the inexact measuring devices applied to the analytical work, I ask the reader's tolerance regarding the ambiguity of

historical "fact" and the potentially-arbitrary way I grouped material. These factors add distinction and complexity to the process of thesis-writing.

Ottoman Empire and Me'am Lo'ez

Establishment of the Empire

As the Byzantine era drew to a close, the forerunners of the Ottoman Empire began their "slow invasion" of the Middle East.¹ By the middle of the eleventh century, the Seljuk dynasty had brought the territory under the influence of Islam.² Uthman ruled the area from 1288 to 1326. Under Urkhan (1279-1359), the Ottomans captured Bursa in 1326, where Jews had been living since the destruction of the Second Temple³.

In 1453 Sultan Mohammed II (1430-81) began the Ottoman control of Constantinople. "The main problem insofar as the sultans were concerned was not to suppress or convert non-Muslim subjects but to organize and control them so that they would keep order, obey the law, and pay their taxes."⁴ Sultan Mohammed II thus introduced the *millet* system to accommodate the three creeds, especially the Islamic belief that the other two were subordinate. The *millet* system facilitated religious toleration by creating separate spheres in which different groups functioned; the autonomous groups each contributed to the Sultan's tax revenues, and through them he enforced his regulations by the agency of insiders in the community.

Jewish immigration to the Ottoman Empire reacted to the conditions in Western Europe and the corresponding situation

in the Empire. During times of European persecution and pogroms, the Ottoman Empire's prosperity attracted Jewish immigrants. After the establishment of the millet system, Mohammed II continued to encourage Jewish settlement in the Ottoman Empire because of their allegiance to the Sultan. The Jews responded because of 1) intolerable conditions of persecution in the West and 2) the Sultan's assurance of religious toleration in his Empire. Rabbi Isaac Tzarfati, chief Rabbi of Adrianople, related his own experience in a letter to encourage immigration: "Listen my brethren, to the counsel I will give you. I too was born in Germany and studied Torah with the German rabbis. I was driven out of my native country and came to the Turkish land, which is blessed by God and filled with all good things. Here I found rest and happiness; Turkey can also become for you the land of peace...."⁵ The pace of Jewish immigration accelerated under the reign of Bayazid II (1481-1512). Three waves of Jewish immigration originated in Iberia: one in 1492 from Spain, and surges in 1497 and 1498 from Portugal at the time of the mass conversion of Jews to Christianity.⁶ Bayezid II reportedly commented "'you call Ferdinand a wise king, he who impoverishes his country and enriches our own...' by expelling the Jews."⁷

Selim I ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1512 to 1520. During that time, he consolidated gains in territory, particularly in the Middle East (Syria, Eretz Yisrael, and

Egypt). From these locales, Selim I brought Jews to Istanbul. This assured the Jews who remained behind of Selim's power, and strengthened the economy of his capital city, as well.⁸

By numerous accounts, the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire occurred under the reign (1520-1566) of Suleiman the Magnificent. Until this time, Muslim nobles held the bulk of power in the Ottoman Empire. Wealthy Turkish families felt comfortable with the influx of Jewish immigrants during this era. Jews arrived from Eastern and Western Europe, bringing their trades and skills with them and learning new ones. However, when Suleiman installed a Christian convert as an influential minister, the system of aristocratic rule began to erode.⁹ As in Iberia, when the nouveau-riche rose to power, Jewish freedom sounded like a recipe for sedition.

According to one source, reversals began under Selim II (1524-1574, reigned 1566-1574).¹⁰ Another writer notes that the decline began with Murad III (1576-1595), with the re-introduction of restrictions on Jews and the dissolution of peace¹¹. According to a third, the Ottoman Empire began its decline at the end of the seventeenth century¹². By 1699, a fourth source maintains that the Empire had lost nearly all its European territory¹³. Regardless of when the deterioration began, the systems perfected during the Golden Age started to malfunction. Weakened by war and cash shortages, the Ottoman rulers thrashed wildly, imposing what

rules they could on their hapless subjects. In turn, the organization of the Jewish community, without the lubricating effect of capital, began to sputter. With the crumbling infrastructure, the poor became more desperate, disease spread, and Jewish knowledge took a back seat to survival.

Shabbtai Zevi

In a chaotic environment, religious fervor began to take the place of gainful endeavor. Messianic hopes skyrocketed, informed by extrapolations from Lurianic kabbalah. The time was ripe for the false Messiah Shabbtai Zevi. Born in Izmir in 1626, Zevi engaged in unconventional behaviors; he married the Torah, and publicly undermined halacha. With the support of Nathan of Gaza, he declared himself the messiah in 1648. Zevi's influence mounted, creating disruption in Jewish communities. Although he had predicted that the final day of judgement would arrive in 1666, instead that year marked Zevi's conversion to Islam.¹⁴ This compounded the confusion in the Jewish community: some Jews converted to Islam in imitation of Zevi, while some remained Jewish messianists and others rejected the movement altogether.

After the Shabbatean revolution, the Jewish community clamped down on further forms of dissidence. "Jewish community organizations now became the watchdogs of morality and suppressors of all signs of luxury. Memunim walked

around each quarter and street entering homes, shops and synagogues alike, helping the poor and the sick to be sure, but at the same time watching out for even the smallest violation of public or individual morality and notifying the community leaders so that the proper punishment could be inflicted.... The *memunim* would attribute [any] suffering to impiety.... Even the slightest mistake during religious services or infraction of the most complex *takkanot* would lead to severe chastisement and punishment...."¹⁵

End of the Empire

Sultan Mahmud II (1808-39) realized that the strengthening nationalism of Europe contributed to the decline of his empire. Rather than restoring institutions of the Empire, Sultan Mahmud II pledged to replace them with a modern system. He laid the groundwork for *Tanzimat* (re-orderings); his two sons, Abdül Mecid (1839-61) and Abdül Aziz (1861-76) carried out the plans, with the help of "a group of modernist bureaucrats led by Grand Vezir Mustafa Reşid Pasha."¹⁶

In the newly reorganized Jewish community, the Grand Rabbi held tremendous power. He served the Ottoman government as a representative, he administered the operations of the Jewish community, and the Jewish community looked to him as its spiritual leader.¹⁷ Modernization re-invigorated ties between Eastern Jews and those in Europe. Once again, as in the Golden Age, Jews had opportunity to

prosper in trade. Of course, such affluence did not sit well with Christian neighbors, who resisted Jewish resurgence.¹⁸ The renewed abundance in the Jewish community resulted in a vigorous growth of Jewish popular printing. Led by the reputation of *Me'am Lo'ez*, Judeo-Spanish periodical publications proliferated in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹

Eventually, Christian animosity toward Jews erupted into violence. Modern pogroms, spurred by nationalism among Christian groups as much as anti-Semitism, began in Eastern Europe and moved into the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Some Jews found refuge in Salonika and Izmir, but late nineteenth-century persecution dislodged many Jews who did not find safe haven.²⁰

Controversy surrounded the reign of Sultan Abdül Hamid II (1876-1909); he brought Turkish society into modernity, but in the process, he repressed the movement toward democracy. "Ottoman modernization culminated during what has come to be known as the Young Turk period, from 1908 to the end of World War I, when efforts to democratize the system through Constitutional government led to an intense but very short period of political, social, and economic democracy between 1908 and 1912."²¹

Between 1882 and 1904, Eastern European Jews began to relocate in Eretz Yisrael in what became the First Aliyah. The ranks of socialists in the Holy Land swelled during the

Second Aliyah (1904 to the beginning of World War I).²²

"Despite [his] declarations and policies, however, the Sultan continued to want Jews to settle elsewhere in the Empire, so in his responses, which were as vague as [Theodore] Herzl's requests, he avoided closing the door, instead promising to... make a public proclamation favorable to Jews at a suitable opportunity."²³

"Jews had served actively in the Ottoman army during the Balkan Wars, and they continued to serve with distinction during World War I, responding enthusiastically to the general mobilization decrees...."²⁴ However, after the armistice in 1918, the victorious Allies attempted to re-establish the old *millet* system, erasing the progress of the previous hundred years. This led to the Turkish War for Independence (1918-23), which concluded the Ottoman Empire.²⁵

Jewish Education

As with so many other aspects of culture, the long and short of Jewish education is that it flourished in prosperous times and withered in lean times. During the Golden Age of Ottoman Jewry, children studied on two tracks. For those who could afford it, a learned community leader ran a *heder*; the community maintained a *talmud torah* for children of the poor.²⁶ "Both schools taught Hebrew reading and prayers, the Bible with its *ladino* translations and explanations, the cursive *rashi* Hebrew script used for

the Judeo-Spanish of the Sephardic Jews, and the rudiments of arithmetic and calculus."²⁷ Students with promise went to secondary education, and a select few continued their learning in *yeshivas*.²⁸

After the messianism of the Shabbtai Zevi era, Jewish education suffered backlash, as leaders tried to unravel the effects of Zevi on a world-weary populace. "Jewish schools limited themselves to training their pupils for lives of prayer and contemplation and little else.... Temporal studies were now gone, and instead the rabbis concentrated entirely on prayer, hardly teaching their students how to read Hebrew let alone the other languages of the empire in which they lived. As the *kahals* [congregations] became too poor to support public education in the *talmud torahs*, the mass of children did not have access to any school, and so were left in complete ignorance, unable to read or write."²⁹

French Jews founded the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in order to bring culture and education to the Jews of the East. At the modern AIU schools, students learned their subjects in French and Hebrew. Ladino began to fade as a cultural force, but Jews stayed out of the mainstream of society by their ignorance of Turkish. "...just as the traditional Jewish schools had cut young Jews off from Ottoman society by teaching only Hebrew, now the modern AIU schools were doing the same thing by emphasizing French."³⁰

The *Me'am Lo'ez* had its beginnings in 1730 as a remedy to widespread ignorance. Part of the beauty of this project is that, as it spanned over a century and a half, its purpose shifted as well. What began as an anti-Shabbtean polemic in the eighteenth century shifted over time, losing the sharpness of controversy. By the late nineteenth century, *Me'am Lo'ez* reflected a culture that prized education, not pontification.

The *Me'am Lo'ez*, from its inception, enjoyed great popularity with Ladino-speaking readers. Often, sets of *Me'am Lo'ez* traded hands as dowries or inheritances. Reading *Me'am Lo'ez* evolved into a pleasurable religious duty for men, women, and children. Unfortunately, some remaining sets bear the brunt of frequent use, while many others disappeared in fires and other dislocations. The original Ladino text I used belongs in the rare book room at the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion.

Rabbi Nissim Moshe Abod's volume on Kohelet bore the heading *Otzar haHokhmah*. Rabbi Samuel Yerushalmi's translation, which I studied closely, cites nearly one hundred different tradents in the first two and a half chapters, many of them obscure. In fact, I could not locate some of his sources in my research. The English translation followed the Hebrew fairly faithfully, but the translator, Dr. Zvi Faier, began his remarks by saying that "the Hebrew

original of Meam Loez [sic] on Koheleth is an anthology of commentaries and insights drawn from traditional sources, interspersed with stories and advice whose principal purpose is to inspire adherence to the teachings of the Torah."³¹ We can learn from this that the translator 1) had an agenda and 2) did not know that Nissim Moshe Abod wrote the original document in Ladino.³²

Further, my study of the Biblical text revealed that Rabbi Yerushalmi's approach conflicted directly with the mindset of the Biblical writer.³³ Clearly, the divergent historical contexts of Ecclesiastes, nineteenth-century Istanbul, and Israel after the Six Day War contributed to the clashing views held by the different writers.

Sources

Mainstream Source Material

The Hebrew translation of *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet follows the pattern of a traditional anthology. In these books, a compiler can show proficiency with texts by citing numerous different authors and documents. In the first two and a half chapters of his document, Rabbi Samuel Yerushalmi cites some 93 different sources. He used roughly 77 recondite sources in the section of *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet I surveyed, and 16 mainstream sources. Rabbi Yerushalmi cited the following sources to which I refer as mainstream:

Kohelet Rabbah - 39 times

Talmud - 35 times

Other midrash - 14 times

Anonymous tradents (M'farshim) - 14 times

Rashi - 13 times

Sforno - 10 times

Zohar - 6 times

Luzzatto - 3 times

Joseph Caro - 2 times

Sa'adia Ga'on - 2 times

Ramban - 2 times

Rashbam - 2 times

Targum - 2 times

Bahia ibn Pakuda - once

Ibn Ezra - once

Ibn Tibbon - once.

Obscure Source Material

I refer to other tradents and sources, even though they may be familiar to the reader, as recondite. Some of these have grown more recognizable to me through the process of my research; others remain so obscure that Bernhard Friedberg's *Beit Eked Sefarim* could not help me identify them.

A search generated the following information about some of Rabbi Yerushalmi's recondite sources:

Rabbi Yerushalmi favored quoting Samuel ben Isaac Aripul (c. 1540-after 1586), who probably was born in Salonika. Rabbi Aripul wrote *Mizmor le-Todah* after a bout with severe illness, roughly 1571. He also composed *Ne'im Zemiroth*, probably in Safed. He specialized in Biblical commentaries, and emphasized ethics. Other works include: *Sar Shalom* (1579 on Song of Songs), *Lev Hakham* (Constantinople, 1586, on Ecclesiastes), and more. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet quotes *Lev Hakham* 18 times in chapter one, 13 times in chapter two, and twice in chapter three.

Elijah bar Moses Luntz came from a family from Worms; Elijah moved to Chelm c. 1700 and became its rabbi. He published *M'klul Yofi* in 1875 in Berlin³⁴. This work is cited extensively in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet, eleven times in chapter one, twelve times in chapter two, and seven times in

chapter three.

Jacob Kranz (1741-1804), known as the *maggid* of Dubno, integrated folklore into his homilies. His *Kol Ya'akov* was first published posthumously in 1819; its latest publication took place in Livorno in 1852³⁵. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet quotes this work liberally: nine times in chapter one, and eight times in chapter two.

Elisha ben Gabriel Gallico (c. 1583) came from Safed. He studied with Joseph Caro. Benvenisti's *Keneset ha-Gedolah* and *Ba'ei Hayyei* cite Rabbi Gallico. His commentary on Ecclesiastes dates from 1578, Venice. It is quoted fairly frequently in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet: ten times in chapter one, twice in chapter two, and three times in chapter three.

Isaac ben Abraham ibn Latif (c. 1210-c. 1280) may have hailed from Toledo³⁶ (Spain, not Ohio). A disciple of Solomon ibn Gabirol, he studied philosophy and kabbalah during the Golden Age of Spain. He wrote *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* in 1238, followed by *Iggeret ha-Teshuvah*, *Perush Megillat Kohelet*, and others. *Me'am Lo'ez* cites his commentary to Kohelet as follows: once in the *Petiha*, six times in chapter two, and six times in chapter three.

Scholars attribute *Orhot Hayyim* or *Zavva'at Rabbi Eli'ezer ha-Gadol* and *Lekah Tov* to Eliezer ben Isaac of Worms (11th century). They also suggest that he was the father of Tobiah ben Eliezer, but this notion is not well-

founded. *Lekah Tov* is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* once in the *Petiha*. There is a confusing reference to Rabbi Eliezer miGermaiza (Eliezer of Worms) as the author of *Hemdat Yisrael*, which had elsewhere been attributed to Rabbi Nahman Polki, quoting Maharasha. *Hemdat Yisrael*, attributed to Germaiza, is cited frequently by *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet*: five times in the *Petiha*, once in chapter two, and twice in chapter three.

Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome (c. 1261-after 1328), known in Italian as Manoello Giudeo, "Immanuel the Jew," belonged to the Zifroni family of Rome. He composed *Mahbarot*, poems and *melizot*, which were first published in 1491. His work was published again in Constantinople in 1535. His last composition, *Mahberet ha-Tofet ve-ha-Eden* (Prague, 1613), includes material inspired by Dante. Although he wrote commentaries to most of the Bible, if a commentary to *Kohelet* exists, it remains unpublished. Rabbi Immanuel of Rome wrote *Leket Shoshanim*, which Rabbi Zevi Graetz reorganized in 1861³⁷. This document is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* seven times in chapter two.

Hayyim Joseph David Azulai (1724-1806), known by Hebrew acronym HIDA, was born in Jerusalem. He studied with Jonah Navon, Isaac ha-Kohen Rapoport, & Hayyim ibn Attar. His diary, *Ma'agal Tov*, chronicles his extensive travels. He died in Livorno. His works include texts on halakha (*Birkei Yosef*, *Shiyyurei Berakhah*), bibliography (*Va'ad la-Hakhamim*,

Shem ha-Gedolim) and collections of folk-stories (*Zikhron Ma'asiyyot ve-Nissim*). *Homot Anakh*, published in 1813, is attributed to him; *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* quotes this work twice in chapter one, once in chapter two, and once in chapter three. Rabbi Yerushalmi also cites another work attributed to HIDA, *Nahal Eshkol*, published in 1889. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* refers to it twice in chapter two.

Scholars from Carpentras, France include Hanan ben Nathan Ezobi, Abraham Malakhi (13 century), Mordecai ben Isaac (early 14th century), Joseph Carmi (Crémieu[x]), Mordechai Astruc, Saul ben Joseph of Monteux, Mordecai ben Jacob. *Sefer ha-parishot* originated in Carpentras, roughly 1700³⁸. It is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* four times in chapter one, and once each in chapter two and in chapter three.

Spanish rabbi, philosopher and preacher Isaac ben Moses Arama lived circa 1420-1494. He counteracted Christian conversionist sermons, and engaged in public disputations. After the Expulsion from Iberia, he moved to Naples. Hasdai Crescas influenced his anti-Aristotelian, anti-Maimonidean views. Rabbi Arama wrote *Akedat Yitzhak*, a book of two-part philosophic homilies (*derisha & perishah*), first published in Salonika 1522. *Akedat Yitzhak* is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* five times in the *Petiha*.

Historians differ regarding the dates of Joseph Taitazak, the 16th century talmudist, Bible scholar,

kabbalist of Salonika. Rosanes claims his dates are 1487/88-1545, but Scholem disagrees. Rabbi Taitazak communicated with Joseph Caro. *Porat Yosef* on Ecclesiastes was published in Venice in 1529, and *Lehem Setarim* on Daniel and the Five Scrolls in Venice in 1608. *Porat Yosef*, a philosophical commentary, followed the ideological system of Thomas Aquinas and Aegidius Romanus. Taitazak quoted the Christian theologian by name, rejecting others' doctrines of Aristotle in favor of Aquinas'. Scholars claim that Taitazak was an aesthete who believed that God spoke to him in Hebrew. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet quotes *Porat Yosef* twice in chapter one, twice in chapter two, and once in chapter three.

The 14th-century scholar David ben Joseph Abudarham, Ibn Hayarhi, wrote *Sefer Abudarham* in 1340 in Seville. He referred to the Talmuds, decisions of geonim, and additional source material of Spanish, Provençal, and Ashkenazi origins. He utilized material by Sa'adia Ga'on. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet cites Ibn Hayarhi three times in the Petiha and once in chapter 3.

Joseph ben Moses diTrani (1536-1639), was known as the Maharit. Born in Safed, this rabbi and halakhist moved to Constantinople in 1599. Wrote *Zofnat Pane'ah*, Venice, 1648. Abbreviated in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet notes as HaRID, Rabbi Yerushalmi cites him twice in chapter one, and once each in chapter two and chapter three.

Hungarian-born Menahem Mendel Deutsch, also called David ben Menahem Mendel (1756-1831), published *Ohel David* 1822; his grandson Menahem published Menahem Mendel's novellae in 1867. Other works are found in *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim* and part two of *Kedushat Yisrael*. He maintained friendships with Benjamin Wolf ben Leib and Eleazar ben Aryeh Loeb Roke'ah (author of *Shemen Roke'ah*). *Mevi Zemah*, attributed to Menahem Mendel in *Beit Eked Sefarim*, was published in 1939. This work was cited in *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* twice in chapter one, and once in chapter two.

The years 1788 to 1869 marked the lifetime of Hayyim Palache (Palaggi), known by the acronym HaBIF, a rabbi and hakham bashi from Smyrna (Izmir). As hakham bashi, he led the Jewish community. He wrote: *Darkhei Hayyim* Izmir, 1821 on *Pirke Avot*; *Lev Hayyim*; *Nishmat Kol Hai*; *Zedakah Hayyim*; *Hikekei Lev*; *Nefesh Hayyim*; *Torah ve-Hayyim*; *Kaf ha-Hayyim*, and other works. In *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet*, we find *Sefer Tenufah Hayyim* attributed to him, cited twice in chapter one and once in chapter three.

Judah Loew of Prague, Judah ben Bezalel (Liwa, Loeb) Loew of Prague (c. 1525-1609) was known as Der Hohne Rabbi Loew and MaHaRal mi-Prag. A rabbi, talmudist, moralist & mathematician, he came from Worms originally. He explored many areas of scholarship, amassing secular as well as Jewish knowledge. He remained committed to a Medieval

outlook despite hearing murmurings of the Renaissance. The Maharal mi-Prag wrote *Tiferet Yisrael*, *Nezah Yisrael*, *Derekh Hayyim*, *Netivot Olam*, *Sefer Perushei Maharal mi-Prag le-Aggadot ha-Shas* and *Gevurot ha-Shem*. His *derash* on the Torah, last published in 1907, is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in chapter one and once in chapter three.

Hayyim ben Bezalel Loew (c. 1520-1588), the elder brother of Judah (above), settled in Worms in 1549. Hayyim published *Vikku'ah Mayim Hayyim*, a polemic against Isserles. He also wrote *Sefer ha-Hayyim* in 1578, a moral and ethical dissertation, and other works. *Sefer ha-Hayyim* is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in chapter two and once in chapter three.

Abraham ben Jacob Saba (d.c. 1508) - the Spanish exegete, preacher, and kabbalist - moved to Oporto (Portugal). There he wrote commentaries on Pentateuch the Five Scrolls, and on *Avot*. In his escape from the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, he lost or hid all his Hebrew writings; he later recovered his material on the Pentateuch, Ruth and Esther from memory. His works include: *Zeror ha-Mor* (Venice, 1522); *Eshkol ha-Kofer*, commentaries on the Five Scrolls; and others. From *Zeror ha-Mor*, *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet quotes once in chapter one, and once in chapter three.

Mivhar Peninim (Venice, 1546) is attributed to Solomon Ibn Gabirol, also known as Solomon ben Judah (c. 1020-c.

1057), the Spanish poet and philosopher. Ibn Tibbon is credited with its translation to Hebrew. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet quotes from *Mivhar Peninim* once in chapter one and once in chapter two.

Joseph Eliezer bar Judah Lev Edel, son of Judah ha-Lev Edel Ha-Levi, wrote *Darkhei Joseph* between 1859 and 1861. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet cites this work twice in chapter one.

Born at Zamoscz, Judah Loew ben Moses ha-Levi Edel, father of Joseph Eliezer (see above), died at Slonim in 1827. This Russian preacher wrote *Safah le-Ne'emanim* (1793); from his *Afike Yehudah*, a collection of homilies, only one volume appeared (Lemberg 1802); *Me Neftoah* dates from 1816; *Mayim Tehorim* dates from 1817; he published *Iyye ha-Yam* in 1835. He wrote other works, as well. *Afike Yehuda* is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in chapter 1.

Moses ben Mordecai Galanté flourished in the 16th century. Born in Rome and ordained in Safed, this disciple of Joseph Caro died after 1612. His works include: *responsa*; *Mafte'ah ha-Zohar*; and *Kohelet Ya'akov*, published in 1578 in Safed. This tradent is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in chapter three, but from which work is unclear.

Joseph ben Hayyim Jabez, (d. 1507), was a homilist expelled from Spain. His works include: *Hasdei ha-Shem*, *Or ha-Hayyim*, "Ma'amar ha-Ahdut," "Yesod ha-Emunah". One of his texts is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in chapter

one.

Author and ethicist Jonah of Gerona, also known as Jonah ben Abraham Gerondi (c. 1200-1263), came from Spain originally. He wrote: a commentary on Proverbs; commentary to Avot; novellae to *Bava Batra* "*Aliyyot de-Rabbenu Yonah*"; commentary on Alfasi to *Berakhot*; *Iggeret Teshuvah* (Constantinople, 1548); *Sefer ha-Yirah* (Salonika, 1529); *Sha'arei Teshuvah*; etc. While it is unclear which source is cited in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet, this tradent is quoted once in chapter one.

Eliezer bar Reuven Kahana was a "preacher and homiletic exegete in Karlin at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He wrote *Siah Sefunim* (Zolkiev, 1751-52), a commentary on the Five Rolls [sic], each of them having its special subtitle; and *Ta'ame Torah* (ib. 1752-65), on the accents, the Masorah, and the recitation of the Pentateuch."³⁹ *Siah Sefunim* is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in chapter one.

Kabbalist Isaac ben Solomon Luria (1534-1572), known as Ha-Ari, lived in Safed. According to *Beit Eked Sefarim*, *Mahazeh Yehudah* was published in 1886. Rabbi Yerushalmi quotes *Mahazeh Yehudah* in *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet once in the *Petiha*.

Provençal scholar Menahem ben Solomon Meiri (1249-1316) surveyed many disciplines. *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet cites his chief work, *Beit ha-Behira*, once in the *Petiha*.

Jacob Sasportas, (c. 1610-1698), born and educated in North Africa opposed Shabbtai Zevi. *Ohel Ya'akov*, published in Amsterdam in 1737, comprises a collection of his responsa. Apparently, the bitterness he experienced in his professional life marked his writing. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* quotes him once in chapter one.

It is possible that Samuel Ha-cohen of Pisa (the Luzitanian), to whom Yerushalmi attributes *Zofnat Pa'aneah*, could he be Simone, who received a degree from University of Pisa in 1554. There is another *Zofnat Pa'aneah* attributed to RaBaN, Eliezer ben Natan of Mayence, however the citation used in chapter one of *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* seems to come from a book attributed to this tradent, published in Venice.

Jechiel ben Jekuthiel ben Benjamin Anav (second half of the 13th century), the Spanish moralist, wrote the popular *Sefer Ma'alot ha-middot*, first published in Constantinople in 1512 under a different title. *Sefer Ma'alot ha-middot* appeared under that title in 1556, published in Cremona.⁴⁰ *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* quotes this work once in a major way at the end of chapter two.

David ben Solomon Ibn Abi Zimra known as Radbaz (1479-1573), moved from his birthplace in Spain to Safed. This wealthy community leader turned scholar is quoted in *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet* once in the Petiha.

Patterns of Source Use

Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet exhibits the following patterns of

source usage:

In the Petiha, mainstream and recondite sources appear in nearly-even numbers - roughly 17 mainstream sources to 18 recondite ones.

In Chapter one, Rabbi Yerushalmi used approximately 60 mainstream sources, compared to 152 recondite ones.

Chapter two contains an estimated 55 mainstream sources and 115 recondite ones.

The section of Chapter three that pertains to verses one through fifteen divides into roughly 34 mainstream references and 75 recondite ones.

Rabbi Yerushalmi drew his source material from a very wide variety of time frames and geographic origins. He cited material as early as Bible and Talmud; some sources he used were published **after** Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet. His quoted documents from Eastern Europe, Spain, Italy, North Africa, Germany, Provence, Greece, the Ottoman Empire and Eretz Yisrael.

Major areas of interest

Upon analysis, certain topics recurred in the text of *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet. From the beginning of chapter one through verse 15 of chapter three, I reviewed each paragraph in the English and noted the subject matter.⁴¹ Four areas recurred very frequently: this world, Solomon, human life, and study/wisdom/Torah. A moderate number of paragraphs focused on the following: God, Righteousness/mitzvot/tzadik, Redemption/World-to-come, Work, Death, and Evil. I also tallied a fair number of paragraphs that seemed to defy categorization.⁴² The text mentions these occasionally: Family life, wealth, food, and the body. In fact, I may have included some of these topic headings due to an awareness of concerns which occur after Kohelet 3:15.

Another issue in the categorization of text material is that of subjectivity. Although I worked as objectively as possible, I understand that human judgement operates in this process. Perhaps if another researcher were to classify the paragraphs I surveyed, the results would differ from mine. Thus, approximation factors into this process, as well.

Additionally, when I began the work, I did not know what to expect. The learning curve may further distort my research, despite my attempts to work consistently from beginning to end.

Given the above considerations, one can still comment

on the subject matter addressed in Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet.
Here is a listing of the topics I found; the number
indicates how many paragraphs belong under the heading.

Frequent:

This world 75
Human life 74
Solomon 69
Study/wisdom/Torah 61

Moderate:

Hard-to-classify - miscellaneous, Gematria 32⁴³
God 31
Righteousness/mitzvot/tzadik 24
Redemption/World-to-come 23
Work 22
Death 19
Evil 18

Occasional:

Family life 11
Wealth 8
Food 6
Body 5

Some paragraphs rode the border between subject areas,
periodically showing overlap or even synthesis between two
topics.

Double references:

God 6

Study 5
 Righteousness 3
 Evil 2
 Food 2
 Human life 2
 This world 1
 Wealth 2
 Body 1
 Death 1
 Family life 1
 Solomon 1
 Miscellaneous 0
 Redemption 0
 Work 0

In this section of the thesis, we will take a closer look at each subject area, particularly the ones addressed frequently by the redactor. From each of the frequently-used categories (this world, human life, Solomon, and study/wisdom/Torah), I will present five key verses. From the moderate divisions, I will illustrate the use of three verses each. I will include examples from the infrequently-used groupings as well.

Frequently Used Topics

This world

These paragraphs from the commentary to 1:2 refer to this world:

"*Havel havalim* - it is true of the things of this world, both, in their large, total aspect, and in detail. Great things are comprised of small things, and since small things are *havel havalim*, so, too, are the great things *havel*." ⁴⁴

"*Havel havalim* - twice over. For there are some things which are *havel* from one perspective, and other things which are *havel* from every perspective. But whether seen in part or seen from all sides, the conclusion is the same: All is *havel*." ⁴⁵

"Another interpretation is that 'all' refers to all men. Do not imagine that for some there is lasting benefit in the things of this world. Not so! There are no grounds for envy. 'All is *havel*' - it is *havel* for everyone." ⁴⁶

"A hungry dog found a bone, and in crushing it was injured, drawing blood. He lapped at the blood, thinking that it comes from the bone. But it was his own blood." ⁴⁷

"A man errs if he values the things of this world for what they are in themselves. As such they are *havel havalim*, without intrinsic purpose. But they are patterned by the Divine Will towards a purpose that is concealed from mortal man. And it is in relation to this true purpose that this world is not *havel*." ⁴⁸

"Thus Koheleth both poses a question and provides an answer. When are the things of this world *havel havalim*? When all - all that there is - is *havel*. But if *hevel* is

joined to that which is perfect and enduring, its value is immense."⁴⁹

The following paragraphs come from 1:6:

"Having dealt with its daily cycle, Koheleth relates to the sun's apparent yearly motion among the constellations. For six months it goes to the south, as each day, from the onset of summer to the onset of winter, it rises more and more to the south. Then it turns to the north, further north daily, for the other half of its annual journey.

"Others understand the entire verse to be speaking about the wind. When blowing to the south, it is a harbinger of good; light rain follows in its wake, causing grasses to grow and vegetation to flourish. Then it heads north, ripening the wheat to golden fullness. It passes to the east, also to the west, as round and round the wind returns in its cyclic pattern.

"Every day the sun shines and its light can be compared to a wind that blows three hundred sixty-five days in the year. Thus the first letters of *saviv shav haruah* spell $\aleph \text{ } \text{QW}$, whose numerical value is 365.

"Nothing in nature rests, neither sun nor wind. The sun in the morning heads south; towards evening it inclines to the north' and, not finding rest, it draws to its place to rise once again. 'round, round goes the wind,' without respite. And the rivers too, without interruption, must flow to a sea that does not fill (v. 1:7)."⁵⁰

The author associates these quotes with 1:9:

"Says Rabban Gamliel: In the future, a woman will give birth every day; thus it says, 'She conceives and gives birth together' (Jeremiah 31:8). And when he was challenged by a student - 'There is nothing new beneath the sun!' - he pointed to the hen that lays an egg daily.

"On another occasion he declared: In the future, trees will yield fruit every day, as it says, 'It will bear leaf and make fruit' (Ezekiel 17:23). Just as leaves grow every day, there will be fruit every day.

"'There is nothing new beneath the sun!' scoffed the student. So Rabban Gamliel showed him the tzalaf plant which exudes fruit daily.

"Then he said: The land of Israel will grow buns and ready-made wool, as it is written, 'May there be abundant grain in the land' (Psalms 72:16). And when again challenged, he pointed to a species of mushrooms that rise out of the ground overnight; and he pointed to the bark of date trees as ready-made garments.⁵¹

"The Talmud relates that within hours of being formed, Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel. And when God said, 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1:28), the blessing was for the woman to give birth daily. This state of affairs continued in the animal kingdom even after the sin, as in the case of the hen, and also in the plant kingdom, where only the mushroom remains of all the 'buns' in the garden of

Eden which nourished Adam and Eve every day."⁵²

"So there is nothing new beneath the sun."⁵³

We see the following regarding 1:13:

"Servants of the king were slack in discharging their duties. Becoming aware of this, their royal master devised a strategy to alleviate the situation. He granted each man a large tract of land, rich in gold, and made it clear that they could keep all the gold which they found.

"The servants of the king rejoiced - and for many years afterwards labored faithfully mining the land. Eventually they had accumulated so much gold that they ceased to value it. However, the king's purpose was achieved. For they had been kept working and out of mischief all this time."⁵⁴

"Before the Flood, mankind lived in great abundance, and planting was done only once every forty years. So man corrupted his ways. Then, God set aside seasons for planting and for reaping, and cold and heat and summer and winter (Genesis 8:22), which bring to the fields all manner of pests and afflictions. Because man must labor day and night in a struggle against the elements, this helps him from succumbing to corrupt practices and abominations."⁵⁵

"This world where man was placed is 'a sorry matter'. He is to perfect it, thereby attaining the distinction of being a partner to God in forming the world."

"The world was created for man's use, and for this reason it is forever balanced precariously. When a man

abandons his Creator, he degenerates and destroys the world along with himself; but when he is master of himself, by cleaving to his Master, he is elevated and he elevates the world with him."⁵⁶

These quotes pertain to 3:15:

"That which has already been before us, is now being done, and either we ourselves have seen it and attest to its truth, or we heard it from others who have seen it. -It is that God seeks the pursued."⁵⁷

"This verse is also pointing to the natural order of movement and change as ever-returning. A generation goes and a generation comes, like parts of a wheel in its turning, one part in pursuit of another, one part a replica of its neighbor. So, 'that which is, has already been; and what will be, already was.' This is the will of God."⁵⁸

"'God seeks the pursued,' in that motion and incessant change are an expression of His will. Matter is displaced and destroyed, and appears again in a new form.

"All that happens to a man in the course of the year, either is, will be, or has already been. It had already been decreed on Rosh Hashanah, or is being decreed every day, and the future is foreseen.

"It is a manifest expression of divine supervision whenever the pursued is saved from his pursuer after appealing to God. And he is often saved without having been aware of the peril."⁵⁹

Human life

These paragraphs from the commentary on 1:2 pertain to human life.

"Kohelet speaks here of a seven-fold *havel*. *Havel* (singular) plus *havalim* (plural, i.e., at least two) makes three; plus *havel havalim*, equals six; plus (all is) *havel*, for a total of seven. These correspond to the seven stages of a man's life between infancy and white-haired old age."⁶⁰

"At first he is like a king, fondled and favored by all. Then, between the ages of two and three, he becomes a pig, wallowing in the dirt. At ten he is a prancing billy goat, oblivious to the damage he causes. At twenty he is a stallion, grooming himself and searching for a wife. By thirty he becomes a donkey, burdened with the support of a family. What humiliations he must then contend with in earning his livelihood! Finally, in old age he resembles an ape, having become ludicrous in the eyes of men."⁶¹

"The seven-fold *havel* also alludes to the seven decades of a man's life span. And 'Kohelet' is so placed in the verse to accent that no less *havel* are the first thirty years of a man's life at his physical prime, than the final forty years of declining strength.

"Associated with the seven ages of man are characteristic pastimes, even as the young child will delight in its toys and the youth in his games. As he

advances through childhood, boyhood, the teen years, the age of physical standstill, and into old age and the white head, a man sees his earlier pastimes as just so much *hevel*, and he abandons one game after another in constant pursuit of novelty. But then he discovers that the pursuit itself is *hevel*.

"It is part of Koheleth's purpose to exhibit man's life on earth as a succession of abrupt reversals. At one moment he might reach very high, be a monarch, universally hailed, and the next moment find himself hurled into the pigsty, ludicrous and scorned."⁶²

These citations describe 1:18:

"The chronicle of ancient cultures reveals that men lived in anguish because they denied the reality of divine providence and divine judgment. With the increase of such 'wisdom' there is an increase of anger and pain.

"There is an increase of pain also for the man whose knowledge of the Torah increases. Man's vision is partial, and there is much in what he sees that breaks his heart.

"The more a man understands the affairs of this world, the more they anger him. Two men went into partnership, and very soon the partner with the stronger, more aggressive personality gained complete control of the business, making the decisions and controlling the books. But when the weaker man's wife protested and urged him to keep track of the profits at least, to make sure that he was not being

robbed, her husband answered: 'It is better not to know than to know, which would only cause me greater anguish.'

"Some exploit and others are exploited. This is an outrage, and the more perceptive the man, the greater his outrage. Thus the Midrash asks: Have you ever seen a donkey suffering from the common cold? But man is vulnerable to all the ills."⁶³

In 2:2 we find these comments on human life:

"What Koheleth said in his day is no less true for us. We are sunk in exile, the Temple is destroyed, and the Nation of Israel is hounded everywhere by evil decrees. So if any man is exceedingly joyous for a time, there is sorrow in the end.

"There is the man who has no money with which to pay his many creditors, and his enemies clamor against him with accusations. Is it possible for him to be joyous? it is the same with the man whose many sins make accusations against him before the heavenly tribunal and demand a reckoning. Is it possible for him to be secure in his wealth and his joy?"⁶⁴

"Therefore when a man is stricken, let him not lose his trust in God. Ask not why the Almighty did this to you? Even in the generations of our classical antiquity such things happened, but they recognized the justice of their difficulties."⁶⁵

"When Rabban Gamliel offered to appoint R. Yehuda ben

Gudguka and R. Eliezer ben Chasma to positions of leadership, they refused. So he said to them: 'It is not power and eminence that I am offering you. It is servitude that I am offering you.'

"Similarly, when Rehoboam the son of Solomon took counsel with the sages, on how best to establish his rule over the people, they said to him: 'If you will become this day a servant of the people' (1 Kings 12:7). It was from his own father that they had received this knowledge on how to govern."⁶⁶

In 3:5, we read the following:

"There comes a time when one must cast away precious stones, as in the following story:

"A merchant embarked on a sea voyage with his son, with a casket of precious gems and pearls in their possession. The ship's captain saw them come aboard with the casket, and guessing its contents, thought it inadvisable to put them together with the other passengers. He therefore assigned them a special berth far below deck. The common sailors also noticed the casket; 'When we are far out to sea,' they said to one another, 'we will throw them both overboard and divide the treasure among ourselves.'

"The merchant overheard their conversation, and pretending to start an argument with his son, began loudly to berate him. The commotion brought the captain and the sailors on the run, and as soon as the merchant saw them, he

threw the casket overboard. To the astonished sailors he explained that his son had demanded half the treasure, and this made him so angry that he cast it all into the sea.

"When the ship arrived at its destination, the merchant went directly to the governor of the city, and relating his story demanded that the crew reimburse him for his lost treasure.

"'But he himself cast it into the sea,' they cried.

"'And well that he did,' said the governor. 'Had he not done so, you would have killed him for his treasure.'

"When later they asked him how he had surmised their guilt, the governor told them that he had learned about it from King Solomon, who said: 'There is a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones.'⁶⁷

"The verse is also seen as alluding to the conditions for accepting proselytes. When for instance a man converts on account of a woman whom he wants to marry, or a woman converts on account of a man, they are not considered converts. On the other hand, Tosafoth recalls the story in the Talmud of the would-be convert who came to Hillel and asked to be converted so that he might become the High Priest (something that could not be, since one does not enter the priestly clan by conversion). And Hillel accepted him. Hillel was certain that this particular proselyte would eventually convert without any ulterior motive. He was probably impressed by the profound desire of the man to

become the High Priest, which attested to the purity of his root convictions. There is thus a time to cast away stones, that is, to reject converts, and a time to gather stones, to encourage and accept them."⁶⁸

"'A time to embrace' - when a man's wife is in a state of purity; and 'a time to keep from embracing,' when she is in a state of menstrual impurity."⁶⁹

Verses 3:10 and 3:11 contain the following references to human life:

"To everything there is a season, yet men continue to expend themselves and to strive. I pondered this matter, and I saw that a thing of great consequence is involved. God has given this toil to man in order to render him humble and subdued before Him, lest he rebel maliciously against the Lord."⁷⁰

"He has placed in the human heart an attraction for being active in developing the world around him. Finding 'everything beautiful in its time,' man will be kept occupied; and his heart will not be filed with heretical thoughts in contemplating what is above and what is below."

"Another interpretation: 'He has made everything beautiful in its time' - every man is an instrument in the hand of God, with a particular talent for what he is meant to do. I the would-be rich man. for instance, He instills an urge for amassing wealth and possessions.

"Impelling man to use his talent is the fact that he

sees only the short-range benefits - what is beautiful 'in its time.' He is not overly concerned about his own tomorrow. As a result, he channels his industry into developing the earth ('He also set the world in their heart'), and to erect structures that will last after he will have passed from the world. It is because man is 'at a loss to comprehend what God has wrought from first to last,' that he behaves in this manner.⁷¹

'He has made everything beautiful.' But man alone is guilty of creating imperfection in the world."⁷²

Solomon

Rabbi Yerushalmi characterizes King Solomon at length in his commentary, especially in 1:1:

"He was called Koheleth (קוהל), cognate of *kahel* (קהל), to assemble, because it was his custom to address assembled multitudes (*kahal*, קהל), and because he would then collect (*kihel*, קיהל) his utterances, sift and purge them of all impurity, and record them in a scroll. These activities so persistently characterized him that he was personally known as Koheleth. Thus the name common to both the author of this work and the work itself.

"Similarly, our sage note that Koheleth speaks about men of great learning as *Ba'alei Asupoth* (...verse 12:11), 'Masters of Collections.' For they would collect the masses and assemble the people to hear words of Torah. Thus God said to Moses, 'Assemble to Me seventy men of the elders of

Israel' (Numbers 11:6).

"Because of all the things (masculine and feminine) contained in it, this work is sometimes referred to in the masculine gender and sometimes in the feminine. Regarding the author, it is noteworthy that the numerical value *gematria*, of Kohelet is the same (541) as Israel, thus implying that he was called Kohelet because he imparted knowledge of Torah to the Jewish people."⁷³

"King Solomon was also called Agur (Proverbs 30:1), for he was a storehouse (*igur*) of accumulated wisdom - knowledge pertaining to this world and the World to Come. Thus it is written, 'And the Lord gave wisdom to Solomon and understanding (that was) exceedingly much' (1 Kings 5:9)."⁷⁴

"According to transmitted tradition, Koheleth personally verified and established all the knowledge he mastered; and his utterances passed the test of public scrutiny.

"Koheleth informs us at the outset that his was not the despised 'wisdom of the poor man' (verse 9:16) - the thinking of a man dependent on other men - but the princely erudition of a king. He was 'king in Jerusalem.' A man of serene and independent thought, he spoke as a prince will speak of the noblest thing (Proverbs 8:6), and he spoke in Jerusalem, the city renowned for its wisdom, to which he contributed more than any other man.

"Thus it says, 'Behold I increased and gathered wisdom

beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem' (verse 1:16).

"From all corners of the globe people came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. When he pronounced his judgement regarding the living child claimed by two women, a heavenly voice echoed his words: 'That is the mother!' (1 Kings 3:27). So the people of Israel and all the nations knew that his great wisdom stemmed from God. He had chosen him when yet in his mother's womb, had loved him, and passed on to him every profound secret of Torah wisdom and every field of knowledge. The people grew fearful of approaching him. When litigants stood before Solomon for judgment, under his gaze no man could utter a falsehood.

"He was divinely blessed with grace, manly beauty, and unsurpassed wealth. As a monarch he was greater than the kings of east and west, north and south, who all trembled before him, and his enemies all sought to be his friends.

"But not only was he 'Koheleth,' the monarch who cultivated wisdom, taught his people, and dispensed of his knowledge to all mankind; he was the 'son of David.' He was a king whom David had chosen over all his other sons to be king, a wise man who had been taught by a wise father, a righteous man, son of a righteous father.

"In the very first verse he informs us that it was not on his personal merit that he had been found worthy of great attainment, but on the merit of his father."⁷⁵

"In this verse, the very first of the book, it is also

evident that Solomon possessed the qualities which ideally characterize a man learned in Torah and faithful to its teaching: knowledge, humility, noble ancestry, and wealth. He was 'Koheleth,' a wise man who gathered about him men wise in every field of knowledge; he did not mention his own name, only the title he was given, Koheleth, which attests to his humility; he was the 'son of David'; and he was 'king in Jerusalem,' hence wealthy.

"On another level of significance, his throne was linked to a divine source - reflected by the emphasis that he reigned in Jerusalem. Thus it is written, 'Solomon sat on the throne of God' (1 Chronicles 29:23). Jerusalem means 'the city of peace'; Solomon (*shlomo*) means peace, and peace (*shalom*) is one of the names of God.

"'I made known righteousness before a great assembly' (Psalms 40:10), King David had said; and Solomon, too, spoke before multitudes on matters that had never been heard before.. Like his father, he dispensed justice and drew the hearts of the people closer to God. And just as David had written books, so he wrote the book of Proverbs, Koheleth, and Song of Songs."⁷⁶

Another verse with extensive commentary on Solomon is 1:12:

"This verse belongs at the beginning. But as there is no necessary chronological order in Holy Scripture, Koheleth began more modestly with the substance of the book - 'the

words of Koheleth' (verse 1:1). Yet here he speaks in the first person, because his intent is to make it clear that when he said '*Havel havalim; all is havel!*' (verse 1:2), he was speaking from a condition of prosperity and achievement, not out of privation and failure. He spoke as 'king over Israel in Jerusalem.'

"The personal tone also marks a shift away from the introductory themes of this book, to its substantive details. Until now, says Koheleth, I insisted that '*Havel havalim; all is havel,*' but as a conclusion based on abstract considerations and traditional teaching. I will now expound on this conviction by drawing upon my own experience."⁷⁷

"From another perspective, our sages point to the sequence in the present verse as an allusion to the shrinking of Solomon's kingdom. At first he was the unqualified 'king,' his dominion and eminence acknowledged from one end of the world to the other. Then he was 'king over Israel'; thus in the book of Proverbs he is identified as 'Solomon, son of David, king of Israel' (Proverbs 1:1). His realm was then further reduced, and he remained with only the one city - 'Jerusalem.'

"The three-stage fall from power was divine punishment, measure for measure. He transgressed the Torah commandment forbidding a monarch to possess an overabundance of horses, wives, silver and gold (Deuteronomy 17:16), and he was

punished accordingly. But for God's promise to his father David, he would have been deprived of Jerusalem as well.

"Because of his many wives, he even lost control of this limited kingdom for a time, and ruled only over his household. And when he was possessed by fear of demons and evil spirits, he was not even master over his own sleeping couch; as it is written, 'Behold the couch of Solomon. Sixty mighty warriors surround it, of the mighty ones of Israel' (Song of Songs 3:7).

"Accordingly, recalling what had befallen him, he speaks here in the past tense - 'I was king.' In the end, however, he regained his throne.

"Our sages recount the downfall of Solomon in the following semi-allegoric terms:"⁷⁸

"When he was at the height of his reign, King Solomon became fascinated by demonic powers, which he learned to control by trapping and chaining Ashmedai, the king of demons. But Ashmedai tricked him into removing his shackles, and then to let him hold the royal ring. Whereupon he took over the throne and hurled Solomon to a distance of forty days' journey.

"Wandering from place to place, he would cry out, 'I am Solomon son of David! I am Solomon son of David!' And people thought him mad.

"Then one day he appeared before the Sanhedrin, and the judges investigated the matter, considering it strange that

a madman should have but one purpose in what he said. Then, having revealed that he was in fact King Solomon, they cast a new ring for him, exposed Ashmedai, who fled, and sat him back on his throne. But from then on he ruled only over Jerusalem.

"Upon regaining the royal ring where the Explicit Name was engraved, Solomon regained the wisdom he had lost when overcome by Ashmedai...."⁷⁹

Yerushalmi includes remarks on Solomon in 2:4:

"'I built houses' - a reference to the two houses which Solomon erected at the end of the first twenty years of his reign: 'the house of the Lord and the house of the king' (1 Kings 9:10).

"'And I planted vineyards,' as it says, 'Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-chamon' (Song of Songs 8:11).

"It is accepted royal prerogative for a monarch to dispossess his subjects, as it is written, 'Your fields and your vineyards and your choice olive trees he will take, and give to his servants' (1 Samuel 8:14). But that was not my way, says Solomon. My houses I built myself, and my vineyards I planted.

"And so it was. The taxes that he levied had one purpose - the building of the Holy Temple. Thus the Targum renders the present verse: 'I built the *Beit HaMikdash* and I planted vineyards (for the wine of libations).'⁸⁰

Solomon figures in the commentary to 2:8:

"Until now Koheleth spoke of the common things that men acquire for the home; now, of 'silver and gold,' the possession of kings.

"'I amassed.' None of it was pilfered by his many slaves, even though slaves and thievery usually go hand in hand. Gold was so plentiful and came in such large chunks that even the scales and ingots used in weighing the precious metal were made of gold (Talmud).

"The royal visitors, who came from all over the world to partake of his wisdom, would bring gifts of great value. Thus the scripture says about the Queen of Sheba, 'And she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, camels bearing spices, a great quantity of gold, and precious stones' (1 Kings 10:2)."⁸¹

"Complementary interpretations are offered for לללל ל'ל . They are male-gender and female-gender musical instruments, or else, male and female singers. According to the Zohar, as indicated by לללל ל'ל , Koheleth was found worthy of knowing the supernal chants sung by the heavenly musicians.

"'The delights of the sons of man,' refers to public baths.

"The terms ללל'ל ל'ל , if rendered ' chests and chests,' denote the containers used for storing the silver and gold (ל'ל) and the treasures garnered from kings and provinces (ללל'ל). "⁸²

Solomon appears in the commentary to 2:10:

"Koheleth begins by alluding to the many women he saw and desired, and then married.

"The 'eyes' also symbolize the eyes of the nation, that is, the judges and of the Sanhedrin. Koheleth testifies that he prized them no less than his own eyes, and deferred to their every decision in law."⁸³

"They in turn gave him their loyalty and respect, and sought out his views before acting.

"He was not of those who foolishly exhaust themselves amassing treasures and possessions, then keep putting off taking pleasure in their acquisitions. 'My heart knew joy in every activity' - he derived pleasure from what he did at the time of doing. And leisure which leads to dissipation was not his habit."

"For a time when he was deprived of his throne, he drew upon his Torah knowledge to sustain him. 'This was my portion for all my labor' - only the Torah had remained with him.

"Thus, the beggar's bowl and the wanderer's staff 'was my portion for all my labor.' And he came to know even the pauper's unsurpassed joy of filling his belly with a pot of gruel. Having experienced everything life can bring, even extreme poverty, he could begin to teach understanding to others."⁸⁴

"Accordingly, when the Talmud refers to 'his drinking

cup and his walking staff' as constituting 'my portion for all my labor,' the walking staff alludes to *Eruv Techumim* (Solomon made it possible to walk further on the Sabbath), and the drinking cup, used for drawing water, alludes to *Netilat Yadayim*, washing of the hands."⁸⁵

Study

Study, wisdom, and Torah assume prominent positions in this commentary. In the commentary to 1:2, they appear as follows:

"The teaching of Koheleth: How far-reaching is the folly of any man who does not walk in the ways of Torah!

"Said R. Pinchas ben Yair: 'Torah brings one to industry; industry brings one to cleanness from sin;...; fear of sin brings one to saintliness; saintliness brings one to experience the Divine Spirit.' And Kohelet gave voice to his teaching by divine inspiration only after he had reached this most exalted of human privilege."⁸⁶

"The latter [regarding old men resembling apes] is true, however, only of the brutish and ignorant man, not of the *Talmid Chakham*. Thus Scripture says: 'Now King David was old, advanced in years' (1 Kings 1:1). Notwithstanding that he was old, he remained a king."

"*Havel havalim...havel havalim*. The reiteration alludes to wealth, wisdom and power. Possession of one makes a man master of the world, yet Koheleth says: *Havel havalim*; all is *havel*. Were a man to gain possession of all

three at once, that, too, would be *havel*." ⁸⁷

"It is the measure of the wisdom of Koheleth that so much, and more, is echoed in this single verse. For it is in the nature of true wisdom to enclose an entire universe in one word." ⁸⁸

The commentary to verse 1:17 also discusses our topic:

"To know wisdom means to fathom the nature of wisdom and its limits, and to know madness is to comprehend the despair and confusion of reason." ⁸⁹

"After he had absorbed much wisdom, Koheleth said to himself: I will apply it to inquire into the nature of wisdom, madness and folly, and the distinctions between them. And he came to know that this, too, was a vexation of the spirit, as one striving after a wind which cannot be contained." ⁹⁰

"It is not possible to plumb the end-point of wisdom, even if one were a thousand-fold more wise than Koheleth. The foundation of wisdom is to be in awe before God in perfect faith. For He enables man to possess his own particular wisdom.

"'Knowledge, madness and folly' - he thought to mix knowledge with folly as one mixes wine with water. But this, too, is futile, for that blend is but human wisdom, and will not succeed."

"In this sense, too, 'In much wisdom there is much anger, and he that increases knowledge increases pain'

(verse 1:18).⁹¹

"I wanted to know true wisdom by knowing the defects of madness and folly - as one values light by knowing the darkness. So 'I gave my heart to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly.

*Folly is written as שכלל (not שכלל). This implies that the things grasped by human intelligence (sechel, שכל) are not far removed from folly (שכלל). It cannot be otherwise, as only the wisdom of the Torah endures forever. This, too, is a vexation of the spirit."⁹²

We can see the topic in 2:9:

"In wisdom I surpassed any who were before me in Jerusalem the city of wisdom, in the land of Israel, whose climate is conducive to wisdom."⁹³

"[Solomon] did not imagine that he came by his wealth through talent and industry, 'my power and the strength of my arm' (Deuteronomy 8:17). He did not forget that he had surpassed all who were wise in Jerusalem before him due to the wisdom divinely granted him."⁹⁴

"Now the term אָפּ (af) denotes stubbornness and daring. Accordingly, 'ל' אָפּ אָפּ אָפּ אָפּ is rendered by our sages: The wisdom that I acquired with אָפּ - with great application and desire - stayed with me.

"The words of the Torah do not remain in the possession of him who is neglectful of them, or who studies in comfort and on only a full belly. They persist in those who drive

themselves ruthlessly.

"The Talmud recounts that when the sages of old were absorbed in Torah study, they would not even take the time to say 'Bless you!' when someone sneezed. Harsh was their reaction to one who neglected his studies!"⁹⁵

These citations come from the commentary to 2:12:

"Koheleth had made the attainment of wisdom his one ambition, 'to ponder and probe...all that is done under heaven' (verse 1:13). But he found this to be 'a sorry matter which God gave to the sons of man to be afflicted by' (ibid.). So he tried combining wisdom and folly, alloying it with pleasure. But this, too, he found wanting."⁹⁶

"I concluded that human wisdom was futile. I thought that perhaps this was so only in my eyes, because of my superior gifts. But then I saw it differently! Did I not put myself in the position of the other men? - draw my flesh after wine and hold on to folly even as my heart was instructed in wisdom? (verse 2:3). Yet I came to the same conclusion. All was *hevel* and a vexation of the spirit as one striving after wind."⁹⁷

"It came to me then that since one cannot penetrate the limits of human wisdom, to know the nature of madness and folly, a man can only rely on the wisdom that is faithfully passed on to him from his forbears. 'The *tzaddik* lives by his faith.' (Habakuk 2:4), and he avoids madness and folly by adhering to the transmitted word of God.

"God's wisdom cannot be encompassed; His commandments are entirely wise. There is advantage to the wisdom of the Torah over folly as there is advantage of light over darkness (verse 12:13).

"Folly and pleasure are fleeting, but the truth of the Torah is impervious to time. Therefore, 'I turned to appraise wisdom.'"⁹⁸

These citations come from commentary to 2:13:

"'The way of the wicked is like thick darkness; they do not know over what they stumble' (Proverbs 4:19). Then, suddenly, a man finds a blazing torch and he is spared all the terrors and dangers. Wisdom is that torch, and it illumines a man's path in this world that is likened to darkness."

"Wisdom and light also have this in common that they transform their diametric opposites into their own reality. Fire warms the water, it does not change the water into fire. Water puts out the fire, it does not convert it to water. But light renders the darkness bright, and knowledge changes the simpleton into a sage."⁹⁹

"Wisdom is not merely to be preferred, says Koheleth, it is to be preferred over folly. It is not enough to understand the good, one must understand the limits and deficiencies of that which is evil. 'Who is the man that wants life, loves the days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deviously; turn

away from evil and do good!' (Psalms 34:13).

"For this reason, Koheleth exhibits great erudition and wit in order to make evident the futilities and defects of this world. The good is then easily set forth. Accordingly he says, 'I saw that there is advantage to wisdom over folly.' By coming to know what folly is, one knows the advantage of wisdom. Although it is not possible to encompass all wisdom, says Koheleth, still, there is advantage to that part of wisdom which is within our grasp. This advantage is like the advantage of light over darkness; even a little of it overcomes darkness.

"A father did not arrange for his mentally deficient son to receive an education. 'My son does not absorb anything,' he explained to a friend.

"'You are making a mistake,' the other replied. 'Even if he will not absorb the deep matters of the Torah, he will at least know what benediction to recite, and be familiar with part of the prayer service. It is better than nothing at all.'"¹⁰⁰

Moderately Used

God

As I began my research, I marvelled how little the text mentioned God. The references escalated in later sections. This begins to occur at 1:13:

"There is a danger, however, alluded to in the word אלה, cognate of אלה (humility). If man's activity does

not bring him to a recognition of his limited power before the Creator of the world, and awaken him to humility before Him, 'a sorry matter is this which God gave to the sons of man to be exercised by.'

"Do not say, as did the king of Tyre, 'I am God. I sit in the seat of God!' (Ezekiel 28:2), but strive to emulate His ways. As He is merciful, to show mercy; as He bestows grace, to be gracious; as He creates in His infinite way, to be content to create within your limits.

"This world was created for man's use, and for this reason it is forever balanced precariously. When a man abandons his Creator, he degenerates and destroys the world along with himself; but when he is master of himself, by cleaving to his Master, he is elevated and he elevates the world with him."¹⁰¹

In verse 2:24 of the commentary, we also find reference to God:

"'But this also, I saw, is from the hand of God.' That men labor for their children after them is proof of a divine design.

"Likewise, every man's food and drink and pleasure are from the hand of God, ultimately, and not the result of his labor."¹⁰²

"Hence, 'It is not good (לֵבֶשׂ) for a man to eat and drink and afford pleasure for his soul by his labor.' It is a mistake to think that pleasure in this world derives from

one's labors; it is a gift from God."¹⁰³

The commentary has a great deal to say about God at 3:15:

"[God] loved Jacob who was pursued by Esau, as it is written, 'I have loved you, said the Lord, yet you say: Wherein have You loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? said the Lord; yet I loved Jacob' (Malachi 1:2).

"'And what will be' in the future, 'already was.' For God does not change His ways, i.e., the pattern of His rule in the world."¹⁰⁴

"A sage was challenged by a minister of the king to explain the verse 'Praise the Lord, all you nations; laud Him, all you peoples' (Psalms 117:1). Why should only the other peoples acclaim Him, why not the Jewish people?

"The sage replied: There are many evil decrees against the Jewish people which are known only to the other peoples who thought to put them into effect. And they are nullified by God without our people's knowledge.

"God created the foundations of the world, and He has created the Jewish people. Though the nations conspire to drive us off the face of the earth, 'God seeks the pursued' and their counsel is reversed.

"God seeks those who seek knowledge of Him. Thus the prophet says: 'Let us know, eagerly strive to know the Lord... And He shall come to us as the rain, as the seasonal rain that waters the earth' (Hosea 6:3)."¹⁰⁵

Righteousness/mitzvot/tzaddik

Some verse commentaries discuss the related topics of righteousness, the mitzvot, or the *tzaddik* who performs these deeds. These start early in the book, with verse 1:2:

"This [notion that all is *havel*] is true of all that is done by man in striving for the things of this world. All that one gathers will pass on to others; and the gains of later generations will go to generations who will come after them. Only a man's righteousness will remain his own."¹⁰⁶

"Our sages provide the following analogy. A teacher was drilling his pupils to count from one to nine. Then he told them about the number zero, remarking that its value was nil.

"'Who needs it then?' demanded a voice.

"'When it stands alone,' the teacher replied, 'its value is nil; that is true. But when it is place near another number, its value is very great. And the more zeros we stand to the right of that number, the more its value is increased.'¹⁰⁷

"This is similarly true for the things of this world, which in themselves are *havel havalim*. If they are joined to the Torah and the keeping of *mitzvot*, whose actual form in this world involves using the things of this world, they acquire truly great value. They become the means towards attaining eternal life."¹⁰⁸

We also see this subject in 1:5:

"Symbolically, the tzaddik is the sun; he is the righteous and saintly man who brings light to the world. 'The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, evermore brightening until the fullness of day' (Proverbs 4:18). And Koheleth says: Before the light of one tzaddik is extinguished, God causes the light of another tzaddik to arise. 'The sun rises and the sun sets...there to rise again.' #109

"Such is the divine order. Before the sun that is one tzaddik dims, and by his passing gains atonement for the generation that passes away with them, another tzaddik is there to shield the coming generation. As a result, 'the earth endures forever.'

"What holds true for mankind as a whole, is also true for the individual human being. Our sages teach: The righteous in death are called the living. Just as the sun merely dips from view and continues to shine, likewise for the tzaddik. He vanishes, but only from before our physical eyes. The sun, its light intact, is impelled to where it will rise again in the east, and the tzaddik is drawn to his rightful abode. There is full splendor is made manifest the radiance he gained by toiling at the Torah.

"The same theme is continued in the following verse: 'It goes to the south, and turns to the north.' South is symbolic of wisdom and also of the Written Law; north ... symbolizes the Oral Law, which is largely concealed from the

ignorant. Both occupy the *tzaddik* all the days of his mortal life."¹¹⁰

We find these remarks in the commentary to 2:2:

"It is implied that man can achieve great things and find satisfaction. However, this cannot be reached through the pursuit of pleasure, but in keeping the commandments of God."¹¹¹

"This [what does it do?] is said of joy that is related to matters of this world, not of the joy that the performance of *mitzvot* brings. There *Kohleth* says: 'I praised the joy' (verse 8:15). And his father David said: 'Rejoice in the Lord and exult, you who are righteous. Shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart!' (Psalms 32:11)."¹¹²

"Job spoke of the righteous, when he said: 'Those who rejoice until exultation are glad when they find the grave' (Job 3:22). Because the happiness of the wicked is linked to physical pleasures, which are fleeting, sinful men are woeful at death. It is not so for the righteous; their joy is in pleasing their Creator by fulfilling His commandments, and they are not fearful of death."¹¹³

Redemption/World-to-come

We can see references to this topic in verse 1:9's commentary:

"[A] student failed to grasp the profound teaching of Rabban Gamliel that the world will once again reach the

plane of perfection as in the garden of Eden. Although man's corruption had caused life on earth to degenerate, examples remain which hold the promise of things to come. "114

"Thus our sages declared: When in the future all the generations appear before the Holy One, He will ask: 'Who shall sing the *Shirah*, (the Song)?' And His answer will be: 'Moses sang the *Shirah* before Me in the past, and he shall sing the new *Shirah*. Thus it is written in My Torah: "Then Moses shall sing" (Exodus 15:1); it foretells that he will be the one to sing before Me at this time.'

"So there is nothing new beneath the sun."115

In the commentary to verse 1:15 we see the following:

"Drawing upon this verse, our sages declare: One who creates distortions in this world, and does not correct them, will no longer be able to set them right in the World to Come....

"The verse is also seen as alluding to Adam. That which he ruined by his wrongdoing cannot be set right, and the lost years of forfeited eternal life cannot be numbered. Nor can the damage this has caused - the 'thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you' (Genesis 3:18) - be tallied."116

The world-to-come is mentioned in 3:5:

"In a future time, God will gather up the stones of Jerusalem once more and rebuild the Temple and the city.

Thus our sages comment: At the very moment the walls of Jerusalem were being destroyed, in heaven the stones were being gathered up, to keep them out of the reach of the enemies and oppressors of the Jewish people."¹¹⁷

"Others relate this verse to the Jewish people. By prophetic vision, Solomon saw that Jeroboam would set up calves for the Israelites to worship, instead of allowing them to come to the *Beit HaMikdash* (1 Kings 12:28); and but for this development the Israelites would have been freed of the sin of the Golden Calf. So auspicious was this moment in time that had Jeroboam continued to come to Jerusalem, he and Rehoboam would have been the twin Messiahs - the one, Messiah ben Joseph, since Jeroboam was of the tribe of Ephraim, and the other, Messiah ben David. For all time, the Jewish people would have been freed from bondage and subjugation to the nations. Instead, when Jeroboam put up calves for worship on the roads leading to Jerusalem, the future might of Israel's enemies was decreed, to subdue and dominate the Jewish people.

"Thus the prophet says: 'And I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them' (Hosea 11:3).

"Hence, 'a time to embrace, alluding to the opportunity for Jeroboam and Rehoboam to embrace and bring about the messianic age; 'and a time to keep from embracing,' which refers to the consequences that ensued when Jeroboam and

Rehoboam were irretrievably separated. The Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah would be sundered apart, resulting in tragedy for the Jewish people that would last for millennia."¹¹⁸

Work

The commentary refers to work in verse 1:3 as follows:

"The verse speaks in the future tense (ya'amol, 'אמול'), 'will toil,' literally. What profit is there for a man in all his toil that he should continue to toil beneath the sun?

"For instance: a man opens a shop and at the end of the first two years he shows a loss, yet he goes on, in the expectation that conditions will improve. But only a fool will persist year after year, when for years there is only loss. The situation is similar in man's involvement in other affairs of this world. He toils year after year, driven by the urge for gain and pleasure. But notwithstanding that at the end of every year nothing remains of all his pleasure-seeking, like a fool he continues to submit to the same evil quest.

"Therefore: 'What profit is there for a man in all his toil' - of the past - that also in the future he should toil beneath the sun? What is his profit if he toils in order to eat, and eats in order to toil?"¹¹⁹

In the commentary to 2:10, we read:

"The Talmud relates that whenever the porters of Achuza

were idle, their strength ebbed.

"Kohелеth labored for one purpose only - to deepen his pleasure. 'I did not deprive my heart of any pleasure,' including the pleasure he derived from Torah study."¹²⁰

These remarks come from the section on 3:9:

"Now that Kohелеth has listed the myriad strivings which characterize man's life, the question returns: What profit is there in all that man does? The answer - his labor! It keeps him out of mischief by suppressing his natural inclination for unwarranted contemplation and dangerous probing into questions which he cannot answer (cf. verse 3:10,11).

"Another implication of 'by his labor' - the profit a man gains from his work corresponds to the labor invested. He is rewarded in accordance with his industry."¹²¹

"What profit has he who works? - by his labor!"¹²²

Death

Since the Biblical original of Kohelet considers death, commentaries to this work also deal with this subject.

These quotes come from the commentary to 2:2:

"Elisheva daughter of Aminadav saw in one day four things to make her heart joyous: Moses her brother-in-law was king, Nachshon her brother was the first among the princes of the tribes, Aaron her husband was the High Priest, two of her sons were priests, assisting their father. Then her sons entered the Tabernacle to offer

incense impermissibly, and were consumed by fire. Her joy turned to mourning.

"There was a man who arranged for the marriage of his son. On the first day of the wedding celebration he invited the sages of Israel, and anxious to please them, told his son to bring a barrel of old wine from storage. A long time passed, and when his son did not return, the father went down to the wine cellar and found him there lying among the barrels, dead. A snake had bitten him.

"Being a man of piety and greatness of spirit, he waited until the assembled guests had come to the end of the meal, and then he said to them: 'You have come to my home to eat and drink and to bless my son with the nuptual benedictions. Now you will recite for him the mourner's prayer. You were to accompany him under the bridal canopy. Now you will accompany him to the grave.

"Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai entered, and he said in eulogy for him: 'Of laughter I said, it is mixed; and of joy, what does it do?'

"For good reason, then, ללללל, mixed, is the cognate of ללל, praise. The test of mirth and joy is their outcome. If it is laughter that leads to wisdom and divine inspiration, it is to be praised; if it results in foolishness, it is tinged."¹²³

"The day a righteous man dies is called his 'day of praise' (לללללל ללל, yoma de'hilula). 'Let the righteous

be glad, exult before God. Let them rejoice in gladness'
(Psalms 68:4). "124

In the commentary to 2:14-16, we find these remarks:

"Why had I turned my eyes inside my head, sought wisdom, if I too will die? Why did I afflict myself and suffer the pain of denied passions? Why did I not follow my eyes?" 125

"Driven by ambition, a man forgets his mortality. Then, however, old age overtakes him, and, if he is rich, his family begins to look forward to his death, to inherit his wealth. And if he is poor, they cannot wait for him to die and spare them the burden of having to provide for him." 126

These citations come from the study of 3:4:

"A further interpretation states that instead of 'to wail...to dance,' this part of the verse may be rendered, 'a time of wailing...a time of dancing.' The time of wailing is a time of rejoicing. When a saintly and righteous man leaves this world, God rejoices at the ascent of a pure soul.

"Rabbi Judah the Prince left instructions that the house of study should reopen after thirty days of mourning for him. 'I am not better than Moses, for whom the Israelites mourned thirty days.'

"Although seven days is the generally prescribed period of mourning, for a *Talmid Chakham* the period of mourning

accords with his stature. It is not, however, to exceed thirty days. There is thus 'a time to weep' - the span of thirty days to mourn the righteous man; and 'a time to laugh' - to ridicule the wicked, as it is written, 'In the perdition of the wicked there is a song' (Proverbs 11:10).¹²⁷

Evil

On the subject of evil, our editor also has words of note, particularly about this verse, 1:15:

"When men choose, there is a crookedness in every choice which cannot be set straight, and a lack that is impossible to fill, for beneath the sun there is not one thing that can be numbered as being without flaw."

"Two close friends were partners in crime for many years. One of them repented before his death of his evil past, and was placed alongside the righteous. His friend was put among the sinners.

"'Is there then favoritism in this World?' he cried. 'Together we robbed, together we thieved, every crime that we committed, we committed together. Why was he put there and I am put here?'

"'Fool that you are!' he was answered. 'Your friend repented. Had you done so, you, too, would find favor.'

"'Let me repent now,' he pleaded.

"'Fool that you are! This world is likened to the Sabbath, and the world from which you came is likened to a

weekday preceding the Sabbath. And if one does not prepare before the Sabbath, what shall he eat on the Sabbath? This world is like the sea, and the world from which you came is like the shore. If a man does not prepare on the shore, what shall he eat when at sea?'

"Whereupon the man gnashed his teeth and consumed his flesh." ¹²⁸

Regarding verse 2:1, we see the following:

"'Let us try,' Koheleth says. He embarked upon this path tentatively, only as an experiment. He did not ask to be drunk with pleasure, merely to drink enough to stay merry. It is characteristic of the evil urge to come in the guise of a reasonable friend, solicitous for one's welfare." ¹²⁹

This paragraph comments on 3:2:

"The times themselves are on occasion helpful to man, and on occasion harmful. The Zohar says: The days soar about in the world warning man to be righteous. And on the day a transgression is committed, the day itself in shame rises on high and bears accusing witness. It then waits for the sinner to repent. If he repents, the day returns to its proper niche; if he does not repent but sinks deeper into the mire, the day descends with him and there it remains. So if a man is worthy, the day is his companion in well-being, and if not, it is there to afflict him." ¹³⁰

Occasionally Used Topics

Family life

The early chapters of Kohelet gave the redactor an opportunity to comment on family life. One such example occurs in 3:10-11:

"He also set the world in their hearts,' includes the love of infants that God has placed in the human heart (Talmud).

"A king has two sons. The older cleans the palace and the younger soils it, yet he is loved by his brother. Likewise God has placed in the nature of man a desire to raise children.

"It is thus significant in this regard that the word עולם (*olam*, 'world') lacks the letter *vav* (ו), and may thus be read עילם (*ilem*), a youngster. Here is an allusion to the love for sons and daughters."¹³¹

Wealth

The commentary reflects the Biblical view of wealth in 1:3:

"Across oceans and deserts, in the face of all peril, roams the man who trusts in money as the highest value and ultimate salvation. But what profit is there for such a man in all the toil that he toils beneath the sun? The wealth he gains will pass on to others, perhaps even to a stranger that he never intended should inherit from him."¹³²

Food

Early in Kohelet, we see a hint of the later mentions

of eating. These words comment on 2:24:

"...When material acquisitions are not an end in themselves, but are used to benefit the soul through just and noble action, true well-being is gained. Indeed, 'and afford pleasure for his soul by his labor; even suggests a particular way to enjoy food and drink and yet benefit the soul. It is by acts of justice and lovingkindness with food and drink - by giving charity to the poor before each meal. Thus the Zohar says: If a pauper comes along when one is dining, it is a gift from heaven."

"The Talmud says that all mention of eating and drinking in the book of Koheleth is an allusion to Torah study and good deeds."

Body

These references to the body occur in 1:17:

"King David said, 'O Lord, You have probed me and known me' (Psalms 139:1). The Holy One established the natural body processes, and only the initial steps involved in eating and drinking were entrusted to man's conscious concern - and with good reason. Conscious tracking of the myriad steps involved in digestion, for instance, would affect the process itself, cause discomfort and pain.

"In this sense, too, 'In much wisdom there is much anger, and he that increases knowledge increases pain' (verse 1:18).

"This implication can be extended from the narrow

domain of the body, to the relation between man's knowledge and his effect on the environment - earth, air and water. Man draws upon his surroundings to sustain life, modifying them, in turn modifying himself, and so on, in an endless cycle."¹³³

Hard-to-classify paragraphs

Sometimes, I just felt stuck in assigning a paragraph to a category. However, as I continued, I noticed that a few of these did create a pattern. Some of the paragraphs, as I shall illustrate, manipulated numbers or words, as if the text itself had mystical properties. Here are examples:

Number play

This comes from 1:3:

"In the book of Koheleth, 'beneath the sun' is repeated twenty-eight times, corresponding to the 28-year solar cycle."¹³⁴

The commentary to verse 1:5 also plays with numbers:

"Note that this and following verses contain together twenty-four words, corresponding to the twenty-four hour day-night cycle. This diurnal cycle is sustained by conditions established by the Creator - the constants of motion and the forces which impel the heavenly bodies...."¹³⁵

This is a classic example from 3:2:

"There are seven verses, from 'a time to be born' to 'a time for peace,' and in each verse the word 'time' (eth, עת)

appears four times. The twenty-eight 'times' correspond to the seven days of the week, which together contain twenty-eight periods. For each day is composed of four intervals that succeed one another: morning to noon, noon to nightfall, nightfall to midnight, and midnight to morning."¹³⁶

Word play

Hebrew commentators seem to favor this game which the language facilitates. A brief example occurs in 1:2:

"The very structure of the word ל'ל' points to this truth; it consists of the words ל'ל' - 'devoid of substance.' "¹³⁷

We see another example in 2:2:

"'Of laughter I said, it is mixed' - mixed with tears. The word for mixed, *mehulal*, is linked to *mahul*, as in, 'Your drink is *mahul*...' (Isaiah 1:22), i.e., mixed with water, watered-down. 'Within mirth there is heartbreak; and the conclusion of joy is grief' (Proverbs 14:3). "¹³⁸

In the commentary to verse 3:4, we find this word play:

"The prefix-letter ל' (*lamed*, ל"ד) is missing from both לל"ד and לל"ד. The word *lamed* means to study, and there is an allusion here to the law (*halacha*) that one is exempt from Torah study in order to attend a wedding or to follow a casket to the cemetery. At a time to wail and at a time to dance one is exempt from the '*lamed*.' "¹³⁹

In this chapter of my thesis, the reader has seen much

of the material from the Hebrew of *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet rearranged by subject. This gives one an idea of the breadth of scope involved in its first two and a half chapters.

Comparison of *Hakdama* with *Petiha*

When I began studying *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet, I speculated that the Ladino and the Hebrew texts might contain some distinct differences. At one point, I began to analyze in translation what I had hoped would give me clues into the redactor's mindset and purpose: the comments between the citations. There appeared to be a large section of such editorial material at the end of chapter two, following the verse commentary. Their style reminded me of Rabbi Jechiel ben Jekutiel Anav's *Sefer Ma'alot haMiddot*; under closer scrutiny, I found that the entire end of Rabbi Yerushalmi's chapter two was, in fact, from Rabbi Jechiel's section on *hokhma*. Wondering if the Rabbi Abod cited in such bulk, I searched the end of the Ladino of chapter two. Nothing came after the verse commentary. In fact, even the verse commentary for the last verse in the Ladino text looked nothing like the Hebrew.

Wondering if such a pattern prevailed throughout the two texts, I undertook the study of the author's introduction in each volume: the Hebrew calls it a *petiha*, while the Ladino terms it a *hakdama*. I continue their naming convention in this chapter, as I compare the two starkly different introductions.

First, I will look at the general demeanor of the two documents. Even though they have little in common at first

scrutiny, I shall compare key concepts as well. Then, I will examine basic contents of these two redactors' opening statements. At the end of the chapter, I will draw conclusions.

General Style

Although Nissim Moshe Abod wrote the mass of his *hakdama* in Ladino or Judeo-Spanish, he appended original material in Hebrew at the end. This Hebrew text contains phrases which parallel the Ladino beginning. Rabbi Abod expressed his views on the process of writing a book. He blessed his father, and, as in the Ladino text, described his own creative process. None of this Hebrew material bears any resemblance to any of Rabbi Samuel Yerushalmi's *petiha*, which he presented exclusively in Hebrew.

When reading Rabbi Abod's Ladino, one can almost hear him speaking; he employed a seamless, unpunctuated conversational style. His thoughts spilled onto the page in a chaotic tumble. He cited no tradents; he dropped Bible citations into his essay conversationally.

Rabbi Yerushalmi constructed his prose in a scholarly, pious style. He progressed through his material in an orderly fashion. His numerous citations indicated a studied approach to writing; the quotes he used came from a variety of tradents, both mainstream and recondite.

Important Concepts

We can understand Rabbi Abod's view on the *mitzvot* in

the following: "... the Law gives the commandments with weight and impartial measure which are beneficial and good for all. For you will see that the Law does not pressure us much to separate from / the things of the world."¹⁴⁰

Regarding study, he referred to the *pardes*, the four different levels of understanding: *p'shat*, *remez*, "*d'rush*," and *sod*. He described the phenomenon of Jews turning the pages of a book without reading them as a motivator for him to write his commentary.

Rabbi Yerushalmi mentioned the *mitzvot* as follows: "All the *mitzvot* and acts of divine service and devout preparation are splendid. They can be practiced only so long as the spirit is joined to the material body.... Act before you are too old to use the instruments for achieving perfection."¹⁴¹ He attracted the reader to his conclusions by interpreting five proclamations of Solomon and twelve principles of *Kohélet*. He seemed to assume that the reader could understand the Biblical text.

"When the Jews strayed" from the *mitzvot sichliot*, according to Rabbi Abod, "God told them He would be more content with the least, as it says in Micah 6: 'What does God request of you? To do justly and love mercy....'"¹⁴² In daily human life, Rabbi Abod asserted that justice and mercy constituted essential attributes.

Rabbi Yerushalmi reminded his readers of the reality of Divine reward and punishment, and their need for humility.

"All failures and afflictions that affect a person are related to his deeds, for God is good and upright in everything He does."¹⁴³ Further, the *petiha* noted that "man is well-advised to keep his passions under control, and to partake of this world only to the extent necessary for life."¹⁴⁴ The Hebrew text advocated a lowliness of spirit not found in the Ladino.

Broad Content

In the Ladino *hakdama*, the redactor included a brief history lesson regarding Moses, the prophets, and the earliest sages (*hachamim*, *tannaim*, *amora'im*, and *sabora'im*). He added, "to the present generation there has not been a generation without great people who have written books of Law and rebuke. All of them continued to affirm and enrich [the faith] through the Law of Moses."¹⁴⁵ He returned to the topic of fairness and justice several times, from his initial musing on why thieves steal to his final plea that the reader have compassion on the writer. He also recounted the inception and process of this venture, and his instructions to those who would buy or sell the book. "Wherefore I beg you all, that when this book comes to your hands [for sale] that you look to sell a Torah first. And one who looks to buy it and pay the costs of the book certainly will be very happy with the *mitzvah* for which it is accounted to him."¹⁴⁶

The author of the *petiha*, in contrast, kept the focus

on Solomon and the book of Kohelet. "Solomon came to Jerusalem.... He gave thanks for having merited this precious gift of wisdom.. Then the Holy Spirit rested upon him, and he spoke these three books - Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Koheleth."¹⁴⁷ He included material about the order and purpose of the three books ascribed to Solomon, and a section on why Jews read Kohelet on Succot. Unlike Rabbi Abod, he did not breathe a word about his own process of writing; rather, he stressed synthesis of others' viewpoints.

Summary

According to Rabbi Martin A. Cohen, other volumes in the set of *Me'am Lo'ez* share the difficulty of this one: translators have deviated from the original Ladino text. In the commentary to Kohelet, the translation shares very little, even conceptually, with the original. When the two documents mention a similar topic, like Jewish Law or personal conduct, they conflict. In their structure, they bear no resemblance. While the Ladino original takes a personal tone that conveys dialogue with the reader, the Hebrew translation presents a formal, didactic style. I looked at the title pages of these two books over and over to make sure I had the same book.

The disparate contexts of the two writers, less than a century apart, may account for the profound differences between the two texts. Late in the days of the Ottoman

Empire, Nissim Moshe Abod sought to publish a popular issue of commentary to Kohelet. He wanted to share his knowledge with other Ladino-speakers who had only been able to turn the pages of their Jewish heritage. He wrote in an appealing, non-scholarly style. Rabbi Abod actually did quote others' material, but, unlike Rabbi Yerushalmi, did not footnote; this, too, typifies a time before scholars guarded their work against infringement. Thus, Rabbi Abod's scholarship becomes woven into the fabric of his work, so well assimilated that the reader might think that it was Abod's own work. While his Jewish community was not homogeneous, he seemed comfortable with the ideas of the Enlightenment which had reached him.

By contrast, Samuel Yerushalmi appears to have a proseletyzing agenda at hand. In the blush of the Israeli victory in the Six Day War, his volume asserts the primacy of Orthodox, *halachic* Judaism, and its values of ritual piety and devotion to study. In the body of his text, as I noted occasionally in my thesis, he clearly distorts the message of the Biblical original. *Halacha* could not have been part of Solomon's world; to maintain that Solomon entreats his reader to observe the *mitzvot* offends the plain sense of the Bible.

Conclusion

Originally inspired by a catapult shot off an aircraft carrier, this thesis has been a real "blast" to research and write. After preliminary studies in Kohelet, Sephardica and Ladino, I had planned to study the contextual differences reflected in the Ladino, Hebrew and English versions of *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet*.

I knew that my work would involve a condensed history of the Ottoman Empire; this section reached realization approximately as expected.

However, instead of comparing translations, I placed more emphasis on the actual text of the first two and a half chapters of this work as published in Hebrew and English. I investigated the source material cited, including the tradents. Knowing their origins has shed light on the redactorial process of Rabbi Yerushalmi. Because it dealt with learning about people, the lengthy process of this inquiry held its interest for me.

Much of the work on this thesis involved reorganizing the material in the first two and a half chapters by subject matter. It involved painstaking, interminable hours poring over my source documents, classifying every paragraph. This resulted in the bulkiest chapter of my thesis, as well. As the history and source chapters, this experience gave insight as to the thought process of the anthologizer.

Originally, I had intended to analyze the way our anthologizer had blended his own material with his citations. How did he organize his thoughts? How did he decide what was important, and the order in which to arrange his excerpts? However, at that point I examined the original Ladino document. This forced me to decide on a different path.

In fact, this change enabled me to do some of what I had initially hoped to do: transliteration and translation of the Rashi-script characters of the Ladino prototype document. In addition to improving my reading facility in Rashi script, working on this process with Dr. Cohen placed me in the presence of my Ladino-speaking ancestors. We became aware that the character we met in the lines of the Ladino text differed radically from the persona one encounters in the Hebrew.

Rather than undermining the work I had already completed, I believe that my Ladino study complemented the other research. It confirmed the accuracy of the opening hypothesis Dr. Cohen and I had established. Indeed, the Ladino and the Hebrew for *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet represent two separate and distinct documents; the later one seems to have co-opted the title of the earlier, without capturing its essence. While the English translation follows the Hebrew accurately, the Hebrew transforms the Ladino. If an English-speaking researcher wants to study this text, that

individual must rely on the Hebrew; in fact, a Hebrew speaker fares no better in the search for the real *Me'am Lo'ez* Kohelet.

My Ladino study stimulated my appetite for further investigation. I believe that the Hebrew "translation" lost sight of the populist nature of the Ladino document. Thus, I believe that the subject warrants further study. Perhaps one might do best to skip the Hebrew, especially in terms of lay education, and go directly to the original Ladino. Transliteration and translation of this document would result in a wealth of material suitable for study by scholars and laity alike.

The style of Rabbi Abod's prose creates challenges for the translator. Because he used virtually no punctuation, footnoting, or other conventions of our age, simply gaining understanding of what he said involves monumental patience. Scholars may want the translator to trace the sources of the Ladino citations. The way Rabbi Abod wove the words of other tradents into his prose creates a major undertaking for the scholar who wants to determine who said what.

"Hasta el dor di agora no hubo dor sin haber gente grande que quitaron libros de Ley y de castiguirios. Y todos ellos van afirmando y acabidando por la Ley de Moshe. ...Es obligado todo modo de hombre que lo engració el Dió Baruch haShem a renovar coza de Ley o di sencilla o de castiguirio [y] de escribirlas en libro."

Rabbi Abod said that "to the present generation there has not been a generation without great people who have written books of Law and rebuke. All of them continued to affirm and enrich [the faith] through the Law of Moses." Further, he quoted the Zohar in asserting that "every kind of person favored by God is obligated to find something new in the Law, either an insight or an admonition, and to write it down in a book." The sensitivity and charm of the original document merit the attention of diligent effort. I believe that this material can illuminate a modern celebration of Succot, or any other time congregants and leaders choose to study Kohelet.

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Appendix A: Obscure references

Format:

Name - Chapter:frequency; Chapter:frequency Tradent, place, year

Or Sharga - 1:2; 3:1
 Ozar Hokhma - 1:1; 2:4
 Imrei Shefer - 2:1; 3:2
 Emtahat Binyamin - 1:2; 3:2
 Binah L'itim - 2:1
 Binyan Yerushalayim - 2:1; 3:2
 Ba'al ha-Rokeah - P:1 R. Eliezer of Worms?
 Divrei Hefez - 1:6; 2:20; 3:5 R. Jacob ben Abraham ha-Cohen, 1864
 Divrei Nehemia - 1:1
 Divrei Sha'ul - 3:1
 Derekh ha-Hayyim - 1:4; 2:14; 3:2 R. Pinhas bar Judah of Plotzk, 1804
 Derash Moshe - 1:2
 Hazon le-Mo'ed b'shem R. Y. Sagal Landa - 1:1
 Hinukh Beit Judah - 3:1
 Hakham Lev - P:1; 1:1
 Hemdat Yisrael - 1:1; 2:2; 3:4 R. Nahman Polki, quoting Maharasha, Livorno, 1820
 Yahir (Yayin ha-Roke'ah) - 1:16 R. Eliezer of Worms?, 1817
 Yakhin Ohel - 1:1
 Ya'arot Devash - 2:1
 K'tuvot koof-gimel - 3:1
 Lev La-da'at - 1:1
 Leket Perushim - 2:2
 Midrash Talpiot - 2:1 R. Elijah ha-Cohen ha-Atmari, publ. 1911
 M'lo ha-Omer - 2:1; 3:1 R. Aryeh Liebzeintz, publ. 1925
 Margaliyot ha-Torah le-Talmid haGara - 1:1 R. Zvi Bar Samuel Zeinol, Meinkovitz, 1803-1805
 Mashal umelizah - 1:3; 3:1
 Mishmeret Eliezer - 1:1
 Neta'ei Eitan - 1:2 R. Abraham (Eitan) Zakheim, publ. 1933, Vilna?
 Seder Ha-yom - 1:11; 2:1 R. Moshe ben Machir, 1876, Russia?
 Sefer Yashan - 3:1
 Sefer Kadmon - 3:2
 Ol'lot Ephraim - 1:1
 Ateret Shmuel - 2:3; 3:1
 Invei ha-gefen - 1:1 R. Avigdor Mordecai Cahana, 1863
 Pele Yo'ez - 3:1
 P'ri HaRaM Zal - 1:4; 2:2; 3:3 R. Isaac Noah Tashrex, 1909?
 P'ri Hayyim - 1:3
 Kohelet Jacob - 1:1; 2:1 R. Baruch ibn Ya'adia, Venice, 1598-9
 Kol Sasson - 2:1
 Korban ha-Oni - 2:2 R. Asher Enzil, Lvov?, 1882

R. Tanhum the Jerusalemite - P:2
R. Samuel Halberstat of Jerusalem - 2:1
Shevet Re'uven - 1:3; 2:4; 3:5 R. Maimon Ebu
Simhat Yesharim - 1:1; 2:1 R. Isaac Josef Zingoli, Livorno,
1881

44 sources listed

Appendix B: Charts of topic usage

This world	3:2 - 69a	Human life	2:25 - 58d
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1:2 - 6f	3:3 - 71a	1:2 - 6x	3:1 - 66a
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2:2 - 36d
2:5 - 39d
2:8 - 41a
2:9 - 41g
2:9 - 41x
2:9 - 42a
2:9 - 42b
2:9 - 42c
2:12 - 45e
2:12 - 45x
2:12 - 46a
2:12 - 46b
2:12 - 46c
2:13 - 48d
2:13 - 48f
2:13 - 49a

2:13 - 49b
2:13 - 49c
2:13 - 49d
2:14 ^ 50b
2:20+ - 55c
2:20+ - 55d
2:23 - 56d
2:24 ^ 57c
2:25 - 58e
2:29 - 59f
3:7 - 76a

God	Righteous...	Redemption..	Work...
31	24	23	22
1:2 - 9d	1:2 - 6b	1:9 - 19h	1:3 - 10a
1:3 - 10e	1:2 - 8g	1:9 - 20c	1:3 - 10b
1:4 - 12a	1:2 - 8h	1:9 - 20d	1:3 - 10c
1:9 - 19g	1:2 - 8i	1:10 - 21d	1:13 - 25e
1:13 - 26b	1:2 - 8x	1:10 - 21e	2:4 - 38b
1:13 - 26c	1:5 - 13d	1:14 - 27b	2:10 - 43c
1:13 ^ 26d	1:5 - 14a	1:15 - 28c	2:10 - 43d
1:15 ^ 27e	1:5 - 14b	1:15 - 28j	2:14 - 50c
1:15 - 28b	1:5 - 14c	2:14+ - 51d	2:18 - 52d
1:16 ^ 29b	1:6 - 15f	3:1 - 67x	2:18+ - 53g
1:17 ^ 30a	1:18 - 31x	3:2 - 69c	2:20+ - 55a
2:12 - 46d	2:2 - 34c	3:3 - 71b	2:24 - 57g
2:12 - 47a	2:2 - 35e	3:4 - 71c	3:1 - 65x
2:12 - 47b	2:2 - 36e	3:5 - 72e	3:1 - 66c
2:14 ^ 50b	2:12 - 46e	3:5 - 74b	3:9 - 77a
2:24 - 57e	2:12 - 48b	3:5 - 74c	3:9 - 77b
2:24 - 57f	2:24 ^ 57c	3:5 - 74d	3:9 - 77e
2:24 - 58b	2:25 - 58g	3:6 - 75c	3:12+ - 80b
2:26 - 59a	2:26 ^ 59b	3:6 - 75d	3:14 - 80e
3:1 - 66b	3:1 ^ 67a	3:7 - 75x	3:14 - 80x
3:2 - 69c	3:2 - 68e	3:9 - 77d	
3:2 - 69d	3:10+ - 78x	3:12 - 80a	
3:2 - 69h	3:12+ - 79f	3:14 - 82a	
3:10+ ^ 78c	3:14 - 81d		
3:14 - 81e			
3:15 - 82e			
3:15 - 82f			
3:15 - 83d			
3:15 - 83e			
3:15 - 83f			
3:15 - 83g			

Death	Evil	Family life	Wealth
19	18	11	8
1:4 - 11f	1:2 - 9b	1:1 - 4x	1:1 - 3a
1:7 - 16d	1:8 - 18b	2:2 - 36a	1:2 ^ 7e
1:8 - 17b	1:12 - 24e	2:10 - 42e	1:3 - 9e
2:2 - 34x	1:15 - 28a	2:18 - 52x	2:9 - 41f
2:2 - 35b	1:15 - 28d	2:18+ - 53d	2:14+ - 50x
2:2 - 35c	1:15 - 28e	2:19 - 53f	2:19 ^ 54a
2:2 - 35d	1:15 - 28f	2:19 ^ 54a	2:26 - 59c
2:2 - 36f	1:15 - 28g	3:10+ - 79c	3:6 - 75b
2:8 - 41e	1:15 - 28h	3:10+ - 79d	
2:14+ - 51a	1:15 - 28i	3:10+ - 79e	
2:14+ - 53x	1:18 - 32a	3:12+ - 80d	
3:2 ^ 68b	2:1 - 34a		
3:2 - 70c	2:2 - 36b		
3:3 - 70d	2:26 ^ 59b		
3:4 - 71g	3:1 ^ 67a		
3:4 - 71h	3:2 - 69x		
3:4 - 71i	3:8 - 76e		
3:12+ - 80c	3:15 - 82g		

Food

6

1:17 - 30d
2:24 - 57a
2:24 ^ 57c
2:24 - 57h
3:2 - 68c
3:4 ^ 72a

Body

5

1:17 - 30e
1:17 ^ 30f
1:17 - 30g
2:3 - 37e
2:12 - 48a

Misc

32

1:2 - 6a
1:2 - 6d
1:2 - 8a
1:2 - 8e
1:3 - 11c
1:4 - 12b
1:4 - 12c
1:4 - 13a
1:5 - 14e
1:8 - 17c
1:9 - 19b
1:11 - 22c
1:14 - 27c
2:2 - 34f
2:2 - 35f
2:2 - 36c
2:2 - 37a
2:5 - 39b
2:5,6 - 39e
2:7 - 40d
2:10 - 44c
2:11 - 45b
2:13 - 49f
3:1 - 67b
3:2 - 69f
3:2 - 69g
3:2 - 70b
3:4 - 71e
3:4 - 71f
3:10+ - 78b
3:10+ - 79b

Appendix C: Ladino of *Hakdama*

Todo el que para mientes en muestra Ley Santa intenderá y sabrá si de parte de los cuentos que hay en ella si de parte de las cozas que permite a él que la afirma; y si de parte de las yediot que hay en ella en saber lo venidero; y si de parte de las mitzvot y los hukim y los juicios que hay en ella que todos no es posible de nombrarlos, siendo son muchos y lleva mucha largura. Ansí, vo a dizir unos cuantos que de ellas intenderás para el resto. Que en cada uno que te vo a nombrar hay cozas que no es posible a el *sechel* del hombre que las acuzga. Y es que el *sechel* de la persona juzga que el ladrón que arroba moneda no merece pena que la mancura de far lo haze robar para tener con que mantenerse. En tanto, siendo en no haziendo pena a el ladrón, se mozigua el robo en el mundo, y no hay reposo en el mundo. Con que viene a ser a que el ladrón y el que mata alma son igual en la pena, y no apartan la gran diferencia que hay del pecado del que mata y el pecado del ladrón. Que en mitiéndolos en la balanza uno en cada tasa, seguro es que el pecado del matador es mucho más pezado di el ladrón. Y haziendo igual la / pena di todos dos es jusgo tuerto que el *sechel* del hombre no puede hazer atención en el pecado del ladrón a darle su pena la cantidad que merece. Otro que se aferá de los dos cabos o que no le da pena del todo, o que lo apena muerte. (Y si *afilu* era atención [d]el hombre y tofara el ellar de alguna coza, no lo aferá otro que en regla.) Y no

en todos los particulares. Lo cual que la Ley del Santo Bendicho *Eil* da pena a cada uno según su pecado con mucha atención. Y dize que el ladrón que pague dos tantos de lo que robó. Y quien que pague cuatro tantos, y quien que pague cinco tantos, y quien que lo viendan por esclavo por pagarlo que robó. Y el que roba alma merece muerte como matador. Que de esto entenderás como los juzgos del Dió *Baruch haShem* son muy justos que da a cada uno su pena que merece. Que lo mismo entenderás para todas las *mitzvot* que el *sechel* las obliga. Con todo el *sechel* no puede apartar hasta onde es que es provecho para el alma o el cuerpo y dar un carar en ellas. Lo cual: que la Ley las dió las *mitzvot* con pezo y mezura justa que son provechozas y buenas para todos. Que verás que la Ley no nos apezgó mucho en el apartar / de cozas del mundo. Otro que una cantidad justa sin apezgar que el que mojigua de la una parte se aparta de la otra que el hazer mucho *ta'anit* el que es flaco de fuerza lo trae a no poder servir a el Dió *Baruch haShem* en otras cozas y lo mismo es semejante en resto de *mitzvot*. Y así verás que muestra Ley Santa está ispartida entro temor y alegría que con cada una de ellas se acerca a el Dió *Baruch haShem*: que el estar con temor en día de *ta'anit* y el estar justozo en *shabbatot* y *mo'adim* por cuento de *mitzvah* todos dos son igualmente para acercarse a el Dió *Baruch haShem*. Y este pezo de las *mitzvot sichliot* a meterlas hasta un grado que venga buena para todos no lo puede pezar que el *Shem*

Yitbarach. Conque se vee claramente si de los jugos y si de las mitzvot sichliot que en ella, es Ley dada del Dió, Baruch haShem. Y lo mismo se vee de los hukim que en ellas que son las mitzvot que el sechel del hombre no las alcanza ni tofe camino onde alcanzarlas sobre que el sechel no las aripasa y las recibe como el hazino que recibe la melizina del médico sin saber lo que es. Que los hukim le se privaron muy bien como por ellos mos acercamos el Dió Baruch haShem a alcansar lo que no alcansimos con las mitzvot sichliot y es el pozar la Shechina entro nos y abaxar fuego de los cielos en el mizbe'ah y la nevu'ah que hubo en todos los dorot que estuvo el Beit haMikdash firme y se alegaban korbanot, y el se'ir ha-mishtale'ah de día di kipur; que todas estas mitzvot son hukim que el sechel de el hombre no las afiera. Que no se acerca el hombre a el Dió Baruch haShem otro que con hazer lo que comandó Eil que son los / hukim. Que las mitzvot sichliot son como hakdamot para la Ley del Dió Baruch haShem y ellas aconantan en natura y en tiempo a los hukim y no es posible sin ellas. Que verás que afilu la compañía de ladrones no se sostiene si no es que entre ellas se rizen y caminan con justidad. Y los hukim son las mitzvot que se dieron solamenta a los judíos pozados sobre las mitzvot sichliot. Y con ellas es que toparon ventaja a ser cercanos a el Dió Baruch haShem sin saber es que hazen esto los hukim y cómo es que abaxó la onra del Dió Baruch haShem entre ellos, y como abaxó fuego del cielo en

el mizbe'ah. Que esto no lo recuze el sechel si no es que fue visto con el ojo. Que es según el hazino no sabe como es que se tiene que melezinar y tornar en su estado de antes con las melezinas que le da el médico. Otro que en melezinándose y torna el su estado cree que le vino de las melezinas. Y cuando se torceron los judíos que alivianaron en las mitzvot sichliot, que sin ellas no se sostiene ninguna compañía de gente según que no se sostiene el hombre sin comer y beber y dormir, en tanto ainda allegaban korbanot y afirmaban y otros hukim, les dixo el Dió Baruch haShem que era más contente con lo más manco según dize el pasuk Micah 6 וְהָיָה לְרוּשׁ מִמֶּךָּ כִּי אִם עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאֵהְיֶנָּה צְדָקָה 6. Y es que le quizo dezir que mejor es a que quadran (guardan) las mitzvot sichliot que caminan con justedad entre ellos, que los hukim no se cumplen otro que después de afirmar las mitzvot sichliot que ellas acuanantan a los hukim en tiempo y en natura. Con que es que vemos claramente como los hukim de la Ley mos dió hatzlacha en muchas / cosas salidas del teva que tuvimos la Shechina con mozotros y abaxó fuego de el cielo en el mizrah y quemó a los korbanot; y muchos nevi'im que habían en aquel tiempo, que de esto se probó claro que los hukim son dados de el Dió Baruch haShem. Y lo mismo se probó de las yediot que hay en la Ley. Y es que en D'varim 14 dize a y cuálá behema o haya que coman y cuales que no coman y va dando simanim en ellas. Y más que en muestra Ley vemos coza grande y maravillosa que cada pasuk y

pasuk y cada inyan y inyan le va muchos declaros demodados
 uno del otro. Si en claro si en secreto lo que no es
 posible en ninguna ley que [haya] en el mundo, que no tiene
 otro que un declaro. Y todos los nevi'im fueron acabidando
 a Yisrael de afirmar los comandos de la Ley que fue dado en
 Har Sinai por mano de Moshe hasta Malachi que fue protero
 de los nevi'im, que dixo en Malachi 3 וְכָל הַנְּבִיאִים עָלָיו וְכָל הַנְּבִיאִים
 וְכָל הַנְּבִיאִים עָלָיו וְכָל הַנְּבִיאִים עָלָיו Y después fueron anshe k'neset
 hag'dolah y sus discípulos o discípulos de sus discípulos
 que fueron recibiendo de sus hachamim y son los tanna'im que
 declararon las mizvot de la Ley y de ellos recibieron los
 amora'im y de ellos hubieron que tuvieron ruah ha-kodesh; y
 de ellos recibieron los ge'onim. Y después inspiraron los
 sabu[r]a'im que quitaron libros sobre la Ley y sobre las
 mitzvot y los hukim y los jusgos que mos encomendó el Dió
 Baruch haShem por mano de Moshe. Y hasta el dor di agora no
 hubo dor sin haber gente grande que quitaron libros de Ley y
 de castiguirios. Y todos ellos van afirmando y acabidando
 por la Ley de Moshe. Y todos sus hablas y sus libros fueron
 recibidos un dor del otro / y lo mismo tiene que ser los
 dorot venideros, que en cada dor y dor tiene que haber
 hachamim componidores de libros sobre la Ley de Moshe cada
 uno según lo que puede alcanzar de ella, quien en p'shat
 quien en remez, quien en d'rush, quien en sod. Que la Ley
 no se tiene que olvidar de la uma Yisraelit nonakah. Y es
 que afuera de la razón que dize el Zohar en parashat Tazri'a

y en *Sefer ha-Hasidim* siman 530 que es obligado todo modo de hombre que lo engració el Dió *Baruch haShem* a renovar coza de Ley o di sencilla o de castiguirio [y] de escribirlas en libro y no como algunos que dizen le mos abasta los libros antiguos que tenemos, que viene este por pozar *mah shetika yafa la-hahamim*. Y le vengo por declarar mi codicia que tuve y tengo por estudiar en todo lo que alcanza mi poder. Y viendo que *ashreihem Yisrael* les plaze a cada uno particular de meldar cada uno lo que sabe; y viendo que los que mieldan *arba'im v'esrim* lo mieldan entero con entender y sin entender; y cuando viene *sefer Kohelet* vueltan uzas y no lo mieldan porque no lo entienden, que sus palabras son selladas y cerradas. A esta causa me determine por ordinar este chico libra di *Kohelet* en Ladino por dar a entender los castigos que mos imbiza (empieza) el *sefer* di *Shlomo ha-melech* y sus sencillas que todos sus palabras fueron dichas con *ruah ha-kodesh* en primer capítulo. Sea Nombre de *haShem* bendicho que da a el lazo fuerza y saber y entendencia a el hombre y da claridad en la vista. Bendicho *Eil* de agora (ahora) y hasta siempre. Y el que se espanta del Dió *Baruch haShem* no dize *afilu* a un / hombre que no lo conoce. [Que] sus to (sospetó) el componidor de este libro otro cuando no sabe lo que está escrito en este libro. Y si no, pasa por el *pasuk* *לְצַדִּיק תִּשְׁפֹּט עַם יְהוָה* que su Ladino es "con justidad juzgarás a tu compañero." Que de este *pasuk* *darsharon* los 60 *hachamim* dos *lavvim*, una para el *dayan* y otro para todo

modo de hombre que juzgue en verdad a parte buena en todo modo de coza. Y por lo que no se venderá con precio bueno. El Dió *Baruch haShem* es Patrón de todo, el oro y la plata y al quien quiere en verdad no sospecha. Y él que entiende o conoce el precio de este libro seguro que busca a mercarlo con buen precio. Que mejor la mercancía de este libro más que la mercancía de la plata. Y lo digo por seguro que todo el que meldara en este libro de el principio hasta el cabo no le queda coza por entender. Y *afilu* lo que es pegado le verná muy liviano en sus ojos y dulce más que panal di miel y tomará plazer con alyudo del Dió *Baruch haShem* y le verná a su boca como dulsura y su *sechel* se le angiará de gran gusto que tomará. Basta que lo melde este libro a la regla según está, no un pedazo de aquí y un pedazo de allí porque el que se salta de un lugar a otro no topará pasto ni sabor en su meldado. Y si verás en mi libro que aseñalo cozas di más adelante es en pocos lugares que fue menester de traer aquella coza segunda vez en corto. En tanto es que en el lugar primero le declaro muy bien sin mancar coza de declaro. Y por demás me declaro que unos cuantos yerros hechos sin voluntad. Rogo (ruego) no aculparme y juzgarme *l'chaf z'chut*. Y por / ser pocos, los señálo aquí por no hacer *luah netayot* porque me viene a estar caro. Y es en uza 29 הנל הנל הנל הנל está escrito הנל הנל הנל הנל. Más en esta uza הנל הנל הנל הנל está escrita הנל הנל הנל הנל. En uza 34, tiene que meldarse "si el dor afirman los comandos de el

Dió Baruch haShem que por ellos se crió la tierra, en aquella Torah se envejese la tierra. Como dixo el pasuk 'y la tierra como el paño se envejeserá' y el ben adam está firme por siempre" (no es según está escrito como dixo el pasuk v'chulei) entre tanto, según sus manías y sus buendades del meldador me juzga. Que si estimian del Dió Baruch haShem me juzga a parte buena y dize que esta coza fue liero, según hay en los más de los libros chicos y grandes que no hay uno en mil a que no se tope ningún yerro. Y lo viendo que este libro está mucho dimandado del pueblo de Yisrael hize todo lo posible por escaparlo de istampador. Siendo inprimirlo estampé esta 7 pliegos y me detuve por modre de alyudo que no topé. Biendo (viendo) a muchos señores abonidados que me fueron dimandando el resto a esta causa procuré por escaparlo y yizkeh l'mitzvot del señor Aharon Tzarfati, haShem yishmerehu, como también al istampador señor David ben Shlomo, haShem yishmerehu, que procuraron bastante por quitar a luz esta chica obra. Sobre esto rogo di todos los señores que en viniendo este libro a sus manos que buscan a mercarlo una Torah antes. Y el que buscará a merarla y pagar las paras del libro indisparte que estará muy contente y por mitzvah le es contado.

[The rest of the essay is in Hebrew.]

Key: Ladino is in Roman type.

Hebrew loan words are italicized.

Words of unclear origin are underlined.

Translation of Ladino of Hakdama

Whosoever considers our Holy Law will have understanding and knowledge; either from the accounts in it, or the things it permits to those who affirm it; or from the yediot that it has for knowing the future; or from the commandments and the statutes and the injunctions in it, such that it is not possible to name them all, since they are many and carry much weight. Thus, I will tell a few from which you will have insight into the rest. In each one which I will name, there are things that it is not possible for the *sechel* of a person to judge. The fact is that the *sechel* of a person judges as follows: that the thief who steals money does not merit a penalty when the lack of wherewithal makes him steal in order to have something with which to maintain himself. Otherwise, since no penalty occurs to the thief, the robbery is taken lightly in the world, and there is no rest in the world. As a result it comes to be that the thief and the murderer are equal in the punishment, and does not separate the large difference there is between the transgression of the one who kills and the transgression of the thief. That in putting each one in the scales of justice, surely the transgression of the killer is much heavier than the thief's. Making the punishment of each of the two / equal is an injustice. The *sechel* of a person cannot pay attention to the thief to give him his punishment in the amount that he merits. Another that grabs

both ends doesn't give punishment at all or gives the death penalty. If a man only had the intention of taking something, by general principle he cannot be caught in his particular desire to steal. In this regard the Law of the Holy, Blessed God gives punishment to each one according to his transgression with much attention, and imposes that the thief pays two times what he robbed, or four times as much, or five times, or some are sold as slaves in order to pay back what he robbed. The one who steals souls deserves death as a killer. Because from this you will understand how the judgments of God are very fair since He gives to each one his deserved punishment for you to understand the same thing with regard to all the commandments to which sechel obligates one. With all our sechel, we cannot separate what is profitable for the soul or the body, and make a distinction between them. Which means: that the Law gives the commandments with weight and impartial measure which are beneficial and good for all. For you will see that the Law does not pressure us much to separate from / the things of the world. Furthermore [the Law always prescribes] a fair quantity without excess, for whoever mortifies himself in one area removes himself from the other. That when a person who is weak fasts a lot, he is rendered unable to serve God in the other things and a similar thing happens in the rest of the commandments. Thus you will see that our Holy Law is divided between fear and

happiness. In each of them one draws closer to God. Being in fear on a fast day and observing the sabbath and seasons on account of the commandment - those two are equal in drawing one near to God. And the ability of the *mitzvot sichliot* to bring the commandments in a situation for them to bring good for all can be judged only by God's blessed Name. Thus we see clearly whether from the judgments or the *mitzvot sichliot* in it that it is a Law given by God. And the same is seen of the statutes which are in it which are the commandments that *sechel* of man can not grasp, nor find the way to grasp, which the *sechel* does not accommodate, and receives them like a patient who receives a doctor's medicine without knowing what it is. The statutes serve Him very well because through them we draw ourselves near to God to reach what we could not reach with the *mitzvot sichliot* and it is the power of the Indwelling Presence which enters us and brings down the flame of heaven on the altar and the prophecy that was in all the generations when the Holy Temple stood firm and sacrifices were offered; and the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement; that all these commandments are statutes that the human *sechel* does not grasp. Man does not draw himself near to God except by the doing what God commanded, which is the *hukim*. For the *mitzvot sichliot* are like introductions to God's Law, and they agree in nature in time with the *hukim* and it is not possible without them for you will see that even the company

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of thieves does not sustain itself unless among themselves they guide themselves and walk with justice. The *hukim* are commandments which were spoken only to Jews following the *mitzvot sichliot*. With them they obtained advantage from being close to God without knowing that it is the statutes that did it, and how the honor of God descended among them and how the fire of heaven descended on the altar. *Sechel* could not grasp this if it weren't visible to the eye. Accordingly the patient does not know how it is that he must take medicine and turn from his previous state with the doctor's medicines. Besides, when he takes the medicine and falls sick again, he believes that it came to him from the medicines. When the Jews strayed who had made light of the *mitzvot sichliot* without which no group of people sustains itself, just as man does not sustain himself without eating, drinking, and sleeping, while they were still offering sacrifices and making affirmations and other statutes but not doing *mitzvot sichliot*, God told them He would be more content with the least, as it says in the verse in Micah 6: What does God request of you? To do justly and love mercy. The fact is that it is better to keep the *mitzvot sichliot* that they should walk with justice among them, because the statutes cannot be fulfilled other than after affirming the *mitzvot sichliot* which are the equivalent of the statutes in time and in nature. Thus we see clearly how the statutes of the Law bring us success in many / supernatural things,

because the Indwelling Presence was with us and fire descended from heaven in the east and consumed the sacrifices; and many prophets who were that distant time. By these it is clearly proven that the statutes are given by God. The same is proven of the yediot that there are in the Law. In Deuteronomy 14 it says what kind of beast or animal to eat and which kinds should not be eaten and it gives signs of them. Moreover, in our Law we see a great and marvelous thing that in each and every verse and each and every matter we see many interpretations developed one from the other. Whether openly or in secret what is not possible in any other law in the world, which has no more than one interpretation. All the prophets were urging Israel to affirm the commandments of the Law that were given at Mount Sinai at the hand of Moses until Malachi who was the last of the prophets who said in Malachi 3 "Remember the law of Moses My servant which I commanded on Horev to all Israel." And afterward the men of the great assembly and their disciples or their disciples' disciples kept receiving from their *hachamim* and they are the *tanna'im* who declared the commandments of the Law, and from them the *amora'im* received them, and they had the Holy Spirit in them; and from them the *ge'onim* received them. Then, they inspired the *sabora'im* who wrote books on the Law and on the commandments and the statutes and the judgements which God commanded us by the hand of Moses. To the present generation there has

not been a generation without great people who have written books of Law and rebuke. All of them continued to affirm and enrich [the faith] through the Law of Moses. All their words and their books were received by one generation from the other / and the same must be for the generations to come, that in each and every generation there must be *hachamim* composing books on the Law of Moses, each one according to what he can comprehend from it, some from *p'shat*, some from *remez*, some from *d'rush*, and some from *sod*, for the Law must not be forgotten by the youngling nation of Israel. This is beside the reason given in the Zohar in *parashat Tazri'a* and in *Sefer ha-hasidim* symbol 530 that every kind of person favored by God is obligated to find something new in the Law, either an insight or an admonition, and to write them down in a book, and not like some who say that we have enough old books. This type of thinking comes from the idea "how lovely is silence for the wise." I come to you to declare my desire which I had and I have to study as far as my power permits. And seeing that "happy is Israel," each individual likes to study what he knows, and seeing that those who study twenty-four study the entire thing with comprehension or without it; And when they come to the book of Kohelet they turned the pages and did not learn because they did not understand, because its words are hidden and locked. For this reason I determined to create this small book of Kohelet in Ladino, in order to

make comprehensible the strong words which introduce us to King Solomon's book, and his insights because all his words were said with the Holy Spirit in the first chapter. May God's Name be praised Who gives the weak strength, and knowledge and understanding and gives clarity of vision to man. Blessed be God now and forever. And whoever fears God, let him not say even to a person / who he does not know that he depreciates the composer of this book, especially since he does not know what is written in this book. And if he does not do so he transgresses the verse *b'tzedek tishpot amitecha*, which is in Ladino with fairness shall you judge your people. From this verse the 60 sages derived two negative commandments, one for the judge and the other for everyone else to judge in truth, compassionately, in every manner of thing. If you don't do this, the book won't sell at a good price. God is the Owner of all, the gold and the silver, and whosoever He loves in truth He does not depreciate. And the one who understands or knows the price of this book, surely he will look to market it at a good price. Selling this book is better than selling silver. I say surely that all who study this book from the beginning to the end will not lack understanding of anything. And even what is heavy will seem very light in his eyes and sweeter than a honeycomb, and he will take pleasure with the help of God and it will seem to his mouth as sweetness and his *sechel* will fill with great satisfaction that he will

take, it is enough that he should study this book the way it is, not a piece from here and a piece from there because one who jumps from one place to another will find neither substance nor satisfaction in his study. And if you see in my book allusions to things farther on in the book, it is only in a few places that it was a good idea to mention that matter for a second time briefly. The first time I mention something, I say it very well without missing any detail. And furthermore I admit to some few errors made unwittingly. I beg you not to fault me, but rather to judge me on the side of merit. And since / they are few, I tell you about them here in order not to have to make an errata sheet, because it's becoming expensive. On page 29 *havel havalim amar kohelet, hakol havel* is written *ki hakol havel*. Moreover, in this page, *va'anachnu lo noshanu* is written *ashamnu*. On page 34, one should read "if the *dor* affirms the commandments of God through which the earth was created, the Earth will grow old with the Torah [still in force]." As it says in the verse "and the earth like cloth will grow older," if a man is faithful for ever (not according to what is written as said in the verse etc.). In the meantime according to the whims and the goodness of the student I am judged. If he esteems God, let him judge me compassionately and say that this error was light since in most small and large books there is not one in a thousand in which there is not one error. Seeing that this book is highly sought by

the people of Israel, I have done all possible for bringing it to press. In printing this I printed these 7 sheets and I was detained for lack of funds that I did not get. Seeing many generous people who asked for the rest, I endeavored to bring it out, and succeeded thanks to the praiseworthy effort of Mr. Aaron Tzarfati, God love him, also those of my printer, Mr. David ben Solomon, God love him, who tried their best to bring this small work to light. Wherefore I beg you all, that when this book comes to your hands [for sale] that you look to sell a Torah first. And one who looks to buy it and pay the costs of the book certainly will be very happy with the *mitzvah* for which it is accounted to him.

APPENDIX E. Hebrew
of *Brakhs*

בכך האמנה כי ענת מאז, וידעת כי את הנהגות
ולא אש, ולא בנות אדם, ולא חזרה אלא דברים קטנים
וענינים קלים יקטן כחול. ולכן אדם אשר ידמה לו כי התורה
והחכמה ארוכה מאוד ורחבה מן יס. ומ'ט ש'אן
להם סוף. ואנ' לא הארכת בכל ענין וחכמה עד
תב'תא. כי הנ"ר יכול והם לא יכולו. שאן קצת לחכמה
ואל ע'ו פ' שידעת שכל הדואה הספר הזה יהיה ב'
ואה'ה שחוק בעינים באומרים וכ'ו. שהד' בארומים
כ לא ע'ה ע' ל' לעשות לו שם. כי באמת אנ' ראו
להקרא מחבר כי אם מאס'. או מצותק ואם ה'כר' בעדויות
ובנפלאות? בעושי חזרות? בדורש' דרשות? אלא אמרת אנ'
אל ל' אם חפץ ה' ב'ר' יצ'ח. אכתוב ספר שאהיה טובה
שיפתחו עיני ויבוא או צד'ק. כמו שאמרו חז"ל שיצא

המצוה כולה לא מקצרה המיתח'ל המצוה אומרים לו
 אמר. אם לא שאל ב'כח'ל' למחור אותה שאל על פ' כ
 לא ימנע מעשים מקצתה. או התחלה מה שבדו לעשות
 אכל אם י' לא ידו למחור ואלו אמרה קורב את
 אשתו בור בניו. כאשר אמרו חז"ל יהודה שהתח'ל
 במצוה הצלו יוסף ולא אמרה קרב את אשתו בניו לכן
 אם ס"עוהו מן השמים למחור דורון הוא לו מאות ה'.
 וראוי לו למחור בו. ולפי חכ השמחה ק יצא שכו. לכן
 לא החזיק את עט' ומחור אותם על הספר. ובאחר'
 שכל איש אשר יקרא בספר הזה מתחילת עד סופו. לא
 יהיה לו דבר אשר לא יבין אותו. ויעקב בו בעצמו ה' טוב
 אעפ ודע' מחור' נבחר. ותה' בפ'ו כדכש. וישמח למו
 על ערבים ברכה. ודווקא אם יקרא בו נסדר ולא

בדלוג. אך כל הדולג ועשה פסח מדלג על הפסוקים.

ויפן כה וכה. ויקרא מכה אחד ומכה אחד. מה למטה

ומה למעלה. מה לפניך מה לאחור. לו יבין אפילו הדברים

הפשוטים בו לא כדעת קצת האומרים ד"ל פון בספרים

הקדמונים וכה בא לכוסי'. ודעת פנבון נקל כ' כל

האומרים כה לבדו עצמם. 'אחרו ככה מפני כ' נפש

יודעת מאד שיש להם פס / גדול בעולם. ואם 'אחרו א"מ

ספר יפול שם וירד מטה מטה ויפגע בבודם. ומלעם

נח ישארו בנפשם ולא יאחרו שום מחלה. ולכן על

הכלל כלו יצאו וקצת אנשים יש אשר יכתבו ויאחרו

ספרים. אבל לא רבו להדפיסים בחייהם. כי אם יצאו

להדפיסם אחרי מותם. באומרים אחרי מות קדושים והיה

להם נח למחמה להציל בבודם בחייהם.

אבל אין חכמה לזין תבונה לנצח ה'.

ויהי שם ה' מבורך. ויורק יעל כח ומס' דעית ותבונה.
 ומאיר ילא'שון בת עין. ועל מכרם בעל. רה י' הכנף
 והכהב אחר ה'. והמכין ספר כה קנה יקנה בעל מלא
 כי טוב סודרה מסחר בעל. וכוס יודע' שכן הברכה
 בי' ע' אל'הם. וסחת' את שמו אוצר החכמה. כספ אדון
 אבי שרה י' כמלאך. יהיה שכרו כפול מן השמים. והוא
 ברית נסים בן חיים רפאל מתנה עמוד השן ימנהו.
 חשבה דין בדושבה דין. ולא היה בעובר, אדם מעולם
 אפילו לכתוב עליה אחד בכתוב ידו בעלמא. ידקל מעל
 אורח הכתובים. וה' עוצרן ונתן ל' עשן למודים. ויד
 כותבה לכתבו מראשיתו עד אחריתו.
 ומעתה אבוא ואתחיל ואשחר פני כל הקורא במסר
 הבה דין ידן אות' לכל נבות. ששורש התורה ומצותה
 הם המדות הטובות. והמה נכתבו בתורה. מלפ

שהמה ידועים על פה. שכל יתרוש' וזכמת אדמ' איזה
 מהם אבי'ם. ואיזה מהם דע'ם בזל' זאת. זכרו מעל
 מהם. ודרך כלל רב'ן עב'ן אב' זכור'ם. כמו'ל' תקום
 ולא תאור. וכן ואהבת רע'ך כמו'ך. וכן קשה עונ'ן של
 מצות יתר מעונ'ן של עבירות בהחיות כל כל
 הכוונ'ם כאלו עובד עבודה זרה. שהא' השקולה בכל
 עבירות כולם וכן אמרו מ' שיש לו גסות הדוד כאלו עובד
 עבודה זרה ועל כן בכל פד' אבות וחסד' חז'ל' לא
 תמצא מהם מצד'ם במצות עשה או לא תעשה. אבל מצד'ם
 במצות באומרי'ם כל מאד מאד הו' שכל רוח ואמרו שם
 אביהו עשר השמח בחיל'קו. וכל דבריהם / בכל במצות
 ואסור שכן נקרא מסכת אבות על שכל הכתוב בו הם
 אבות לכל המצות ושור' לכל התורה. על כן יזכור אליהם
 לאבה רפ' שם יצ'ל' לכל חובה. וזכות אבות'ן הקדושים

אשר עליהם סמכתי ראש' שהק'בה יפתח לבי
 בתורתו וינחני במעטלי צדק למען שמו. ויכניני למדור
 הספר הזה. קאן הכמות אשר חברתי לעשות נחת
 רוח יוצרי מלכי ואלה' כי אלך אתפלא. ומעתה אשא
 עיני אל כפי' ואפרוש כפי אל אשמים. ואותחנן אל
 ה' הצדק הבור והנורא שיעזרני על המלאכה
 ויעמידני על דבר אמת וירחיקני מדבר שגור.
 וישמרני מכל שט'א והוא ויאנני דעה בינה והשכל
 ויעיר לי אכן לשמוז כלמחזיק כרבונו וכרבונו
 ירא'ו אמן.

End Notes

1. Farber, Sara Joan Glazer, Societal Reflections of the Me'am Lo'ez in the Book of Ruth, rabbinic thesis, 1984, page 9.
2. *ibid*, p. 9.
3. Shaw, Stanford J., The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, p. 15.
4. *ibid*, p. 41.
5. *ibid.*, p. 32, quoting Galanté, *Anatolie III*, p. 223-248. In this section, Shaw goes into great detail regarding European persecution of the Jews and the roots of such behavior.
6. Donnell, Shelton, Jacob Culi's Me'am Lo'ez (Genesis), rabbinic thesis, 1977.
7. Shaw, p. 33, quoting Franco, 37; Galanté, *Istanbul I*, 123-124.
8. Shaw, p. 41.
9. *ibid.*, pp. 109-110.
10. Donnell.
11. Farber.
12. Cohen-Rosenberg, Judith, The Glorification of Esther among Ottoman Jews in the Eighteenth Century as Reflected in the Me'am Lo'ez on Esther, rabbinic thesis, 1986.
13. Barzilai, Morris, The Reflection of Sephardic Society in the Ottoman Empire as Seen Through the Commentaries of the Me'am Lo'ez on the Haggadah, rabbinic thesis, 1989.
14. Scholem, Gershom, "Shabbtai Zevi" in Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 14, cols 1219-1254.
15. Shaw, p. 139.
16. *ibid.*, p. 147.
17. *ibid.*, p. 150.
18. *ibid.*, p. 176.
19. *ibid.*, pp. 179-187.
20. *ibid.*, pp. 187-206.
21. *ibid.*, p. 147.

22. *ibid.*, p. 215.
23. *ibid.*, p. 217.
24. *ibid.*, p. 231.
25. *ibid.*, pp. 238-243.
26. *ibid.*, p. 74.
27. *ibid.*, p. 75.
28. *ibid.*, p. 75.
29. *ibid.*, p. 139.
30. *ibid.*, p. 165.
31. Faier, Dr. Zvi, Translator's preface to Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, page v.
32. The reader will discover more about the translation phenomenon later.
33. For further information regarding the Greek influence on Kohelet, see Gordis, Robert, Koheleth, The Man and his World, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1951.
34. Friedman, Bernhard, *Beit Eked Sefarim*.
35. *ibid.*
36. Encyclopaedia Judaica.
37. Friedman, Bernhard, *Beit Eked Sefarim*.
38. *ibid.*
39. Jewish Encyclopaedia, volume 7, p. 412.
40. Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 2, cols 937-938.
41. In the Hebrew version of ML Kohelet, the paragraphs break up differently.
42. See pages 69-70.
43. I will explain this category in more detail later in the chapter.
44. Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, p. 6.

45. *ibid.*, p. 6.
46. *ibid.*, p. 8.
47. *ibid.*, p. 8.
48. *ibid.*, p. 8.
49. *ibid.*, p. 9.
50. *ibid.*, p. 15.
51. *ibid.*, p. 19.
52. *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
53. *ibid.*, p. 20.
54. *ibid.*, p. 25.
55. *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
56. *ibid.*, p. 26.
57. *ibid.*, p. 82.
58. *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.
59. *ibid.*, p. 83.
60. *ibid.*, p. 6.
61. *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
62. *ibid.*, p. 7.
63. *ibid.*, p. 32.
64. *ibid.*, p. 34.
65. *ibid.*, p. 35.
66. *ibid.*, p. 37.
67. *ibid.*, p. 73.
68. *ibid.*, pp. 73-74.
69. *ibid.*, p. 74.
70. *ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

71. *ibid.*, p. 78.
72. *ibid.*, p. 79.
73. *ibid.*, p. 3.
74. *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
75. *ibid.*, p. 4.
76. *ibid.*, p. 5.
77. *ibid.*, p. 22.
78. *ibid.*, p. 23.
79. *ibid.*, p. 24.
80. *ibid.*, p. 38.
81. *ibid.*, p. 40.
82. *ibid.*, p. 41.
83. *ibid.*, p. 42.
84. *ibid.*, p. 43.
85. *ibid.*, p. 44.
86. *ibid.*, p. 5.
87. *ibid.*, p. 7.
88. *ibid.*, p. 9.
89. *ibid.*, p. 29.
90. *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
91. *ibid.*, p. 30.
92. *ibid.*, p. 31.
93. *ibid.*, p. 41.
94. *ibid.*, pp. 41-42.
95. *ibid.*, p. 42.
96. *ibid.*, p. 45.

97. *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
98. *ibid.*, p. 46.
99. *ibid.*, p. 48.
100. *ibid.*, p. 49.
101. *ibid.*, p. 26.
102. *ibid.*, p. 57.
103. *ibid.*, p. 58.
104. *ibid.*, p. 82.
105. *ibid.*, p. 83.
106. *ibid.*, p. 6.
107. *ibid.*, p. 8.
108. *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
109. *ibid.*, p. 13.
110. *ibid.*, p. 14.
111. *ibid.*, p. 34.
112. *ibid.*, p. 35.
113. *ibid.*, p. 36.
114. *ibid.*, p. 19.
115. *ibid.*, p. 20.
116. *ibid.*, p. 28.
117. *ibid.*, p. 72.
118. *ibid.*, p. 74.
119. *ibid.*, p. 10.
120. *ibid.*, p. 43.
121. This is one of those citations which directly conflict with the plain sense of the Biblical text.
122. *ibid.*, p. 77.

123. *ibid.*, pp. 34-35.
124. *ibid.*, p. 36.
125. *ibid.*, p. 51.
126. *ibid.*, pp. 53-54.
127. *ibid.*, p. 71.
128. *ibid.*, p. 28.
129. *ibid.*, p. 34.
130. *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
131. *ibid.*, p. 79.
132. *ibid.*, p. 9.
133. *ibid.*, p. 30.
134. *ibid.*, p. 11.
135. *ibid.*, p. 14.
136. *ibid.*, p. 70.
137. *ibid.*, p. 6.
138. *ibid.*, p. 34.
139. *ibid.*, p. 71.
140. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, hakdama.*
141. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, petiha.*
142. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, hakdama.*
143. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, petiha.*
144. *ibid.*
145. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, hakdama.*
146. *ibid.*
147. *Me'am Lo'ez Kohelet, ibid.*