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THE LIFE OF LEONE DA MODENA
AS REFLECTED IN
HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND LETTERS

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the rabbinical degree

by
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Mic. 12/19

Referee: Dr. Marcus

To

My

Mother

March 15, 1932.

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, Dr. Ludwig Blau, published a group of letters and compositions of Leone da Modena, which were hidden away in the British Museum. This material was given to Dr. Blau with the understanding that he write a German introduction which would throw light upon the life of Modena. And so in the year 1905, at Budapest, he fulfilled his agreement in a scholarly fashion by the publication in the Jahresbericht der Landes-Rabbinerschule of Leone da Medina's letters and compositions.¹ From these writings, we can weave together the various strands to make up a beautiful episode telling of the life of our people in Italy during that generation and of the life of Modena in particular.

Although Cecil Roth collected and searched through a vast amount of material for his recently published book, "Venice", we know that a great many documents are still wandering about, either in the possession of a few individuals or are on the shelves of the great libraries of the world.

The most important contribution to the life and times of Modena comes from the pen of Modena himself, in the form of an autobiography which has been translated from the Hebrew into English in the following pages. This autobiography which is called שְׁנֵי יָמַי² was referred to by a few of the scholars in the past generation, who selected the parts which they need to enlighten them on their own particular contributions. From it, Isaac Samuel Reggio of Gerizia published selections to his book

1. Leo Modenas Briefe und Schriftstucke in Jahresbericht der Landes-Rabbinerschule, von Prof. Dr. Ludwig Blau, Budapest, 1905.

2. שְׁנֵי יָמַי "I", with an introduction and notes by Abraham Kahana, Kiev. 1912.

ג'סא דא מדינא, Gerizia, 1852; Rabbi Abraham Geiger, selections at the end of his book, Leon di Modena, Breslau, 1856; Solomon David Luzzatto, in the summary which he made for Solomon Judah Rappaport, Letters of Luzzatto, pp. 286-293; and in the book of Rabbi Chaim Michael, The Biography of Modena, the chapter entitled, The Light of Life, pp. 439-444. But no one attempted to publish them in full because of the particular respect of our scholars for their predecessors in the past. Up to almost recent times, it was the custom not to throw any unfavorable light upon any outstanding Jewish scholar of the past, for they felt that they had no right to diminish his established greatness. And so they felt that they were not justified in publishing such memoirs and historical truths as is contained in Leone's Autobiography even though it came from his own pen. On the one hand, they realized that it might add to the greatness of Leone da Medina because he was able to recognize his own weaknesses and irregularities even to the extent that he was willing to publish them, but on the other hand they could not permit themselves to offend his honor by actually putting them into print.

"My heart grieves me," writes S.J. Rappaport in the year 1841 to Luzzatto when he returned the selections taken from Modena's Autobiography, "lest you reveal the gambling proclivities and shame of a builder in Israel. It will make for sport and mockery of a precious man, who was one in a thousand, and then one who should be honored will be despised. If you should send it to the editors of "Zion," you would be erecting a bitter monument over the ruins of an excellent man. And by so doing, you would be placing his grave among the wicked who will rejoice that they discovered a man whose activities in one respect was hidden by the grace of God, and thereby, you would be pouring innocent blood in the midst of Israel."

The original of the autobiography was in the possession of Baron Jacob Travis de Bonfils of the city of Venice and from it, Moses Soave, an eminent and excellent teacher of Venice made a critical edition. Baron Travis then gave the original copy as a gift to Rabbi Abraham Latis, who was a tutor to his son. In the year 1839, it was held by the head of the Beth Din of Venice. But at the death of this rabbi in the year 1875, he bequeathed it along with the other books to his son Dr. Moses Latis who died in the year 1883. Then the brothers of Dr. Moses Latis gathered together all of his books, among which was the Autobiography of Modena, for which they apparently had no use, and to save them from oblivion sent them as a gift to the Brera library in Milan.

Following the death of Moses Soave, his son gave the critical edition of the Autobiography as a gift to Rabbi Yehudah Luzzatto and he, in turn, gave it to Rabbi Isaac Castilloni who was a rabbi in Rome. And when Rabbi Castilloni wanted to compare the copy of Rabbi Soave to the original, written by Modena, he and Rabbi Elisha of Mapano, rabbi of Milan, went to the Brera library and made a careful search because the library had no record of the manuscript. There is little difference in the two manuscript except for inconsequential changes. The account of the sources were given by Isaac Chaim Castilloni to Abraham Kahana.¹

There also seems to be extant some other copies of the Autobiography which were made after the death of Modena and those copies were worked out with additions and changes as those copyists were accustomed to doing at that time with matters of chronicles, and the relating of incidents. From other sources we know that the grandson of Modena, Rabbi Isaac, the Levite,

1. Introduction to Leone da Modena's Autobiography, p.7.

busied himself in making copies of the books of his grandfather and writing introductions to them. In a book called "Shield and Sword," and also in the book called "History of the Great in Israel," p.176, Ramash of Gerona mentions the fact that Leone da Modena's grandson, Rabbi Isaac wrote an introduction to Modena's Autobiography and also to Modena's book called, "The Raging Lion." It is also possible to assume from this that Rabbi Isaac while writing the introduction to the autobiography of his grandfather, which we cannot doubt was very dear to him because in it his name is frequently mentioned, also must have made certain changes or additions of his own in the Autobiography.

Jewish history has given us a very unusual character in Leone da Modena. Indeed, one would have to go far afield to find another such a paradoxical individual, vacillating without any apparent rhyme or reason to form such a life of contradictions. He would make a splendid subject for a careful psychological study. How can we label or catalogue one who was a firm believer, almost a fundamentalist and at once, a leader of liberals; a master of divination and yet be one who fought against it; an author of a book opposing gambling, and yet later to be impoverished by this vice right up to his last days; a senior member of the Venetian rabbinate for which he wrote decisions of a documentary character while at the same time composing comedies for ghetto theatre in Venice of which he was the director.

What is most striking in the life of Leone da Modena is that he was able to carry on no less than twenty six enterprises while he was constantly hounded and crushed by one misfortune after another. It is amazing

to read in his autobiography of the great misfortunes which dogged him up to the day of his death while on alternate pages to find him make mention of the fact that while all this was going on, he was writing and publishing prolific works and busying himself in various civic and rabbinical interests in which he played the pivotal role. He mentions these activities only incidentally. And perhaps from this we can deduce ~~from this~~, that his many sided interests were efforts on his part to become oblivious to the profound sorrows that continually cast their shadows over his entire life. It may be that he threw all his vitality into various aspects of life as a means of escape from an inner despair. There seems to be little relation in style between his autobiography written ~~naively~~ and simply and his letters which for the most part are written in an officious and embellished manner.

From his autobiography we gather that he was perpetually in a state of anxiety, either due to monetary losses sustained from his gambling activities or due to family disasters. He had three sons and two daughters. His oldest son, Mordecai who was endowed with a great deal of talent and who was Leone's greatest source of joy and pride died at the age of 26, while dabbling in an experiment of alchemy. His other two sons, Zebulon and Isaac, were always an aggravation to their father, the first being killed in a brawl, and the other becoming a vagabond, living a dissipated life and ~~who~~ finally exiling himself to Brazil never to return again. We can get a more intimate glimpse of the achievements and the feelings of Leone toward his sons from a letter number 84 written to Mordecai in the year 1607: "The famine is already in the land, bread is diminishing daily and money flies

from the pocket like eagles. You may receive a letter from your brother Isaac which is written with swine fingers, for his heart turneth to evil only and all his sins have become permissible to him and I am tired of exhorting him. Give my regards to all my acquaintances who ask for me and send my greetings to your brother Zebulun. You, my son, be a teacher and do as you promised me and study continuously, etc." He never really recovered from the tragedy of his sons although he lived many years later. He mentions it as a sort of a refrain throughout the autobiography as follows, "for out of three sons, one has died, one was killed and one is exiled." From the experiences of his two daughters, he also suffered greatly; one, Diana, being married to Jacob Halevi, a dancing master, a profession highly esteemed in those days, who died after a short time, forcing her to return to her father's support until a second marriage, which later proved unhappy was arranged for her. The other daughter, Esther, also lost her husband and came to live with her father. During all this time, in order to find comfort from out of his evil fate, he resorted to gambling, only to sink deeper into despair, with additional losses. However, for the most part he bore these losses with equanimity, and each time promised himself to overcome the failing until a new disaster befell him.

What struck him with grim horror was the death of Mordecai, his oldest son who gave promise of following in the footsteps of his scholarly grandfather. Throughout his book he mentions him and especially at the beginning where we learn that what prompted the writing of the autobiography was this tragedy. He writes;

"Especially is it my desire to bequeath it as a blessing for my eldest son, the most desirable in my eyes, the root of my heart, whose splendid characteristics were like the scholar, Rabbi Mordecai who was

called Angelo, and all my thoughts are concentrated upon him. Through him was I glorified; he was my greatest joy."

In this wise, he begins to tell the story of his life but not a complete story. He began writing it when he was 47 years old and up to the date of its inception, it takes on the form of an autobiography and after that he records fragmentary events periodically in the form of a diary. If he had not noted down his various compositions in one place and his many enterprises in another which are done only incidentally, we could never have guessed from the rest of the autobiography what an important man he must have been to his generation. Perhaps his little emphasis on the activities which made him influential may be due to modesty, or perhaps the purpose of the autobiography according to his own intentions was something where he could, by writing down, be relieved of the tremendous tension ^{that} must have been his. But at any rate the real purpose is difficult to determine. Only after one scrutinizes the 214 letters which are contained herein and after one peruses the multitude of books which he composed can one get an idea of the greatness of his personality and the influence which he must have had on his generation.

The family background from which Leone sprang reflects some of the political, social, and economic heights to which Jews could attain at that time. His father Isaac Modena was a scion of an illustrious house which could trace back its ancestry for 540 years. They had come to Italy as exiles from France, first by going to Viterbo and then to Modena. Here they acquired wealth, privileges and a seal giving them the authority to add the place of their residence to their name and as their title. The interests of the Modena family

brought them to other places in Italy. And so we find that although Judah Leone was born in Venice, he did not visit Modena until he was ten years old and proudly retained the title. His grandfather Mordecai added to the luster of the family name by his distinction in medicine for which he was given the title of "Cavalier of the Golden Treasury." Modena also frequently refers to his great scholarship in Jewish fields. His uncle Abtalion too was an extraordinary man who is often quoted in Azariah'de Rossi's book M'or Enaim for which book, Leone says, Abtalion was greatly responsible. At one instance he went to the pope to plead for the removal of the ban upon the Talmud and made a speech in Latin before a number of cardinals which lasted for more than two hours. Another uncle, Solomon, also was a scholar who was married to a woman named Fioretta, a very learned person. Leone's father was forced to go into business and although quite prosperous at first, his fortune was reduced to next to nothing when Pope Pius V banished the Jews from the pontifical dominions in 1569.

Judah Leone da Modena was born on the 23rd day of April 1571, a little after a tremendous earthquake which drove his parents from Ferrara to Venice. He began to demonstrate incredible precociousness at a very early age. When he was only two and a half years old, he read the haftorah and at three he knew enough to interpret what he was reading. His father gave him the best possible education despite his impoverishment, getting lessons in music, singing, dancing along with his Hebrew education. Some of his teachers were Samuel Archevolti, author of a pioneer work on Hebrew prosody; Moses Basola della Rocca, for whose memory Leone composed an elegy which read phonetically, making equal sense whether as Hebrew or as Italian; Leo Levi of Montagnana. To the latter, he wrote a letter when he was 18 years old, part of which

may be quoted:

"---I had no time for carrying out my wishes since Rabbi Zerach left town, but now I will ask him to explain a passage in Rashi....for ^{study} we ~~learn~~ Rashi in our academy every day of the week, yet I never heard a satisfactory explanation of this verse except in the commentary of Rabbi Nathan of Horodna (Poland) and I would like to know how he interpreted the term ע'דן for I understand he can interpret any passage in Rashi, let him therefore send his opinion and then I will give him my interpretation." (Letter No.8)

This letter of course shows that the Italian Jews had access to the scholarship of other parts of Europe and that Leone's education was far from provincial.

His step-brother's death in Ancona, in whom his father had faith to help him recoup his fortune marked the end of of their hopes. And so Leone began to earn his own living by giving private lessons. In 1590 he became betrothed to his cousin Esther in Venice and as his fate would have it, she subsequently died and in her stead he married Rachel her sister the following year. (Letters 38 and 39 are invitations for ^{intended} his marriage to Esther).

After being invited to preach in one of the synagogues in Venice, he proved to be exceptionally eloquent and then later gained a tremendous reputation and following. Letter number 44 gives us the reason why they asked him to preach despite the fact that he was comparatively unknown:

"And the Lord wanted either to favor me or to oppress me by making a tutor out of me. The Lord has made me gracious in the eyes of the people of Venice; they continually asked me to preach, since, they claim, I possess besides Hebrew, also Christian scholarship, and would therefore

influence many disciples, who in turn would be thankful to me. I have accepted this invitation (after having declined three times) and I have agreed to hold forth a sermon on Shebuoth...."

People of all sorts, Jews and gentiles, princes, dukes, cardinals flocked to hear him. His eloquence is attested by the fact that when he delivered a memorial address upon Rabbi Solomon Shemayah Soferno, he made an appeal for the purpose of providing for the Rabbi's daughter and at that instance he raised 500 ducats. And while Leone was attending the church of S.Geremia as was his wont to do, he heard this event acclaimed as an outstanding example of charity, with a finger pointing in his direction.

He occupied almost innumerable positions. In 1625, he became the regular preacher of the Spanish synagogue. Previous to this, he became the reader in the Italian congregation, a position which he retained till his death. He also lectured at a Yeshivah which was set up by Kalonymos Belgrado, a patron of learning. And from his letters we learn that he was questioned by people from all parts of Italy on Talmudic law and he ultimately became the senior member of the rabbinical commission of the community. His letters show generally a lenient attitude in all matters. At various periods due to abject penury, he was forced to act as a private and public tutor, both to Christian and Jewish students. He also taught secular subjects such as Italian, music and dancing. He composed letters for others in both Hebrew and Italian. He wrote and published books in both languages. He acted as printer and proof-reader for a publisher. On various occasions he wrote laudatory poems and epitaphs. At other times, he earned money for drawing up deeds. He wrote comedies for the theatre

in which he was director, then supervised their production. He received a nominal salary as secretary for the Talmud Torah and for a philanthropic organization. At different times he was a marriage broker. He mentions also that he dabbled somewhat in business. He taught the secrets of amulets and even wrote a work upon the subject. But he was always financially embarrassed and was forced to do these things in order to pay off debts incurred by gambling losses. A very interesting letter to Abraham Cammeo in Venice divulges his activities in necromancy:

" I have some news which I wish to divulge to your honor, although I hesitated to put it down on paper but since you live in Venice, I decided to tell you about it. There is a man here who Hails from a far country and who showed me an amulette in the form of a full moon which cannot be burned nor can it be drowned in the water; this amulette has stood nine tests, failed one, and is good for any endeavor. The man is willing to sell the amulette for half a ducat and he would like to know how many amulettes he could sell; this is no superstition but truth itself. Will you kindly inform me what your reaction is in the whole matter. Meanwhile keep it as a secret." (Letter number 85).

At the age of 13 he wrote a book against gambling which has since been translated into five languages. And one might believe that Leone of all people would abstain from this vice, although it seemed to be fashionable in the gay community of Venice. Despite repeated avowals not to indulge in this sport, Satan and astrology, he felt, were not forces with which he could contend nor make a compromise. It is interesting to note how apologetically he mentions his losses, losses which were altogether out of proportion to his income. He may have won at times but only in one instance does he mention gambling without lamenting over his losses. Every Jewish

festival as well as every tragedy in his own family life were signals for him to enter into his relapses, and as he terms it, a hopeless victim of the stars. During the great plague of 1630 when the 74 lay heads of the community hoped to allay the divine anger by issuing a decree of excommunication against gambling, he wrote a forceful essay arguing that "they did not have the power to do this, nor the right of excommunication." This addiction lost for him at various times many pupils, and also the withdrawal by Joseph Pardo, the ghetto Maecenas, and father of a line of rabbis, of an assignment to prepare a commentary on the Torah synthesized from a collection of all the authors who were known to have them in print.

On page 38 of the translated autobiography contained herein, he writes: "At this time I shall mention some works which I composed, especially those already printed whether they be in Hebrew or Italian and also books which include my poems, prefaces, or criticisms." And then for two pages he mentions some of these books which undoubtedly does not include them all. This he wrote in the year 1622 at the age of 51 and although he later added some to this original list, we know, and he also tell us, that there were a host of other manuscripts which never went into print. If he had not given so much time and energy to gambling he might have written a monumental work or a great many more minor ones. He certainly must have written in great haste for how else could he have found the time to write so much. In 1602, when he had gambled away everything he possessed, he hastily wrote down sermons page after page and sent them to the printer. In 1612 he published his dictionary, Galut Jehudah, for which he received 250 ducats. For the

publication of a Mikrah Gedolah, his son had to travel all over Italy to secure subscriptions to total 500 ducats. He published a prayer book and dedicated it to a congregation at Rome but because he printed the names ^{of the officials} in the wrong order, he received only 25 ducats. A very interesting account of the publication of the book by which his name is frequently associated, a work on Jewish rites and ceremonies is given on page 54. This book was printed without his knowledge by a Frenchman who was studying Italian with him. The account betrays the fear of the Jews for the Inquisition of those days. Leone's fear in this instance is unwarranted, for he later received praise from all quarters, and especially from the French ambassador to Rome to whom the book was dedicated. This work was originally requested of the Frenchman by the King of England but it never reached its intended destination. From his early youth, we find that he evinced a keen interest for poetry and poetic compositions. Many letters contained herein illustrate that his interest in this field never waned. Letter 21 which was written at the age of 21 is characteristic of his attitude toward the subject. Later in life, he collected and published all of his poems in a book called Shire Jehudah. On pages 38, 39, and 40 are mentioned a great many other compositions but the work which throws the most light on his life and his environment is the book which is translated in the following pages.

Leone da Modena represents the most curious mixture of sophistication and naivete, of enlightenment and superstition. At some very significant instances of his life, we find that his actions were motivated by dreams. By one he was guided in his choice of a wife. He tell us impressions of future life related to him ⁱⁿ a dream by his father who had died but a

short time before. He had implicit faith and even dabbled in alchemy while at the same time by means of a pamphlet he attacks the doctrine of transmigration of souls. He fought the superstitions of the time while he was earning money transmitting the secrets of amulets and published a book upon the subject. According to his own caprice, he would either attack or defend the Kabbala. He sincerely felt that astrological forces controlled the life of man inasmuch as his father's entire career had been foretold by a master in the field. He had his own fortunes told by four experts and when he found that his future had been misrepresented, he seemed to lose confidence in the whole business. Despite his liberality, he was a synagogal official, composing prayers and hymns some of which obtained widespread usage. He had friends with whom he had utmost familiarity, ranging from ambassadors, cardinals to gamblers and scoundrels of the worst kind. During Purim 1636 when the ghetto was closed because the Christians claimed it was a haven for stolen property and that the rabbinical commission had a hand in bribing the officials, ^{not} to interfere, Leone was somehow implicated. But he continued preaching publicly and was not troubled. No one would visit the ghetto but what they went to hear him preach and he more than anyone else represented Judaism to the outside world. From scattered references in both his autobiography and letters, we know that many Christians from various countries came to him as the authority on Jewish matters.

When old age began creeping upon Leone, he found himself deserted by friends and relatives. He had survived his sons and his sons-in-law. The rest of the community, it can be judged, looked upon him with suspicion. His wife took on a strange malady which probably was a form of insanity and would hound him day and night until he too nearly lost his mind.

Asthma and stomach trouble were constantly undermining his health. He must have presented a sorry picture for a man who might have been honored and glorified by his community. He could not find a suitable dwelling place and he kept moving from house to house. Even as a very aged man, he sought relief and comfort in the playing of cards, sinking deeper and deeper into the sloughs of despair, until the last pages of his autobiography makes the reader callous to his sufferings. His last recorded date is Kislev 1648 and from other sources we know that his death took place on March 21st 1648.

Fifteen letters picked to illustrate the various aspects of his life have been translated in full from the Hebrew. The rest of the letters contained herein are an epitomized description of the nature of the letter and for the most part sufficient to show his versatility and the variety of his interests. These letters by means represent all the letters written by Modena. Cecil Roth in an article "Leone Da Modena and the Christian Hebraists of His Age" published in the book "Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams", New York, 1927, presents us with six letters written in Italian by Modena to some scholarly Christian friends with whom he was on intimate terms. There are undoubtedly many letters of which we have no record. But if we can take the letters found in Bâu's collection as representative of all his letters which are sufficient to indicate the manifold activities of his life. Out of the 214 letters found in this collection, there are 74 which deal with rabbinical questions written either in his own name or in the name of the Venetian rabbinate. Twenty three letters represent his interest in poetry and other compositions, such as epigrams, elegies etc. Fifteen letters deal with printing, publications or distribution of books.

Letters of a friendly nature to acquaintances number twenty three and letters of congratulations, invitations, consolations, etc., total nineteen. We have eight letters which were written in his youth; two letters to students, three which contain prefaces to books, nine for philanthropic purposes, two requesting scholarly information, three asking for material aid, two letters of exhortation to students, five to his sons, two relating to Christianity, three which deal with exegetical or philosophical themes and one which tells of the secret powers of amulets. A great many letters are included which were written for others by him and these together with others written by himself which deal with miscellaneous and insignificant matters total twenty one. The letters written in the name of the Venetian rabbinate are of exceptional interest because with the exception of the autobiography, they give us the most intimate glimpses of various aspects of the life of the times.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

LEONE DA MODENA

This is an account of the life of Yehudah Arish, the son of the bountiful and faithful Isaac, the son of the Gaon, the doctor, Rabbi Mordecai, the son of the excellent Isaac, son of the Prince Moses of Modena.

"Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life in this world."

Inasmuch as the Ruling King has decreed that man must leave the earth at the appointed time, and later everything is forgotten, I have for that reason wanted for more than twenty four years to put down into writing all the important events of my life so that I shall not die but live, because I believe it will be of value to my children and their children and to my disciples who are called children; since it is of especial joy to me that I am able to know the lives of my fathers and my predecessors and my teachers and every important and beloved man and especially is it my desire to bequeath it as a blessing for my eldest son, the most desirable in my eyes, the root of my heart, whose splendid characteristics were like the scholar, Rabbi Mordecai who was called Angelo, and all my thoughts are concentrated upon him. Through him was I glorified, he was my greatest joy. But my desire to write down this memory in a book was not to be fulfilled for 24 years and now that God has taken away my joy which is now two months distant, God has caused me to be desolate, every day is a day of mourning - my soul refuses to be comforted until I shall go down to my son in the grave and it waits for my death on the appointed day. I am now 47 years old and replete with troubles. In the month of Tebeth 1618, I have decided to begin and to finish it through the help of God. I shall tell all about myself and the events so that my children or my children's children or my disciples or those who know my name may look and see what happened to me since I came into the world. I have not been serene, I have had disquietude, I have not rested since that trouble has come, the trouble of Mordecai, my son, who has been stricken by death and is no more. From that time on, from year to year, at the end of every six months, I shall add that which occurs to me and after this will come the order of departure for my body and soul

and shall leave behind my letters and my compositions. May the Lord do what is good in His eyes.

Thus I have a tradition from my father, my teacher, that our ancestors came from France and his household was a tree from which was brought forth generations of families, the genealogy of which was kept for 540 years. This is found in the writings of the Gaon, my grandfather and through my uncle Solomon of Modena, it came to his grandson, my relative Rabbi Aaron, author of נא' נא' נא' and נא' נא' נא'. Rabbi Moses of Modena who lives in Modena told me that he has now lost possession of it and although I examined it carefully at one time, nevertheless I have not been able to get it for myself to this date. But with certainty I know from the traditions of the elders that there was always in our family learning and achievement, and at one time they acquired wealth, honor, position and privileges and I am told that since our ancestors went out of France, they lived for a long time in Viterbo and after that they came to Modena because they were attracted by it and they multiplied there. And since they first came there, they were in the loan business and through their wealth they acquired a title ^{of authority} from that city and until now the title of the present household comes from there. It is now in the hands of Moses, my relative, mentioned above, and it was acquired by our first ancestors in the city. The first house which they owned in Modena is still in the possession of Moses. I saw it and also the seal of ours, - a marble stone, an image of a leopard standing on two feet with a Lulab in his hand. Moses told me that it is now more than 500 years that it has been with our family, and that he has ^awritten document that whoever rules in Modena, whether it be Pope, Emperor, or dukes or others, will confirm it. And it appears that in the days of Isaac, the grandfather of my father, who went

to live in Bologna, that he did not forsake the home or Banking house in Modena but at the same time they also became great and rich there and retained the title, "Family of Modena." And although I was born and grew up in Venice and lived in its suburbs, I did not come to Modena until I was ten years old. Furthermore I have signed myself by my Christian name Leon Modena of the city of Venice and not of the city of ~~Venice~~^{Modena}, because the city remains to us only for a title and is not my place of birth and thus you will find this in my secular writings in Padua.

My grandfather, the Gaon, Mordecai, was a very learned scholar in the Torah and received ordination from the Gaon of his city and his ordination papers are in my possession today. He began his literary activities early, like the House of Joseph that produced the Gaon Karo. He wrote opinions, legal legislation and essays, the majority of which are in the hand of Aaron of Modena. He was also a great doctor and he had a prominent place as the Emperor's doctor, during the time of Emperor Charles V rule~~d~~ over Bologna, and he gave him the title of "Cavalier of the Golden Treasury. for so did the Emperor do for all who excelled in medicine while he reigned there whether he was a Christian or Jew and he was honored above all in the city and his name was known throughout Italy. You will find him mentio~~n~~ed for honor among the Gaonim of his generation in the books Shalshelas Ha-Kabala by Rabbi Gedaliah Yab~~y~~^{ya} who lived at the time of Joseph ben Giktiliah. He died when he was 50 years old in the year 1530, when the ass upon which he was riding, kicked him. And since the doctors of the city were jealous of him, they bribed the specialist who was treating him to put po~~is~~on in the sticking plaster and it killed him. On the day of his death, he called to my father who was then a small boy and he said to him, "Recite a verse for me" and he said to him, "Come, let

us walk in the light of the Lord." Then he said, "If so, it is necessary to go." And immediately he called to the teacher who was in his home, namely Rabbi Isaac Gallico and his wife, Gentila, a woman of genuine virtues who died in my youth at Ferraro, at the age of 94 years and through a scribe he made his will and he appointed these two as administrators over his legacy. He left four sons, the oldest of whom was my father Isaac, 9 years, the second was Solomon, the third, Shemaya, and the fourth was Abtalion who was then 18 months old. Solomon grew up and acquired great wisdom in the Torah and also secular knowledge. I kissed his hand once in Ferrara, the month in which he died, the month of Ab, 1580, at which time he had gone there to study. He left the daughter of his marriage to Moses, father of Aaron of Modena, Emphriah was her name and the wife of Solomon was Fioretta, a very learned woman in Torah and Talmud, like her sister Diana, the mother of the family of Rietzi of Mantua and both of them were daughters of a sister of my grandfather, Fioretta, who went at the end of her life to the Holy Land. And as soon as she was about to leave Venice I spoke to her and when she spoke Torah, I found her to be very proficient. But when she reached the border of the Holy Land she died and she was buried there on the border.

When Shemaya lived in Modena, he was in charge of the Banking House and while there he became interested in Alchemy. A gentile deceived him when he showed him how to increase his wealth and he persuaded him to take all the gold and silver of the bank and bring it to one court and there to melt it, thereby quadrupling the original amount. And there, he stuck a sword in his stomach and killed him and he stole all the money and left. This occurred on the night of the cleaning away of unleavened bread. The following day, the incident was discovered when they found him. Within three days after they buried him, the murderer was arrested, and the gold and silver, divided up into four parts, was seized. He left a son, Mordecai

who died in the year 1612 and left an only daughter Sarah, who married into our family, Modena of Venuella, and she died childless. Abtalion excelled in wisdom and in Torah, as well as Gemorah, no one equalled him in his generation. Later he came to live in Ferrara. The people acclaimed him a number of times, which is shown in the book, Azariah de Rossi's Me'or Ehaiim. Most of that book is dependent on the grist of the mill of my uncle Abtalion. In the days of his youth, Elijah the prophet swore unto him and revealed himself to him and in the year 1581, he went to Pope Gregory, in the name of the Italian congregation because of supposed slander contained in certain books and spoke to him many times, and once especially, before him and a number of cardinals, for more than two hours in Latin. He argued in favor of Gomarah, departing there in great honor, because he answered all questions creditably. He died in Ferrara when he was 82 years old in the year 1611. I delivered the funeral oration for him, as is customary in Venice, on the Parasha, "Ekev". He left a daughter, ^{Fulvia} married to Rabbi Judah of Fano called Saltero. She had many children and grandchildren. My father grew up learned in the Torah and Theology. And when he was 17 years old, he began to do banking and merchandizing. And when he ceased to be the administrator, he prospered very much so that when he was 30 years old and when the time came that the brothers wanted to separate, he showed them that the amount their father left them was more than doubled. There had been contention among the brothers for more than 32 years and if they had been united they would have been worth more than 100,000 ducats. And furthermore, at 17, he fulfilled the proverb, "Do not wait for an opportunity to study," he was a man who retained the learning and understanding from things studied in his youth, and one could not ask a question from the wise men that was hidden from him. He took for a wife Fanina, daughter of Samuel of Arignana, Emilia, and she bore five boys and four daughters and

and the oldest was called Mordecai who grew up to be wise and intelligent, but who died at the age of 24; my father always remembered him for praise and continually mourned over him. The others also died, none survived him except Samuel Hezekiah and Armonia who was the wife of Elishma of Saperno, who died after the death of my father, while I was talking to them in their home. When Pope Pius V banished the Jews from the Pontifical dominions in 1569, my father left Bologna and left behind his possessions, house and palace, and his business of trading gold, and he took what came into his hands and came to live in Ferrara. And Fanina, the wife of my father died in the year 1569. In that same year at Shebuoth, he married Rachel, daughter of Jochanan, the Levite who came from Apulia, also from an Ashkenazic family, then a widow of Mordecai, whose other name was Gumpelin Parenzo who was the brother of Mayer Parenzo, mentioned by name in many printed books, and she had one son from Mordecai, whose name was Abraham, then nine years old. He asked the sage Abraham de Rovigo who was proficient in many sciences whether he would prosper if he took this woman, and he was told that he would not prosper materially unless he changed her name to Diana. Diana conceived in the year 1571. There was a great earthquake which shook Ferrara, the like of which was never heard of in all the land, according to the book, Me'or Enaim, by the sage Rossi and they fled for their lives, my father, and his family, to Venice.

On the second day, between six and seven P.M. on the 28th day of Nisan, the 23rd of April, 1571, I was born, causing anguish and suffering, no less than that of Job or Jeremiah. I curse the day on which I was born, for why should I see nothing but travail, trouble and distress, evil only all the time. My mother bore me ^{with} in great difficulty and in my going out of the womb, I was doubled up, and I have been destined for trouble since that time.

At the end of eight days, with great joy, I was circumcized by the prominent Gaon Menahem Azaria of Fano. My father and Sarah, daughter of my uncle Shemaya, my god-mother, called me Yehudah Ariah, may the Lord have mercy on my soul and may my deeds atone for my sins and transgressions. After living in Venice for about eight months, they returned to go to Ferrara, and while on the way to Francolino near Ferrara, when they got off the boat, they gave me to a gentile porter and the porter fled and carried me in his bosom, and when they saw that I was gone, Samson Meshulam, who was my father's guide pursued after him for about two miles and overtook him and grabbed me from him, delving him many blows and he returned me to my parents. And then we came to Ferrara and remained there. Then my father bought a beautiful palace in Ferrara in the quarter which is called Gaira. A match was arranged for my brother, Samuel to the daughter of Corinaldo, who was surnamed Pogetto, and because he did not walk uprightly, the match was broken.

I began to study the Alphabet, with a certain fellow called Chiznito. After that with Isaac Supino and then with Jezreel Basola, the son of the Gaon Moses. Truly I saw a good omen in my studies from the very beginning and when I was two and a half years old, I read the Haftorah in the synagogue. At three, I recognized my Creator, He who joins together study and wisdom, by interpreting the Torah and understood it as I went along step by step. One day I was walking in the garden in the afternoon, and I fell off of a stone and my arm was broken. I was sick for a long time, for it was aggravated by worms and a certain woman kept pouring oil over me, and I was very faint. I barely survived that illness. A little later, I was infected with boils and all of these things occurred before I was four years old, and I remember them, as if they happened yesterday and what I

thought of then, I know even now.

In the year 1575, we left Ferrara and we went to live in Colonia, a small town near Venice, and where my father started a banking house. My father made extreme efforts to make a Mikveh for women in his house and to draw Kosher water in it and at the end of 1576, it was fit to use. One day while I was studying Mishne with Rabbi Gershon Cohen, (now he is the head of a Yeshibah in Polonia) there was then a small boy with me and our teacher left us, both of us went to the Mikveh to play and I fell in while it was filled to the brim. The boy ran and screamed and the men of the house heard him and they ran together with my parents and they looked everywhere but they did not know where I had fallen. About an hour passed. I was holding with my hands to the side of the wall which went round about the Mikveh until the men of the house came and threw in a tub and brought me out and they carried me up to a room and put me on a bed and I was like dead from fear or fright.

In Cologne, my brother Samuel married Gindetta, daughter of Angello della Faggiani of Pizzaro amidst feasting and joy and I recited Torah at the table as my parents had taught me, to the astonishment of all who heard me. I had then as a teacher, Rabbi Mallakai Gallico, a Rabbi, doctor and Cabbalist. At that time, a gentile was badly injured, a fellow named Priamo and they were discussing whether he would die or not, before my father, and many people and visitors were in our house, and I gathered up courage and said, "He will certainly die, for the scriptures substantiates it. X₂/68 87/68 1N'70" at which many laughed and said, "A young pumpkin is known by its shaft." (A future scholar is recognized by his utterings in childhood.)

In the month of Ellul, at the end of the year 1578 we left Cologne and we went to live in Montagnana, a small town about 5 miles away and my father prepared a synagog in his house to pray to God, which is there yet today in the house of Zerach, the Levite. For many years themen of the place did not

pray together in a minyan on account of the strifes among them and we instituted an order of service for all occasions. In the year 1579, in the month of Nisan, the Cardinal Alvise d'Este began to fight his son in order to collect 500,000 ducats. My father was put in jail as a hostage and he stayed there about 6 months, and even after he was freed, his money was retained for three years while the son was looking for Alvise Mocenigo who was to get it from the cardinal. There was involved a great expense, certainly there was no gain in it, only losses. Meanwhile my mother went to Ferrara and to Venice to speak to the princes and the rulers. From this we lost much property, for this turmoil, lasting three years cost us more than 8,000 ducats and even greater perplexity.

Rabbi Malaki left us and I had for a teacher for a year, R.Elikim da Maurata, a Cabbalist and Theologian. Later, Malaki was killed by a servant of an owner of horses, on the highway, who took his money and bought with it an expensive red shirt, and the man from whom he was fleeing suspected him and they put him in prison and put him to death. In the month of Nisan 1580, my father sent me to Ferrara to Mordecai of Modena, ^{from} whom I was to get ^{my} education and my brother had already been there one year. Four months I studied with Yechiel Tardio and eight months with Hezekiah Finzi (who was a rabbi in Ferrara). It was the custom of R.Hezekiah, that after a student studied Al Fasi for a week, he would allow the student to give his own interpretation to the Parasha, and on Shabbas, a minyan would be gotten together in the Beth Ha-Midrash, and a student would interpret the Parasha to them. When my turn came, it happened to be Parasha T'rumah, so I connected up the verse נפיל פסל בדך הכל with R.Simeon b. Gamliel's statement, "On three things the world stands, on Torah, on Avodah, and on Charity and I showed the connection between these two statements, by saying that if Israel's offerings are acceptable to God, he causes his Schechinah to dwell over Israel.

And when I finished, Rabbi Hezekiah said to the two elders, who were there, "I will put my faith in this boy as an interpreter of homilies for Israel."

And so, during the years 1605, 1606 and 1607, ^{when} I used to give homilies in the Large Synagogue on the 205 mitzvot, he would come up to me and compliment my sermons and would say, "Twenty five years ago, I prophesied that he would give splendid homilies for his people."

I also learned to play to sing to dance to write, and Latin I studied a little. But there were two maids, servants of Mordecai's who hated me and they embittered my life and I left his house at the end of a year. In the month of Iyar 1581 my father sent me to Padua to Rabbi Samuel Archivolti (who was head of the Beth Din of Padua) (and the author of two books, "The Garden banner of love" and "From the ^{Garden} fountains") and I listened to his teachings. I studied prose and poetry and he loved me exceedingly until the day of his death, for he used to say that I was one student whom he turned out, whose knowledge was according to his own likeness and image. I remained there one year when my father called me home, because my ^{parents} ~~my~~ wished that I stay with them. Now the Lord caused to come to pass that a young man who had come from the capitol of Italy, Moses bar Benjaimin della Rocca, a grandson of the Gaon Moses of Basola, a man of knowledge and understanding, should desire to live with someone, and so he became my teacher and from him I learned much.

At that time, my brother Samuel wanted to settle down after a life of vanity, and so my father agreed to divide up the wealth with him, giving him half of his possessions, property and money, approximately 4,000 ducats and he left and made a home for himself. At the end of two years in Iyar 1584, Moses della Rocca left us and went to Cypro where he was engaged but he died shortly thereafter. And when this evil report came to me, I composed dirges and especially שמונה עשרה (eight poems in one or a poem of eight stanzas)

(printed in the book Midbar Yehudah). I was 13 years old at the time and all the poets praised it and even today it is a model for Christian and Jewish scholars. From that time on I ceased studying with a regular rabbi but only by myself and even when I was in a big city, I would not go to scholars for help, but I regret that I did not attempt to take advantage of the opportunity at a time when these privileges presented themselves.

Sometimes, my father began to send me to Ferraro^{to} take care of his business, that is collecting money owed him, and our director there was Samson Meshulam, but I would make efforts, returning without accomplishing anything.

In the month of Tishri 1587, an old man named Isaac became blind and after many doctors declared his case hopeless, he continued to pray to God until the Lord heard his prayer. It so happened that one doctor gave him a white liquid to apply to his eyes, so that his eyesight returned.

At this time we were growing poorer, and we were idle, because my father was perplexed and full of anxiety, inasmuch as my father could not solve an inner conflict whether or not to leave that place. Moreover, due to a father's mercy for his son, and to his persistent goodness and kindness, Abraham Parenzo who was the eldest in the house of my father and who in his youth wasted his time gambling with friends, lost much of his own and my father's money. However, my stepbrother saw the evil that he had wrought, and so he left us and went to the city of Ancona. Here lived many of my mother's relatives and he was received kindly for he was handsome and intelligent. They gave him a wife and put him on the right path and from then on, he did not waste his time nor do evil. He became esteemed and respected by all the gentile business men of the city and was honored by the Jewish community and when he prospered later, he returned the losses incurred by my father. And he wrote to my father frequently, for although he had repaid my father for the

trouble he had caused him, he wished that my father change his place of residence so that he could be with him, remembering my father's kindness to him. He extended some of the traffic of his business to me for he liked me especially, and he was a saviour to us. He kept urging my father very much but my father was not willing to listen to him, until finally after losing all hope and seeing nothing but evil, he decided to send some goods there, flax and silk and ornaments of a synagogue in charge of a certain Jew. It so happened that a great plague swept the Jewish community of Ancona, which caused the death of many prominent men, including my brother's two sons and two brothers of his wife and her father. In the month of Iyar 1588, I heard that my brother's mother-in-law died and that his wife was very ill. And so I went by sea, reaching Ancona on the first of Sivan 1588, and although I found that the Lord had restored my brother's wife to health, he was very much embittered over all the trouble he had experienced. And upon seeing me he became very happy and was comforted a little. He honored me very much even as the community honored me. While Shebuoth was being celebrated, he fell on his bed as a log from a headache, and from day to day, his illness kept growing worse, and no one knew the nature of the illness. From the time that he fell on his bed, he was certain of his death. He told of the dreams which he envisioned and when flies used to come around his bed, he used to say, "There they are, flies of death," until his mind left him and at the end of fifteen days, on the 23rd of Sivan 1588, he was gathered up to his people at the age of 28. The community did him great honor at his death, with many sermons and dirges and everyone lamented over him for he was liked by all his brethren and acquaintances. I too composed a Lamentation for him. It was allegorical prose poetry. Then I was bewildered and confounded. I came on a ship alone, none of the Jews were with me, and I came to Venice and from there to Montagnana. I cannot speak of the pain and grief it caused my mother, for she loved him exceedingly, even on the day of her death,

she did not forget it. My father too wept, like a father does for his son. Indeed, from that day on, it was apparent, that all the glory of our house took a turn for the worse, and now, our hope and our support was lost. I look to that day, as one of bad omen.

On the first of Tamuz, 1589, having nothing else to do, I began to study Torah with Menasseh Levi, and Joseph, son of Zerach Halevi, a task to which I diligently applied myself until the year 1612, although it was against my will and despite my resentment, because it did not seem to be the right thing to do under the circumstances.

At this time, my mother urged me continually saying, "Please me and comfort me; take my niece Esther to yourself as a wife; she is honorable and peace will surely dwell in our house." And she was also confirmed in her desire by my father, and then she wrote to her sister about this affair and she was agreeable but the matter remained at a standstill. I prayed to behold this woman in a vision without being bound by oath, - this woman who was destined to be my wife. And lo and behold, I dreamt that an old man seized my hand and led me to a certain wall on which there was an engraved stone covered by a curtain. He removed the curtain and I beheld engraved on the stone, Esther, my niece, and even the color of her garment. And while I was gazing upon her, the picture changed, and another girl displaced her, but this other one was not pleasing to me. In the morning, I recounted the dream to my father and mother, but they did not believe it until the month of Ellul, 1589, when we arrived at Venice. It so happened that my mother and I went to Ancona to redeem property and valuable objects which belonged to my ~~max~~ stepbrother, for his wife had taken possession of them, and now we could not see even a shoestring of them. So after that we desisted from going on and we remained in Venice. A correspondence began between my mother and her sister, by which a match was arranged and the deposit was received

with great joy. And then I pointed out to my mother the the many colored garments which I saw in my dreams, more than a year previously. She was the fairest of women and wise. And when the date for the wedding was set, which happened to be the 13th of Sivan, 1590, I wrote to my father and he came. And I invited my friends and relatives and we went all of us, after making an oath, in great joy and in fine spirits to Venice. When we arrived there, we found the bride ill in bed and everyone said that nothing was wrong outside of a little malady from which she would soon recover. But from day to day, her illness became worse until she was about to die, But despite that her heart was like the heart of a lion and was not confused. On the day of her death, she called for me and embraced and kissed me saying, "I know that this is brazen, certainly God knows that it is not yet a year that we have become engaged and now the lot of death has been assigned to me, - I am not worthy of being your wife, what can I do against the decree of the One who dwells on high, may the Lord have his will." And she requested that they call a sage for the confessional, and when he came, she said, "I confess and ask blessings for my father and my mother." On the eve of Sabbath, the 21st of Sivan, almost at the same time that my brother died, the ~~bride~~ left this vain life to go to an eternal one. And within and without the house, there was great weeping by everyone who knew her.

Immediately after the funeral, they came to me and my mother, that is all the relatives and said, "Her sister, next in years, is just as fine as she was, and it would give consolation to her parents." They urged persistently that I take her sister Rachel to wife. I wrote to my father and he answered me as follows: "Do as you like, for you have good judgment, for I may soon be taken from you, and you and your children will have to live with her; therefore use your understanding which you possess and do good to yourself according to

God's bounty. And I, in order to give comfort to my mother and the deceased, who intimated as much by her words, accordingly took Rachel to wife and immediately we made an agreement in writing, and were married on the sixth day of Tamuz, 1590, with Mazel Tob. On Sabbath, in the Italian Synagogue, Rabbi Solomon Shemayah bar Rabbi Nisan of Sforzo, delivered the sermon. Three Gaonim, Rabbi Katzenellenbogen, Rabbi Jacob Cohen, and Rabbi Abigdor Zividal who were in the audience, conferred upon me with pleasing laudation, the title of "Chaber". I gave a response, basing my text on one of the ten sayings found in a Mishna, "Make of yourself a teacher," which seemed pleasing to all who heard me. Then we returned to our home in Montagnana.

That summer we were in the midst of a famine and great distress which continued through the ensuing year and there was no surcease from the great expense and even greater misfortunes. From Sivan 1591 throughout the summer, we were distressed by the fact that Cardinal d'Este had boycotted us and my father was very confounded. Sickness seized upon our family, my mother, my wife, and also I became infected, and during that entire summer up to Tebeth, illness did not turn away from our house.

My wife conceived and on the 22nd of Ellul (9th of September) at 9 P.M. 1591, she bore a son. All of us were sick abed, and of course, my wife was in a worse condition than all of us, but at the end of eight days, we gathered up enough strength to have the boy circumcized. This was done by Benjaïm Cohen Zedek d'Este, an expert Mohel and my mother and father were the god parents. My father did not wish me to name him Mordecai because, as he said, his son who was so named and who was intelligent and comely, died at the age of twenty four. But I revered the name of the Gaon, my grandfather, who was a great rabbi, and so I did not consider this and

I named him Mordecai. Woe unto me, what a great misfortune befell me when he was torn away from me at the age of 26, - Mordecai died and took with him my heart and he left me in the valley of sorrow and in the depths of anguish.

In the meantime, my father after being restored to full health and vigor, fell down on his bed, in the month of Kislev 1592, like one who was playing but never to rise again, with a continuous fever which burned like fire, and then confessing before the Lord, he blessed me and said, "Nothing should you esteem higher in this world than to remember to fear the Lord Thy God, and the honor of your fellowmen. May the Lord bless thee and keep thee." It was at daybreak 6 A.M. on the 20th of Kislev, the sixth of December 1592, that my father left this turbulent world by which he was burdened seventy two years of his life and especially ⁱⁿ fifteen of these was he humble and good hearted despite the punishments which he accepted in love, and his burdens were in accordance with all the righteous who fear God and turn from evil. He was more silent than the average man. His body was slight but strong. And although he was healthier than the average person, he appeared consumptive. He had a short beard. He had a great deal of common sense, and he knew the Torah which he had studied in his youth very well. He was very careful about the observance of the Mitzvoth and the general customs of the house. He loved his neighbors, was friendly with his relatives and loved his wife and he honored her more than his own self. He was not wasteful but was not stingy for he did not spare his money, - even at a time of need, he was charitable, a prince in righteousness. He did not like frivolity and he was an honest man in business. The day of his death was brief, inasmuch as there was much rain and the roads were in bad shape, and I was

unable to transport him for burial to Padua where he asked to be buried. And so I chose to place his body and soul to rest and to release him from the burdens of the grave. It was Erev Shabbath and so I buried him there in Montagnana and at the end of a year, I placed a stone on his grave, inscribing on it, - "Prince and leader, a righteous man, known to all as full of understanding, the sun of his generation, his light is sunken, The Elder, Isaac, of Modena."

About a month after his departure, he appeared to me in a dream, and he looked like he did at the time of his death. Many times during his lifetime he promised me that he would tell me about the soul, in its relation to reward and punishment after death, especially what one Spaniard told him at his death. Then he said, "Now, I know what the soul is," as if to say that he discovered this after death. And I asked him, "If so, may it please your honor to tell me how your soul is faring in that world." And he answered me, "I eat and drink of the best." And so I said, "How is this possible, the rabbis say that there is no eating and drinking." And he responded, "O fool, be not wise in your own eyes, This refers to the end for the fallen, but the righteous sit and enjoy themselves, etc., according to the scriptural statement, "They shall see God and they shall eat and drink."

After this, I was like a lame man standing on two thresholds, not knowing whether to remain in Montagnana or whether to leave. Finally I decided to leave. An adversary came my way, Solomon Navarra, a Spaniard of Ferrara, who persuaded me to live with him there and join him in partnership in business. I supplied the rent for an establishment and he set me back for four months with an expenditure of 250 ducats. And so I did not wish to go on with him, for I decided to leave and go to Venice.

On a Friday, the 15th of Kislev, I acquired a home downstairs from a fellow named Lachmi mentioned above. My first day as a teacher was

on the first day of Tebeth, 1593 and my first pupil was Abraham, surnamed Mayer Luzzatto. And on Sabbath of Repentance, 1593, I gave my first sermon in public at the Large Synagogue. The synagogue could not contain the great number of people, among whom were many sages and prominent elders, and that sermon is now printed in my book of sermons, called Midbar Yehudah. And so the Lord put grace in the eyes of all who heard me. In the month of Iyar 1594, a Yeshibah was established by Rabbi Kolonymos of Belgrado and midrash was the chief subject, and I have been the head of homiletics for 25 years, dating from that time. And it is now more than twenty years that I have been reading and teaching, night and day, every day, and delivering the sermon on the Sabbath, in three or four different places. The community never seemed to tire of me, nor did they weary of listening to my sermons and it seemed that each time, they were as if they were new for the people. Frates and priests, Princes and famed ones came to hear them and through the kindness of God, may they be to His glory and to the glory of Judaism and not to me, they were praised and glorified. If only my father could have heard me, - he might have been happy with his lot, for he wished that I excel in homiletics above everything else, but during his lifetime I was not worthy of distinguishing myself in it. My mother heard me and she was happy, thanks to God who made me stout of heart, and who gave me fluency of expression, and who was gracious unto me to merit the public audiences in spite of the fact that I was not yet great.

My wife conceived again and bore ^{a boy} at twilight, on a Thursday, 2nd of Cheshvan, the 28th of October 1594, 6 P.M. Jacob ben Meir circumcized him and my mother-in-law and my father-in-law were his god-parents to their great joy, and I called him Isaac after my father, the righteous one, may God give him peace and rest. About 15 days after giving birth, my wife became ill,

and she had a continuous fever for about twenty days. About the 25th of Adar, she became seriously ill with Petacchie (an illness where the skin is covered with blood spots), and she lost her mind until she was on the point of death. The doctors said that there was no hope, and especially on Wednesday, the sixth of Nisan, 1594, her soul almost departed from her and we were almost ready to make funeral arrangements for her, and I cried exceedingly. I asked a boy to recite for me a verse and he responded by saying, "May thy days be many, etc." And I added prayer to that and entreated God, until ~~she~~ improved and became well. However, her milk went out of her breast and I turned the boy Isaac over ^{for a period of eight months} to a Jewish nurse maid, the wife of Ephraim who was an expert in the preparation of herbs, and this thing was very costly.

At the beginning of the year 1595, I went to Montagnana, and my son, Mordecai, for a vacation and when I returned I began to teach at the house, of Elikim Cohen Panarutti, and he was to board with me and to study, and I had about twenty three pupils. During Chanukah 1595, Satan enticed me to gamble, by which I lost nearly one hundred ducats.

On Thursday, the sixth of Nisan, the sixteenth of March 1595, between two and three P.M., my wife bore a third son, Jacob bar Mair circumcized him and the god parents were the uncle and aunt of my wife, Samuel Simchah and Stamma (Annetta) and I called him Abraham in accordance with the wishes of my mother who wished me to name him after her son Abraham Parenzo. At the end of the year, in Adar 1596, the boy was infected with boils, by which more than seventy children died in this community in six months, and he too was returned to God who gave him to me. My two other sons were infected with this disease but God spared them.

And then my wife bore a daughter in the house of Civald in the New Ghetto, where I had come to live in Tamuz 1596. She was born on a Monday evening during the days of Chanukah which was Rosh Hddesh Tebeth 1597.

I did not have the opportunity to name her, for she died after 17 days.

The report of a great earthquake reached me, as did the death of my sister Armonia in Modena, whom I had never seen. Sorrows and distresses were added thereto, and alas, woe unto me, my mother, who was delighted by the praises of my deeds and my sermons, particularly by the one I preached on Shebuoth, and on a day after this festival, a day on which my brother, her son Abraham Parenzo became ill, she too took sick from stomach trouble and her malady extended for more than twenty nine days, aggravated by diarrhea and fever. She had reached the age of 61. On a Friday about 19 hours after much confession and prayers, the fourth of Tamuz, 1597, she became worse and although she was on the point of death, she remained sound of mind. Then she, Rachel died, she was surnamed Diana. She was buried on a Friday here in Venice near the grave of her father and mother. And I placed a stone ather head engraved upon it was as follows:

On the fourth of Tamuz, 1597, Rachel died, surnamed Diana, a
gracious wife, who merited glory, wife of Isaac of Modena,
Blessed be he who brings death and He who restores to life.

During Succoth, I wento to Cento, for I had made up my mind to go to live there with Pacciotto di Revere. After going there, I wento to Ferrara and then to Mantua, sojourning about 20 days and then I returned here, Venice, Cheshvan, 1598. I regretted making this sojourn, for at that time, the Duke of Ferrara died, and in that district, they were making preparations for war. I returned and was happy that I did not remain for in a short while Pacciotto was killed. And while I was away, many students left my tutelage, and all that year I had only a small income. But He who gives bread to every soul did not forsake me, nor leave me, for through writing and composing, I sustained myself and provided for

my household honorably with the help of heaven.

On Friday, the fourth of Nisan 1598, my wife bore a daughter. And on the night of the 13th of Adar Sheni, Erev Shabbos, while asleep, I dreamt. Behold, my mother was calling me and said: "Let her hasten up to me, and I shall return her together with a gift," and when I asked her when that would be, she responded, "During the last days of Passover." Then I woke up, and my spirits were greatly disturbed. I told the dream to Rabbi Solomon Seferno and he interpreted it for me to be - in time, my wife will bear a girl for me and this dream was completely fulfilled. During the last days of Passover, I called ten men and a cantor and they blessed her. I named her Diana, by which my mother was surnamed because I ~~was~~ ^{could} not call her Rachel since that was my wife's name.

On Rosh Hodesh, Ellul, at the end of the year 1598, I returned to the house of Gizlan Panrutti, my relative, to teach his children, and to board with him, and then, later I went to live in the house of Spagnoletto. And during Chanukah, Satan enticed me to gambling, and up until Shebuoth, I lost more than 300 ducats. From that time up to Chanukah I worked assiduously by teaching and I paid off all my debts, and then that same "brother" inveigled me into some secret enterprise, by which I lost a great deal.

Rosh Hodesh Iyar 1601, I began to interpret Midrash in an Ashkenazic Talmud Torah, and also in that week I began to explain the Proverbs.

My wife conceived again and bore a son on Tuesday, 29th of Nisan, fourth of May, 1601 at 9:30 P.M. and in joy I approached the time of the Brith. Meshulam Halevi bar Asher of the House of Mesciullam, relatives of my mother's family circumcized him and his godparents were Moses Simchah and his wife. I named him Zebulon since I always wondered why the Jewish people did not make use of this name, especially because he

was one of the fathers of the twelve tribes and moreover, I wanted to establish that righteous name in Israel. Indeed he was born in Venice, a place resting by the sea, and according to the Scriptures Genesis 49:13, it says, "Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea. He was born during the reign of the duke Marino Grimani, and the Christians called him Marino. May God magnify him who fears Him, and may his deeds be as fine at the end of his life as they were at the beginning, and when he becomes old, may he not turn from the righteous path.

On Tuesday, the tenth of Tamuz, the sage Joseph Pardo encouraged me to prepare a commentary on the Torah synthesized from a collection of all the authors who were in print up to that time. I began with about 27 authors before me and I chose the simplest means of interpretation so that any common man could understand, and indeed, if I had finished it, it would have been a fine piece of work. But I had done only the commentaries to Parashat, Parashat, Parashat, when I returned to gambling. When he saw that I was not working diligently on it, he relieved me of the work, and did not want me to finish it. And so I continued until Iyar 1602, for I had since left Panrutti's in the year 1601 Tamuz, supporting myself by the means of a few students. By the month of Iyar, I made about 500 ducats by gambling together with a fellow Solomon surnamed Elikim Panarutti, but by Shebuoth the money went back the same way it had come, in truth, even more to the extent that I lost everything and my students deserted me until I was left down and out.

And so, in the month of Tamuz 1602, I girded my loins and decided to print some of my sermons, taking some of my best sermons and synthesizing them. As I kept writing them each day, they were printed, until I compiled twenty one of them in the book called Midbar Yehudi, the first part of which has already been made widespread in Israel. Now I have more than 400 sermons

printed, not including the commentaries on the Torah and other selections.

During the month of Nisan, 1602, I heard of the death of my oldest brother Samuel Hezekiah in Rome. He was the son of my father from his first wife, Fanina. He was a spendthrift and a wastrel. After my father had divided up his wealth with him in the year 1583, he received more than 3000 ducats in money and property. And in less than two years, he lost everything and then went to live in Pesaro. There he taught children, and there he lost his first-born son. Finally he went to live in Rome where he again taught until God took him to be with his people. He left behind two sons, one was Solomon and the other Mordecai, who are now living in Rome, married and are getting along well.

In the month of Ellul about the time of the printing of the above mentioned book was finished, I perforced remained in bed ill for about fifteen days. When I recovered from this, I went to Ancona and returned home Erev Yom Kippur 1603. All of 1603, I was without a student. And so I foolishly took up Alchemy, because Dr. Abraham di Cammeo of Rome had enveigled me. He was then only a young man who lived with his father here. In this project I lost much money.

After Passover, I taught a few students, chief among them were the sons of Menasseh Calimani, the oldest of whom had a wonderful mind, but who died at the age of six, after the time I journeyed from Venice to Ferrara.

On Monday the 24th of Ellul which was the 31st of Ellul 1603, my wife bore a daughter at 9 P.M. I named her Esther after my grandmother add my wife's sister to whom I was first betrothed. May she merit marriage and children and may I live to see it.

All of the year 1604, I was in dire need and distress, but I did not keep away from the evils of gambling and I continued this until the end of the year, in Ellul, when I went to Ferrara, and there I compromised with myself by remaining to teach in the house of the prominent, Joseph Zalman, the pupils were his sons and his nephews. At the end of the month, I brought my wife and children to live there with the exception of Zebulon who remained with my parents-in-law for they did not wish him to come along. There I was received in great love and I remained in that house like a lord, as an honored and an acceptable patron; never was there any morē affection showered upon me. Every Saturday, I delivered a sermon in the large synagogue which they praised and extolled. The young people formed a Yeshivah and a society, so that they could catch what overflowed from my cup and I was invited by them every Sabbath for Torah and sermons until I had more than 260 disciples. I boarded with Zalman and I was influential but the whole business was too burdensome for me. I remained only because it was there will, not of my own desire, for I loved Venice, the city of my birth.

On the 24th of Ab, 1605, my brother-in-law, Moses Simchah died at the age of 33 and when this report reached me, it turned my heart within me. He was upright and respected by all who knew him, and his knowledge was a source of joy to all who knew music, dancing, business, books and had wisdom. My wife was also very much grieved for she was loved by him, more than any of his other sisters. And I composed a lamentation which is engraved on his grave stone here in Venice.

The climate of Ferrara was not agreeable to my son Mordecai so I sent him to Venice with my father-in-law. Although Mordecai did not look like my brother-in-law, he had many traits like him; my heart aches for him for his days were few. At the end of the month of Ab, he, Joseph

Zalman passed away, after two days of illness. And if formerly, I desired to leave Ferrara, I now after his death, had still a greater longing to do so, for he loved me, even as his children did. And so I had all intentions of going to live in Venice but this was not fulfilled until Adar 1607, when my family and I came to Venice and established our home and a school in the upper part (upper floor) of the House of dal Aosto the Levite. Students came to me, and I again taught students individually and also in a Talmud Torah and friends were not lacking.

In the month of Cheshban, 1608 I went to live in the house of a wicked fellow, a relative of my wife, Moses Coppio, whose son I was to teach, Abraham Coppio, one of the same type as his father, and together with four other pupils. I boarded with him but certainly no one can be expected to dwell with a wild ass, or live in a cage with a serpent. And so in the month of Tamuz, I forsook his house. Some pupils followed me and I established a school in my house located in Ghetto Vecchio, upstairs in one of the homes of the Treves. Meanwhile, my son, Isaac, did not behave properly with women, so I sent him to Morea to Patrasso. He was then about thirteen years old. He roamed around the district of the Levante and much of his time was spent with Zante who took the trouble to reform him by giving him the task of collecting loops. But he also was enticed into gambling and after two years returned home penniless.

In the month of Cheshban, 1609, I went to live in the Ghetto Nuovo, in the home of Zatal da Udine, downstairs. All that winter, I had many pupils, but met the fortune, according to the saying, "The angels tear down, him who is flattered," until my occupation dwindled to nothing and so I decided to live outside of Venice. And altho letters encouraged me to

go to Florence, to teach and preach for the salary of 220 ducats a year for a certain congregation, I instead went to Montagnana and remained there until after Passover, from where I went to Ferrara and then to Florence. While so journeying, I happened to be in the company of many Christians and two Jewish young men near Leono, which is between Bologna and Florence. While I was talking to a certain priest, an accident occurred. The ass upon which I was riding, kicked the priest. They said that I was responsible for this, and all of them gathered round me while one of the priests hit me with his fist in the ribs and another young fellow, Modenese hit me with a strap over the face, directly on my right eye. Smitten and bruised by those priests, I managed somehow to reach Florence on Rosh Hodesh Iyar. I was kindly received at the home of Abraham Tedeschi and there I my injuries were treated, remaining there in his house for a month, in honor and in glory, until the arrival of my wife and my son who reached there Erev Shebuoth. I remained in his house, teaching and preaching. During that summer, I became ill from an infected throat and also a boil broke out on my left arm. During the holidays, I quarrelled with Abraham and then with the congregation. Moreover the climate was injurious to my eyes, and too, my wife longed to return to Venice. Less than a day after Passover, after remaining in Florence for almost a year, I came back to Venice.

I reached Venice on Rosh Hodesh Iyar, and I negotiated with the Askenazic Bureau of Talmud Torah, and finally I agreed to teach their students and also to preach. After a month, my wife and children came here from Florence, whereupon I established a home in the small house of Joseph Cohen Roman who consented to it because of his poverty brought on by his studies. I wished to live in his house so that I could afford to live in the city.

Rosh Hodesh, Tamuz, I sent my beloved son to the city of Vito, to the home of Loeb Romanin, in order to be a teacher for his nephew, and he remained eight months. He was successful as a teacher and he also used to preach there every Sabbath. These sermons are still in my possession, but I cannot bear to read them because of the sorrow I would suffer, But I know that they are profound in thought. On Rosh Chodesh Nisan 1611, I brought him home to help me in the teaching of the pupils of the Talmud Torah. The Bureau requested that I give him the burden of teaching while specialized in preaching on Sabbath and to teach publicly during the week. Whichever way my son would turn, he would prosper.

*a little longer
if we must
marry?*

In the month of Tamuz 1611, I arranged a match for my daughter Diana with Jacob Levi, the son of him who was called Kalman di Padovani and I made an arrangement whereby I would give a dowry of 400 ducats worth of clothes, and 460 ducats in money. In the month of Ab, my uncle, Abtalion of Modena passed away at the age of 82 and I delivered the funeral oration for him and he left a daughter mentioned above. For more than two years after the engagement of my daughter, I engaged myself in gambling and all my deeds were vain. In the month of Iyar, 1612, I finished the printing of my essays, "The Exile of Judah," and "The Heart of a Lion", and the master Patriarca d'Aquilya Ermolao Barbaro accepted the dedication affectionately by which I honored him and he gave me a gift of 25 Scudi. He was a Zaddik and he cared little for money. And I distributed them in Venice, Padua, Verona, Mantua, Modena and in other districts of Italy and I realized from them 260 ducats, although much of that which I printed went to waste. The days of the wedding of my daughter Diana approached, Rosh Hodesh 1613, and we were greatly perplexed as to how we were to raise the requirements of her dowry, until I together with my son, Mordecai, under

the stress of the situation, collected the necessary dowry. And on the sixth day of Cheshban 1614, we joyfully celebrated the wedding. And they made Jacob a Chaber. He ~~made~~ a home for himself, and indeed, he walked uprightly in all his deeds, in teaching, in dancing and in music, and did not forsake the Torah, and was successful as a teacher. He had a son who died after eight months and then a daughter who died after ten months.

During Kislev, 1614, I continued my gambling activities, but nothing outside of bad luck faced me all the time. And it was on the tenth of Tishri 1615, that my son, Mordecai left us upon the persuasion of a wicked fellow to go with him. And so he left the studies of the Bureau of Talmud Torah, but he returned again in Kislev when he began to busy himself with Alchemy in association with the Priest Joseph Grillo, a very wise man. My son occupied himself with this very much, and became so proficient that the old masters of the science were overjoyed by his success. And in the month of Iyar, they made him a ~~laboratory~~ laboratory in a house in Ghetto vecchio. Here, he made for himself all the necessary implements for his work. ~~and~~ He was given an examination in the home of the priest and was to make from nine ounces of copper ore and one ounce of silver, ten ounces of refined silver. I examined his results twice and I bought for myself six lith and a half ounce (that which was changed to pure silver) and I know that this is true. This matter required great effort and trouble on his part, and took up nearly two and one half months. He realized from this about 1000 ducats a year.

I too was absorbed in this matter, trying to understand these things as best I could, but I did not permit myself to go astray, perhaps, because it led to sinfulness. During the month of Succoth, 1616, all of a sudden he suffered from a hemorrhage of the head, and from that time on, he ceased to labor in this. Some say that the arsenic fumes and the acid entered

his body and affected his head. He remained in this condition for two years until the time of his death. On the ninth of Cheshban, 1617, my loved one and friend, Rabbi Solomon Shemayah Soferno passed away, and I preached a funeral oration for him in the large synagogue. And I importuned the congregation to give money to marry off a daughter of his. My sermon was so eloquent in that God put favor into all who heard me and I raised 500 ducats, a remarkable thing among the Jews, or even among the Christians, who, in times of appeal would in their speeches, persuade their audiences by saying: "Did not one Jew of the Ghetto through the eloquence of a sermon raise 500 ducats to marry off a girl." And on the pulpit of Chiasa di Geronima, this statement was made in my presence during a sermon, with a finger pointed at me.

The Lord immediately paid me my reward, for I, in the association of a good fellow, Abraham, made efforts to secure a publisher for a Mikrah Gedolah, while my son visited many congregations in Italy for the purpose of securing subscriptions for this book. He was quite successful in that he secured about 400 subscriptions. The whole venture was successful. I secured its printing, acted as the agent and proof-reader for the book company, and made about 500 ducats profit. But on account of the confusion caused by the death of my son, I could not collect it. I was not chastised from heaven, for measure is meted out for measure, inasmuch as they had previously sent me the money when I was an object for charity when I married off my daughter.

On the night of the 13th of Tebeth, 1617, I beheld a vision in a dream, and lo and behold, a man was before me while others said to me, "Do you see, that man is a prophet, the spirit of God is within him." And so I

went up to him and said: "My Lord, May your excellency make known to me my end and the number of my days." And the man answered immediately: "Four years and seven months." And I awoke. And in the morning, I composed a poem dedicated to Rossi who inscribed it in his book. At this time, I should not refrain from mentioning the fact that I longed to know from my youth, by means of astrologers, the hour of my birth, so that they might tell me the length of my life. For I knew the fortune that was told to my father when he was 17 years old, in Bologna, from a man named Alessandro Bovio, who told him what would happen to him from year to year, and everything was fulfilled. He told him that he would live to be 72 1/2 years and actually his years were 72 and 2 months. And so from that time on, I yearned to know whether my fate would be like his. A fortune was told me by four fortune-tellers, two Jews and two Christians, saying that I would live to be 62 years; I am now 50 and according to ~~xx~~ to Psalmistry, I should only live no longer than this. But now I repent from all this, since I am convinced that there can be no good to man except that he be upright with God, and furthermore, he should not seek these things because he is pained by his past and he worries about the future. My one prayer is a request that he bring me up with regard for the repentance of my sins. I have had no pleasure, and I am in constant anguish with regard to my shortcomings. There is little good in a world which makes it difficult for one to leave it.

These last days of mine have been very difficult ones, but for everything, may the Creator be praised forever, He who has taken my son away from me; his departure I have spoken of previously. My son Mordecai passed away, for from the time of Succoth 1616, blood began running out of his head regularly once a month, and then once a week, and from Passover 1617 and on, every day. And so I despaired of his health since no cure could be

found for him, and of all the medicines that were poured into him, not one of them had a beneficial result. In the month of Ellul, his malady became critical. Eleven doctors conferred in consultation, Jewish and Christian, who visited him and wrote prescriptions. But he preferred only the priest Grillo, from whom he had witnessed miraculous healings on others. Mordecai disliked all the other doctors and I feared to persuade him to hearken unto them. Only when he was on the point of death did I convince him to take medicine from them.

At that time I dreamt that he requested me to take him to a house outside of the Ghetto, and I asked him; "To which house, tell me so that I might take you to the entrance." And he answered me, "I do not wish to tell you because I do not wish you to go to the entrance." And so he weakened continually, remaining in bed. On Shabbas Shubah, 1618, he got out of bed to listen to my two sermons. At evening, he returned to bed, and then a fever told hold of him, the like of which was never known. Finally at dawn, the ninth of Cheshban 1618, he confessed, reciting Psalms and the confessional. For about three hours he was in agony and about 9 A.M. his soul returned to God who gave it. And if it is true that in the same way that God gives strength to the righteous so that they can enjoy their reward, he also gives strength to the wicked so that they can endure their punishment, this quality was withheld from him during his life. From then on, I have been in the throes of pain and distress constantly. Every day appears to me like a month. The saying about the dead, that is, that they are forgotten will not be fulfilled by me, for it is now three years since the time of his death, and wherever I turn he is always before me. I can describe him as a man of understanding, thin, hair over his body, dark

complected, a small round beard; he was favored by all who saw him, he had good common sense, and his advise was as good as if one received the word of God. He was a very fine preacher, having delivered sermons in Florence, Mantua, Ferrara, and Venice; he never rejoiced, nor did he grieve. He had a good understanding of his fellow men. No one respected his parents more; we were like two brothers who are always together although he was only 26 years old and two months and I was 48 1/2. Woe unto me that I lost him for I have no record of his life. Once in Ferrara, a year before his death, in a dream, he requested that he be shown the woman who was destined to become his wife and a coffin with a black cover was shown to him. I thought perhaps, that I might find comfort in my son Zebulon but up to this time, he has always strayed from the right path, and continues to pain me, nothing can I expect from him except sorrow and affliction. May the Lord guide him in the path of duty and comfort me before my death.

After the death of my beloved, the root of my heart, I turned from the multitude of my sorrows to the unfortunate diversion, gambling, by which means I forgot my sorrows, but I became steeped in this evil until Passover 1620. I cannot refrain from writing about the aforementioned matter. I must add that the Prince Solomon Shemaya Soferno was very intimate with my son, for he found him a master of wisdom, and they were often in council together. It so happened that the Prince died at dawn, Tuesday, the ninth of Cheshvan 1617 in the home of Zalman Lorias of Padua, near the houses of Calimani, and my son died at the end of the year at dawn, Tuesday the ninth of Cheshvan 1618 in the same room and on the same bed, for I had gone to live in that house immediately after the death of the Prince, may both of them rest in the Garden of Eden.

During Succoth I went to visit the doctor Chaim Alatini. Then I and my son Zebulon and I went to Ferrara to witness the marriage of the sister of the doctor, a widow, to Leon Costantini di Candia. When I returned on Simchath Torah, 1619, I became ill. The first days of my illness were serious, then I had a fever lasting for about three days, and the entire malady lasted for about 42 days but God restored me to health.

After the death of my son, my soul yearned to find a husband for my daughter, Esther, surnamed Sterilla. I promised myself that if God found me worthy of marrying off my daughter, I would change the manner of my living, by separating myself from that place. And I sought a husband for her but was unable to do so until Tebeth 1619. Heaven decreed the match to be with a young man, 18 years old whose name was Jacob ben Yekusiel nicknamed Fiz. He lived in a small village called La Motta which was across the sea. I made up my mind to earn the dowry which amounted to 500 ducats in money and about 300 ducats worth of property, through the publication of lamentations and marriage songs which would bring in about a thousand ducats.

Friends persuaded me to make an agreement with the Bureau of the German Talmud Torahs and this took place on Rosh Hodesh 1620. Jacob Jozvil Levi was to be associated with me in the teaching of students and I was to teach publicly. I obligated myself for a period of 16 months, up to Rosh Hodesh 1621 at the salary of 250 ducats a year. I found this work very difficult. Added to this, I received little comfort from Zebulon for in Adar 1620, he began roaming on the sea for about three months and then he returned home. During Sivan 1620 I went to Verona, Mantua, Ferrara, for a period of a month, and then I returned to the Beth Hamidrash.

Through the grace of God, my daughter, Esther, was married on the tenth of Ellul 1620, and I fulfilled my obligation to her. But there was no rejoicing for my son Zebulon joined in a rebellion against the tyrannical Christian rulers of the land, and it took nearly three months before I was able to appease them and to make peace. But during Succoth 1621, My wife, and son and I, went to escort my daughter to the home of her husband, and there they celebrated ~~the~~ festival in joy, and we returned/^{home} immediately after in peace.

At the end of Ellul 1620, my son Isaac returned from Egypt after a period of more than twelve years. He used to travel in the district of the Levante. It cost me about 50 ducats to redeem him from the boat and to clothe him. I took him into my household, thinking perhaps that he would restore my soul and be a help to me but as formerly, he kept away from me, returning to his frivolities, to gambling and drinking. And this kept up until Rosh Hodesh Iyar 1621 when I made him go back to the Levante. It cost me about 20 ducats to send him away. May God implant within him the way of righteousness and may he not profane my name wherever he goes.

During the year 1621, my distresses continued to come upon me for I lost everything gambling and now I found it necessary to prolong this difficult work in which I was engaged, so that now my contract does not expire until Rosh Hodesh 1622 and it is now only Iyar 1621. I am in dire need and in great debt, may the Lord have mercy upon me.

At dawn, Friday, 16 of Iyar 1621, 7th of May 1621 at 5 A.M., my daughter Diana bore a son. His father named him Isaac after the Zadik, my father, and also after my wife's father; may he grow up to be God fearing.

During Tamuz, 1621, I went with my wife to Padua where a wedding of the daughter of our relative Moses Simchah was held. And in the month of Ellul

my wife and I went to La Motta, where my wife remained with our daughter Esther until Yom Kippur when she returned home. During Kislev 1622, Zebulon was imprisoned by officers for twelve days, and it cost me 32 ducats to secure his release, whereupon he went free.

At the end of Tebeth 1622, we made a sivvum, after finishing the Mesechte Ketuboth, which was held in the Great Synagogue. Eighteen sermons were delivered Before an immense crowd, among whom there were many Christians. Poems were recited and songs were sung and music was played. And Zebulon was one of those who sang, a song which I composed, and every one praised his pleasing voice. And I was very happy also, for at this time, my contract with the Bureau expired, I secured the release for which I yearned, inasmuch as I was constantly occupied and was paid almost nothing for it, and could not meet my debts. So I praised the living God and I decided that after Passover, I would go on the right path.

At Passover, 1624, joy turned to sorrow, and joyous days to mourning. Oh, Righteous One of the world, how my sins have multiplied, how great are my sins! From the 51 years since the time of my birth, things have been growing constantly worse, and a day does not pass but what there is not a curse in it, always disquietude, passion follows passion, and misfortune ensues misfortune. either because of money matters, or pangs of the heart, or bruises of the body. Where do I get the strength to hold the pen between my fingers to write that with which I am burdened, and the paper, how sticky it is from the water of my tears flowing upon it. My bewildered heart is ready to burst forth like a shrieking whistle and death would be a kindness to me and the greatest comfort. Nothing has occurred for 100 years like this terrible scourge which God inflicted upon me for my presumption. It is now about four years since my son Zebulon was forced to testify against some arrogant and cursed murderers and robbers in a bitter and oppressive

case. Since the time of the destructive princes, there were none like those cursed priests, may their name be blotted out in this world and may their bones be disgraced in Gehinnon in the world to come, and especially Shabti and Moses Benincasa called DiHindelina, may their portion be cursed in the land, may their sons be orphans soon and may they wander about for a piece of bread like the seed of Canaan and may enmity always be with them. They spoke peacefully with him and with me but among themselves they plotted up until the month of Ab. Then again my son had a conversation with the Prince Shabti and they quarrelled when Zebulon smote him on the jaw and he ran after him with a butcher knife until Cannaregio and there my son saw a sword on the shoulder of a certain fellow from the village which he grabbed, and then turned against his pursuer, smiting him slightly on one of his hands. Then my son jumped into a lake and escaped. Before this event, I heard what was going to taking place, I consulted the officer Alvize Guistinian who ^{later} made peace between them, and then again the brothers acted friendly. But the fire of venom burned in their hearts, And alas on the night of the clearing away of Chometz, toward dawn, on a Friday, the 25th of March 1622, the brothers plotted together and included Isaac, the son of Spagnoletta, the bastard Abraham called Ciompo della Bella, who everyone called asses but they were really bastards, and also four Spaniards, David Mocato, Moses Emmanuel, Isaac and Jacob Montalti, brothers, the sons of Comare, eight of them in all. Isaac the manzer spied him out, for they knew that he was stout of heart, like the heart of a lion who will not flee before strength. What was going to take place was told me, so I went out looking for him in order to bring him home. They came out of their hiding places, making out as if they were going to smite someone else, and then a manzer called to him, saying: "Come down for thy friends are being fought against at the entrance of the court." And he rushed down, passing me in a way, so that I would not be able to recognize him. And immediately when

he came out they surrounded him and smote him on the head, injuring him, a bloodless wound, and then they stuck a sword or spear in his throat, until he left them crying out, "My father, my father, I am dead, and the blood spurted forth like a fountain. He was unable to reach home, so he went into the house of my brother-in-law Jochanan, laying down on a bed, reeling in blood. And before the doctor arrived, all of his blood went out of him, for the bandage which bound the wound did not remain. Instantly he lost all his feeling, and made confession and recited supplications, and then lost consciousness. He never spoke again, nor could he understand a thing, but he suffered agonies four nights and three days and on Tuesday, his soul departed from him. He was buried on that same day near his brother, my son Mordecai. On his coffin, they placed all of his clothes which were stained by blood. And my cries and the cries of my wife caused everyone to shed tears, even the Gentiles were pained, even bystanders. At the cemetery, an acquaintance of his, a young fellow of our town, 18 years old, of the family of Dolphin's was so grieved that when he reached home, he fell in a faint and within four days he died. There was not a creature who had spoken to him, and there were many gentiles among his acquaintances, who did not weep at his death, a death which was so cruel. He was 21 years old minus 13 days, beautiful of form and appearance, none like him in this community. He sang songs like an angel of God. He was wise and intelligent, composing epigrams and poems. Now one was as strong as he was. All his strength and his weapons were used only to avenge God and to sanctify His name, for he could not endure witnessing a Jewish name profaned. The burgher, Senatore Lorenzo told his fortune by means of astrology four months before his death, and predicted that he would be killed between the age of 21 and 22. Woe unto my eyes which witnessed such a cruel death, the flow of his blood is constantly before my eyes, my soul refuses comfort, indeed there is no comfort. Only

my prayers to God are a source of profit to me, He shall take my soul from me, and then being in His presence, I shall no longer be turbulent, rest and quiet shall be my portion.

Later I attempted to get vengeance for his blood against those who spilled it and I spent four months doing so until all of them were called before the magistrate at the Tribunale della Bestammia, by the order of Consiglio dei Dieci and also Elia Musiscion. All of them were banished from the land and the dominion forever, and ~~no one could speak~~ to them for ten years, and they would be fined 1000 litrine if caught within the borders. And so by this act, they had cut their own heads. Only the neighing ass della Bella was allowed to remain, the rest went away to their punishment. They took it lightly for they rejoiced over his death. Every evening and morning and afternoon, I prayed to the living God, reciting Psalm 104, so that God would avenge the spillers of guiltless blood but this did not give me comfort, may his death be his ransom. Certainly, I live against my will. It seems to me as if both of my sons died on one day, how can my soul find comfort!

At this time I shall mention some works which I composed, especially those already printed whether they be in Hebrew or Italian, and also books which include my poems, prefaces, or criticisms. These are to me a great source of comfort since my name shall not be blotted out from Israel.

ש"ס נ"ו, a dialogue, for and against gambling. This was composed in my youth when I was 13 years old, and was printed in the year 1601, but I do not care especially for my name to be remembered through this work.

פ"ט נ"ו, printed a little later, containing many precious gems and selections. The title page bears my name.

פ"ג נ"ג, I translated this from Italian to Hebrew from the book Ethics.
ש"ס נ"ג containing all their laws and matters of holiness, printed 1600.

ש"ס נ"א, twenty one of my sermons, printed in the year 1602, in

Italian and the language is clear and simple.

ג'ון' ו'ל'א, an interpretation of the Scriptures in the vernacular, containing also grammatical rules, selling now for ten lire because it is out of print, but at first it sold for three lire.

א'ב'ר'א, In the memory of this locality, no one has been known to compose a book in this field up to this time.

א'ב'ר'א פ'ר'א, An introduction to the collection, א'ב'ר'א, 1625; ק'ד'ו'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, on the Haggadah, א'ב'ר'א, 1625; א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א for every sorrow, may it never come, printed in a small volume but has not yet been sold; א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א a collection of essays, commenting on the א'ב'ר'א; א'ב'ר'א, printed in Prague 1637; א'ב'ר'א, a collection of Gemaraha.

Poems and prefaces are found in the following books: א'ב'ר'א פ'ר'א in which I have printed supplications for the dead. In א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א and א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, devotions for the morning and evening of Rosh Hodesh. In א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, in the large edition of the א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א in the small mishnas, a commentary called א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, a service and confessions for the Gemilath Hasidim Society; א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א; the sermons of the sage Rabbi Naphtali, א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א with commentaries. In the Passover Haggadoth, illustrated and completely translated; a new Mikrah Gedolah; א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, a commentary to the Book of Principles; In the book of poems by Solomon Rossi of Mantua; In א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א of א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א, my pupil, the doctor; in א'ב'ר'א א'ב'ר'א and many books which I do not recall.

In the Christian books; In the book called, "The Ark of Noah, by Marco Marini, a Hebrew grammarian and writer of a Hebrew dictionary, there was printed a very beautiful poem of mine written when I was fifteen years old.

in a book containing a collection of verses of praises to the duke Grimani; in Esther by Rabbi Moir Rieti; In a book of verses celebrating the marriage of an official in Bologna; In the Triumphant Pastoral of Rabbi Israel Altini; The Tragedy of the Bride Esther; and also many others besides these.

There are some which have not yet been printed, some of which are finished. Others that are not yet finished are: דברי יוסף commentaries on the Meschta ד'ק"ה; the five megilloth, the Haggada, Psalms, Samuel. דברי יוסף, additions to the selections from the Gemarah which the author of דברי יוסף abandoned.

Those that are completed are: a book for the instruction of composition of letters in the Hebrew Language; commentaries on the Prophets, connecting them up with the Parasha; The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus; the Book of Maccabees and others translated into Hebrew; דברי יוסף, a collection of my poems, to these I have added verses dedicating them to my grandfather Yehudah. There are any number of sermons and commentaries to the Torah scattered here and there. ד'ק"ה ד'ק"ה, a response to a certain book opposing the oral tradition.

And besides these, there are many others: An ancient parable in Italian adapted to the modern scene; the Pastoral of Rachel and Jacob. I have many verses which I might continue if God would only grant me strength, but the death of my son over whom I grieve, has stayed my hand.

At Tamuz 1622, My wife and I were left alone to worry and grieve over the spilling of my son's blood, and so I brought over to live with me in part of my house located in the new Ghetto, Rabbi Merrara. I had been living with my daughter Diana and my son-in-law Jacob Levi and their son Isaac since Kislev 1619, and their company restored me a little to life from out of my sorrows.

Tyar 1623, I went to Mantua to attend the wedding of Diana Coppio, who was married to one of the sons of Massarano. The fear that we might meet robbers was with us, also Archibuieri who was in our party. It so happened that he came across five drunken Corsicans, who also feared that we might be bandits just as we thought them to be, and they began looking at one another without speaking. They were carrying a large pole. We were between the towns of Sanguinetto and Castellara. Some men and women of our party, including myself started to run away so that we could hide from them, but then were apprised of the entire matter. Then everyone was called together and we went our way peacefully to Castellara. There I composed a story in prose poetry in a very fine Italian. Before a multitude of people I preached in the synagogue, and in the audience were priests who spoke well of the sermon.

In 1624 and 1625, no outstanding event occurred. As is His custom, God did not forsake me. There were two Jews and some Christians who were my students.

At the beginning of 1626, at Succoth, the sage Rabbi Gershon decided to leave for Palestine and they gave me the office of preaching in the Great Synagogue every other Sabbath and my son-in-law Rabbi Isaac Levi was assigned to preach on the alternate Sabbaths; for I had been preaching every Sabbath twice both ~~in~~ in the Great Synagogue and also to the Spanish Jews besides giving ~~gix~~ instructions in the Prophets to the Italian congregation besides the regular instruction during the entire week.

Kislev 1626. My grandson, the son of Diana died of boils. His name was David, only 14 months old. He was a continual delight and my grief was great, and so I went to ~~live~~ in her neighborhood, with Mayer Cingoli whose house was very large.

Monday morning, 18th of Kislev, 1626. I was going from Da Rialto a Cassan hastily, when I reached a path leading to Camp S.Cassan which I

was about to enter because it was a shorter route but I noticed fumes of smoke going up from a smoke stack and if I had entered there it would have fallen on my head and killed me, blessed be the Redeemer and Deliverer.

During that winter, I continued to lose money in gambling until the following Passover when I was forced to borrow 132 ducats from the Ashkenazic Bureau of Talmud Torah to pay my debts. I had to pay them six ducats a month out of my salary. I then vowed that I would not gamble again until the I would be free from those payments which would be 25 months from date. And so the year can be counted as if there is no income and I could not tell what would befall me.

After Passover 1627, my brother-in-law and my second brother Jochanan Simchah passed away. My heart turned within me for he was to me like a brother and I was now bereft of all my relatives and sons. Even my son Isaac was not willing to come back home despite my entreaty to him to come home to comfort me after the death of Zebulon. But he kept on roaming from city to city, receiving no good reports from him. And now O Lord, how long will he pain me and inflict me. Between the period of Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, I was informed that my son Isaac have gone from Smyrna to Lazzaretto and then after Succoth he came home. My wife and I were very happy. We expected to be comforted through his presence but he remained only until after Shabuoth 1628 when he became restless and longed to go to other places in the Levante. I urged him exceedingly not to leave me but he would not hearken. And so he went to Smyrna and is still there. My punishment for my sins and transgressions have been fulfilled in that my three sons are dead, one having died, one having been killed and one in exile.

Kislev 1629. I ministered at the marriage of the daughter of my brother-in-law, Samson Levi of Ancona. Her mother Sichah was a sister of my wife, Esther was her name, who was married to Ephraim Ostileo.

My^{self} and I felt obligated to raise 450 ducats, 90 ducats of which I urged should be gotten by her from the inheritance of her father, Jochanan, and the remained I collected together from friends and other contributions and from my own pocket. May God remember me for good for this deed. 1629 While speaking in the Spanish Synagogue on the Farasha Y2(3n/18.1.1) a brother of the French king, along with some French princes and five chief Christian preachers who had spoken during the holiday (Quaresima) came in, and it so happened that the Lord spoke profoundly through my mouthpiece, and although all of them were pressed for time, they remained until the end. There were also many other Christians there, and the assembly praised me very highly. I have labored with divine service for 36 years, but now especially the news of my fame spread to all parts of Italy. Altho before this time many prominent Christians came to hear me but particularly now there came many princes and leaders, dukes, cavaliers and duchesses, from all classes; may God be praised for giving grace to His servant so that he may sanctify His name ~~me~~ publicly before the Christians, may this not be for arrogance or pride. .

My eyes are a fountain of tears, and I weep and am embittered, and I curse the day of my birth for I witness nothing but pain and distress, and curses continue to multiply. Job said, "I have no rest, no peace, no comfort since trouble has come my way," but I have more than trouble. Trouble is added to distress and my days are consumed and my troubles have no end. My son-in-law Jacob bar Kalonymos Ha-Levi, very wise in the Torah, Kabbala and so forth, a preacher, a man who feared sin, more pious than all men, who loved my daughter, his wife more than himself and honored her, who rejoiced in his lot, who was successful in his dancing, and the Torah,

whose deeds were without reproach, a quick scribe, a master of fine and lucid writing, you, I am unable to stop praising him. By him I was comforted in my grief over my son who has departed and is no more, truly, he was a restorer of life to me. One day during Shebuoth, he fell sick on his bed, and at dawn Thursday, Rosh Hodesh Tamuz 1629 he died. There was not a child or grownup here but that he wept for him, there was none like him in all of these congregations. A righteous man must have forsaken God, because in that summer more than sixty people of the congregation died, more than ten of whom were highly accomplished in the Torah. They were of the upright, of the wealthy and the heads of families. The statement that one finds half a comfort in the distress suffered by others is false. It meant only additional sorrow and suffering for me, for after he died, the boy Isaac who was then eight years old and my daughter who was then in pregnancy for a period of seven months, came to live with me. My eyes are flowing with tears all the day.

At dawn Friday during the month of Ellul, my daughter bore a girl and a nurse was gotten for her at great expense. She was named Ricchina, may God have mercy upon her, and upon her brother and mother who is now a widow. Her daughter died after seven months.

During that entire summer I was suffering from a pain in the stomach. Also the boy Isaac was ill, almost on the point of death. I cried to God who heard my prayers and who miraculously healed him. May God give enough so that I may raise him according to His law so that he might fear Him, just as a father wishes of his own son.

In the month of Ab 1629, Esther, the daughter of my brother-in-law Samson died. She was the one for whom I labored to marry off to Ephraim Ostoleo. Two days later, her mother died, Simchah, the sister of my wife.

Adar 1630. I argued with the 74 lay heads of the community who for two years had forbidden various types of gambling by executing the punishment of excommunication. I did not praise gambling but I showed that they did not have the power to do this, or the right to excommunicate anyone. And so, in order to disprove their decisions, I wrote a beautiful and forceful essay which I printed by pen and sent it to all Israel.

During the month of Kislev, my son Isaac came to Livorno, remaining there about seven months but he did not even want to come to see me here in Venice, may God have pity upon him.

During Sivan, I took my student Baruch Luzzatti to Modena where I wished to make a match for him with the daughter of Simchah Sangoni, and the trip both ways took about three weeks on account of a plague which began to harass Italy.

In Tamuz, my daughter Diana's girl ~~died~~ whose name was Ricchina died. And at that time, the hand of God began to weigh down upon the world. Italy was held in the throes of famine and disease and especially Mantua was in great distress, the like of which had not been witnessed since the destruction of the Temple. Also the community of Modena was almost swept away by this plague. It reached here in Venice after the beginning of the Ten Days of Repentance. In the Ghetto Vecchio, Moses Zarfasi died and during Succoth, Jacob Cohen called Sekkko died. The plague raged until Rosh Hodesh Adar, it killed 170 people. There was great confusion in all the communities and many, particularly, the Spaniards, left the city to go to the Levante and Verona. They sent a great deal of money to Lazarito. Almost everything was spoiled, lost or destroyed. In 1632, Jews were forbidden to buy or sell, or to do business of any kind, and prices were unheard of before and Israel became the poorest of the community, the rich became the

middlemen, and the middlemen became the povertystricken, and the poverty stricken were penniless. The government had taken more than 120,000 ducats from the Jews.

I happened to be among the poverty stricken. It had been two years since daughter Diana, a widow and her son came to live in my house, and my daughter Sterilla was also living with me for her husband was unable to come here safely so she was also dependent on me as was everyone else. Nevertheless though the time was so critical, God did not forsake me. He was wonderful to me in kindness and truth, for outside of the gifts given to me by the people, I expended more than 500 ducats for the necessities of the house and the payments of obligations which I earned through the exertions of my pen and my speaking, according to the multitude of His mercies, for He was always my help, for although His hand struck all about me and even on the floor on which I lived where some became ill and died from the plague, and some upstairs and some downstairs, and on all sides, right and left, He did not permit destruction to come to my house until this day. He did not forsake me nor my household.

From Rosh Hodesh Adar until the 11th of Sivan, the plague continued and grew worse among the inhabitants of the city but God worked a miracle between them and the camp of Israel. There was no illness and no deaths in the two ghettos and all the Goim were wondering about this wonderful thing; only we Jews did not recognize this miracle and we continued to do evil in the eyes of God, by way of quarrels and contentions, stealing and lying and swearing falsely. And the anger of God became incensed against His people, and then they began to be smitten on the 11th day of Sivan. They could not be healed and many died in the two ghettos but as usual Israel did not die in proportion to the rest of the city. However, it was not so in the communities of Verona and Padua for the hand of God was

against them, not a third of them remained, and there was not a house in which a death did not occur, may the Lord have mercy upon those that keep his covenant.

And all of this time, my son Isaac happened to be in Livorno, and although he wished to come to me, he was unable to do so because the cities were closed to travelers on account of the plague and so he returned to the sea. I am waiting for him, may God return him safely.

The stars of the heaven and their constellations which God placed in the heavens always impressed me, for no one is able to escape their power, no one can hide from their effects, and wherever one may turn, he cannot flee from it. There are some who struggle against it and who are strong willed and this forced me to hate the folly of gambling with all my soul so much so that when I was still a boy of 12(2) I showed my knowledge to the community in the form of an essay 174 210 which was printed in the year 1596 here in Venice and which was again printed in Prague 1615. And although I have been brought low many times, yet I found solace in my portion because God had given me the knowledge and intelligence so that I could find favor in the eyes of exiled Jews, princes and nobles who were not of our people. And now at the eventide of my life at the age of sixty, during the time of this terrible plague mentioned above, the spirit of Satan entered within me, exactly the 13th of Tamuz 1631 and I returned to gambling. From that time until Kislev 1632, I lost more than 500 ducats, most of which was money which had been loaned to me.

Cheshvan 1632. God repented in accordance with the multitude of His mercies and withdrew the plague from the city and from the Jews, revoking the bitterness of death. A holiday was celebrated in the city and everyone gave thanks to His God and also in all the Jewish communities they proclaimed

a fast on the evening of Rosh Hodesh Kislev. The prayer for Rosh Hodesh was in S. S. S. S. and the rejoicing was translated into free-will offerings of money for remembrance of the deliverance, Blessed be the Deliverer and the Redeemer.

Kislev 1632. My daughter Diana, the widow of Jacob, called Kolynomos HaLevi was married to Moses of Fano, called de Saltara, son of the chief Yehudah and son of Fulvia, daughter of my uncle Abtalion of Modena who lived in Padua. During the plague his mother, two of his daughters and his wife died. My wife, my daughter Esther and her husband remained there in Padua through Purim when the wedding was joyfully celebrated. May God lengthen their days, may they have children and may God cause them to prosper so that my eyes and the eyes of my wife may live to see it.

The boy Isaac, the son of my daughter remained with me, may God cause him to grow up to serve Him, giving him knowledge and wisdom so that he may merit marriage and wealth during our lifetime.

After the wedding of my daughter, no event of any consequence occurred until Rosh Hodesh 1633 when I engaged myself in gambling, sometimes with fortunate results and sometimes otherwise.

In the month of Adar 1633, my daughter Diana gave birth to a daughter and she named her Angelitta, in memory of her brother, my son Mordecai, for she loved him very much.

All during the plague, from the beginning to the end, my son Isaac lived in Livorno and then he decided to return home. He reached here Tebeth 1632 sound in body but penniless and he regarded me like a son who has sinned against his father.

The period from Rosh Hodesh Iyar 1633 to Passover 1634 was one of quiescence and complacency for me, for I did not engage in gambling, and God aided me so that I was quite successful in my work and also

earned a great deal from my writings which I had completed and arranged. But I had little pleasure perhaps because I was getting old and senility had come upon me suddenly and also upon my wife. We turned away from associating with people since we could not find solace in that inasmuch as our end is drawing nigh. If God forbid, her death should precede mine then I shall die twice or if my death precedes hers, then I die once. Our lives are in the hands of our Creator, may He lengthen our days.

Adar 1634. I began the printing of my book אגוד' ה'א, a supplement or addition to אגוד' ה'א which contained all the delights of my soul. May it be the will of God to cause me to be worthy to see its completion, for this is my one joy and desire.

Tamuz 1634. My son Isaac took a wife, Sarah, the daughter of Joseph Finzi who was divorced from her husband not because of lewdness but because of incompatibility. He established a home for himself, for my house was too small to hold all of us. May God lengthen his days and cause him to prosper.

From the period of Ab 1634 to Rosh Hodesh 1635, God cursed my fortune. Astrology most surely betrayed me and between the period of Ab and Ellul 1634, I lost in gambling about 200 ducats, and then after that during Cheshvan, Kislev, Tebeth and Shebat 1635, I lost 400 more. I was left penniless and I have been in distress from Resh Hodesh 1635 until the present time. Nevertheless, the mercy of the Lord does not completely desert us, for he provided me with the ordinary necessities of life. Old age was weighing down heavily upon me and my wife who was in poor health and full of grief.

Previously I mentioned the beginning of the printing of the book אגוד' ה'א, a supplement to אגוד' ה'א. There was nothing more that

I wished to see fulfilled than its printing and distribution throughout Israel, for through this I hoped would come to me merit and honor and an everlasting name which would not be blotted out. The printing of it began Adar 1634 but many obstacles presented themselves until Cheshvan 1635. Before Ellul our people were denounced before Cattaveri on account of printing matters, and he closed the printing house for a period of six months. It was then opened and they returned to work. The printing of my book was done almost entirely by my grandson Isaac HaLevi, whom I introduced into this work two years ago so that he might earn a comfortable livelihood through an upright hand labor, and at the same time might educate himself. One day, Wednesday the 28th of Iyar 1635, officers suddenly came into the printing house and seized my grandson Isaac and some young associates, placing them in darkness in jail and then they closed the printing house. I was very much distressed inasmuch as I with all my efforts could not secure his freedom but at my request, at the end of fifteen days, they took him from the dark part of jail to a place where there was light, remaining there altogether 66 days. It cost me a great deal of health and expense until the Lord relented in accordance with the multitude of His mercies and the "Quarantia Criminale" permitted him to go free which was on a Friday, the 28th of Tamuz 1635.

Ab 1635. I took ill with Asthma and stomach trouble, remaining in bed for about twenty days. My son-in-law and daughter came to visit me from Padua. Later I was restored to health but my Asthma remained with me.

Adar 1636. My daughter Diana bore a son. My wife and I went to Padua to initiate him into the covenant. He was circumcized by the doctor Rabbi David Chaim Loria and his father named him Abtalion Chai after my grand uncle, may he be like him in Torah and wisdom and length of days.

About Rosh Hashonah the printing of my book שמואל 120 was completed. I expended about 250 ducats for the cost of the printing without borrowing from anyone, some of which I earned from other books which were already in print, and some of which I realized from royalties in Venice, Ferrara and other places in Italy, and some of which were sent to the Levante, Germany, Fiandra where they are being sold constantly.

continues
My son Isaac who had been married a year, who it appeared was turning away from evil, was not walking uprightly. In the month of Ab 1636 which is the time of this present writing he has continued so, and has aggravated my illness which began in 1635 when stomach trouble and Asthma took hold of me and I did not get any relief until winter. But in the summer the heat troubled me very much. And then my son left because of gambling, going on the wrong path up to this present time, it is now about 18 months since he has come into my presence, not speaking to me nor I with him. I cover my face because of shame on his account. May the Lord be praised, though he has not allowed me any pleasure from my sons, for out of the three, I have had only sorrow and suffering. Only the students which I have trained and made great wise men and teachers in Israel, who are called sons are a comfort to me.

1636. During the winter months I taught Italian and other things to a prince, the honorable Lodovico Eselin, a great Frenchman of the court of the king. He was very affectionate towards me. I earned from him about 100 ducats. He gave me his picture and a statue of himself by which I might remember his affection and he also wanted my stature made by the Cavalier Tiberio Tinelli, the great painter and sculptor. It was almost completed when Tinelli died and the model of the statue was lost. It was very precious.

During that year I was engaged in teaching and took care of the Yeshibah. At that time I composed a poem on the metamorphosis of the soul. I called it "Ben David" for I composed it in order to reconcile David Finzo who was now living in Egypt so that he might find solace after the death of a precious son only nine years old. And I sent it along with other small books and included a picture of myself as a remembrance. Later I sent him ten of my books עשר ספרים but I have not heard from him now for three years, either by letter or by word of mouth.

Purim 1636. All this community was turned to mourning. ~~When~~ When either general ~~and~~ specific troubles began ~~and~~ it was always my lot that my troubles should be a portion of them. It so happened that two fellows Grassin Scaarmello and Sabbadin Catalino bought and placed in a room in one of the house of the ghetto, property and valuables worth as much as 70,000 ducats, which included silk, clothes of silk and gold which certain gentiles had stolen in Mercuria from the merchant Brigonzi and this crime was discovered, after Brigonzi accused them. The revelation was made by the wicked fellow Isaac bar Jacob Sinigo and so officers came and seized Sabbadin who confessed to them where the valuables were located. Menachem Danielo and Isaac Scaramello was implicated for they were suspected though they were innocent. They locked up the ghetto court on Purim so that they might seek them in all the houses. There was great confusion and a great outcry since every one was disgraced, princes and burghers cursed the Jews only because one man had sinned. And so they gave vent to their anger against the whole Jewish community, saying that they were accomplices of thieves, and that the ghetto was the source of all evils. And from that time on, their friendship has turned to hatred against the whole community. Moreover, injury was added to insult, when on the first day of Passover 1636, they seized the brothers Zorzetti, Mordecai who died later as an

apostate in prison, and Jacob who was found at the time in Galera. They had given bribes to the Judge Cornatia so that he might favor those two Christians, since Grassin Scaarmello had implicated them to avenge them. God was not willing to pardon me for he punished six families of upright folks and then began my broken and heart to groan. I was brought to grief by Grassin and Sabbadin who were my friends. My son-in-law Jacob Motta was also an associate of the Zorzettis and was involved with them in this business. He was in great fear and distress and forsook his business to go to Ferrara along with some other crushed and upright men for they too were in dread because of this. This fear and continual dread lasted about a whole year and each day was greater curse than the next. My daughter lamented over her husband for he was far from her. Even I was in great fear, feeling that my skin might burst open any minute because of Isaac Vigevano of Roviglio who was arrested and reported that I spoke to him about this business, intimating that I knew all about the giving of the bribe to the princes. And I was ill at ease night and day, until I was entirely overcome by my fear and distress. On Rosh Hodesh 1637 some of the ~~israelite~~ officers were implicated for having accepted bribes. He was one of my good friends but I feared lest it would be said that I was an accomplice in this thing, for truly I was innocent and without transgression. Despite this everyone was tense since they would seize any suspect on the slightest provocation. So I went to Padua where I remained in hiding for ten days, and I wanted to go to Ferrara in order to escape. But the mercy of the Lord enlightened me and I decided not to go into exile because I had committed no violence and then I decided to return home which was a little while before Purim. There I delivered sermons every night in the garden until the end of that winter.

In Adar 1637, the decree was rendered against all the Jews who were suspected, that they be exiled forever. Such a decree was unheard of since the time of our forefathers. Whole households, fathers, children, and brothers of those suspected Jews were driven out. My son-in-law Jacob was not forced to dwell alone for he had two brothers who were living in La Motta to which place they had previously fled. But my son-in-law decided to establish himself in Ferrara and his wife thought it proper that she live with her husband. And so at the beginning of the year 1637, my daughter Esther went with all her belongings to Ferrara, and there they live like respectable people for my son-in-law does business honestly with his fellowman. That Jewish community always liked me for a long time. He has been there for two years, may God grant him health and peace.

My wife and I who have become senile are now alone in grief. We do not have good health and our beloved daughter is far from us. She was always a help to us and would minister to us in times of illness or need. Now we are crushed, living all alone; there is no one to render us aid except the Holy One. My daughter and son-in-law try to comfort me, but I am overcome by worry and dread, the like of which I have never experienced heretofore.

~~For~~ ^{ago} Two years I had~~de~~ been giving a certain Frenchman lessons in the holy language. His name is Monsieur Giascomo Gaffarel. He~~was~~ reading a book which I composed at the request of an English officer who wished to give it to the King of England. For more than twenty years I had wanted to write about all the laws of the Jews, including their mitzvot and their customs practiced in their exile. When I wrote it I was not very cautious despite the Inquisition. It was written by hand so that people might read it but at the same time would not come under the jurisdiction of the pope.

After the Frenchman read it, he asked for it so that he might print it in France and I acceded to his request but at that time it did not occur to me to remove the things which according to the Inquisition were not permitted to go into print. At the end of the two years after I had despaired of it, the Frenchman printed it. It was on the second day of Passover that someone brought me a letter from him, informing me that the book was printed in Prague 1637^{and}, to whom it was dedicated, and whether he made any changes in it. Immediately my heart was smitten and I went to see the translator who had remained with me from the time of my composition. And I saw in it four or five important things of which it was forbidden to speak of and not permissible to print because of the Inquisition. Then I cried from out of a broken heart, I plucked my beard and I was breathless for I expected that when this book appeared in Rome, it would be like a plague against the Jews. For they might say, How impudent are these Jews that they print in the vernacular their laws so that the Christians might know them and found out how they contradict our laws and our doctrines. And I would not be able to flee to Ferrara or to any other place in Italy. And so I painted a picture of the danger worse than what it really was until I was in the throes of misery and was heart sick, almost going out of my mind. My friends could not offer me any comfort since these things were absolutely forbidden but the gracious and merciful God urged me to listen to the advice of an Inquisitor who made it possible for me to concoct favorable testimony to the Inquisition which would stand as a shield against everything. I had faith in that and because of that I regained my equanimity after a month of untold pain and distress.

In a few days the Frenchman went to Rome from where he sent me one of the chapters of the book which was printed in Prague, wisely and mercifully devoid of those four or five things for which I was in dread. He also

wrote me a letter in which he praised me exceedingly and telling me that he dedicated the book to the French Ambassador at Rome who had come to live in the dominion and the Ambassador wrote me a letter which was impressive and lovely on behalf of the king himself. Then I was quieted from my fear and dread. A great many grammatical errors crept into print and there were also certain things in it which I felt would not appear favorable in the eyes of the Christians, so I decided to print it a second time here in Venice, removing or added thereto according to my favorable intentions. It is now being sold and from those who have bought it in the last six months, are heard nothing but praises. The second edition, also, I dedicated to the Ambassador and he gave me a gift of 34 ducats which went to pay for the expense of printing it.

Sivan 1637. I went to Ferrara together with my wife and we remained there with my daughter Esther for a few days, returning home safely. About a month later, my wife became ill. On the night of Sabbath, she happened to get up out of bed and fell to the ground, her shoulder striking the corner of a wall. From that time on she could not move the arm, and later during the winter, her other arm became paralyzed. Then God had mercy upon her and after Passover 1538, without the aid of a doctor, only through a little exercising, she was able to move them about enough to meet the necessities of her duties.

Cheshvan 1638. I went to Padua to visit my daughter Diana who was having trouble with her husband because of the manner in which he was conducting the household, and I remained there through Passover. After Passover my daughter and her son and daughter came here, remaining with us for a month and a half.

During the time that my daughter Diana was with us, about the sixth of Sivan, I went to Ferrara to visit my daughter Esther. I went by the way of Padua and Riviglio, arriving there safely on a Wednesday. I was in good health and spirits until Sabbath when during the afternoon, I was stricken by my continuous threat, Asthma and stomach trouble. My illness forced me to go to bed for twelve days and when I saw that my illness was a prolonged one, I chose to return home even though I was sick and faint. My daughter Esther came along to help me on the journey. I went to Riviglio and from there to Padua by carriage, from where I sailed to Venice by boat at a great expense. Upon my return home, I began to gain strength and my illness became less serious with the exception of a thirst that came upon me. All that summer from morning until evening I drank well waters, rain waters and prepared waters, no matter what the cost was. After my daughter remained here for about fifteen days, she returned safely to her husband.

In the month Shebat 1638, my son Isaac, who, already having multiplied his transgressions, who did not earn a living as do other men, but who sought pleasure in various forms of gambling chose to leave. I had made attempts to prevent him from becoming restless, but now he left his home, forsook his wife to be alone in grief. He went first to Liverno, and from there to Amsterdam where he decided to exile himself on his own accord by going to Brazil. He has gone his way to be a wanderer over the earth since Rosh Hodesh Sivan. This is due to my sins, for out of my three sons, one has died, one was killed and now one is exiled. My poverty leaves me no comfort and my only source of joy is my grandson Isaac Halevi, the son of my daughter, Diana. It is ten years now that he has lost his father and he is being raised in my house and acts towards me like a son.

He is now eighteen years old, and he hearkens to my voice. It is pleasant to hear him preach whether it is from the Bible or Aggadah. His occupation of printing is pleasant and easy. He also busies himself in the Torah. I love him very much and from his traits, he appears to me very much like my son Mordecai. May God grant him a good and long life, and may God give me the joy that may come from him, and after my death may He give me a good reward in the life to come together with my wife who raised him who is ~~was~~ an orphan in our home not without a good deal of trouble which the raising of children necessitates.

From the year 1638 until the present time, many priests have preached favorably of the Jews in their pulpits and also they have magnified my praises of me through their sermons before the presence of many Christians. One would not believe how great my name is among the Christians, even greater than it actually should be.

On the even of Rosh Hashomah 1639, Abraham Aboab announced to me that they would not continue my salary at the Yeshibah, at which place I was receiving six ducats a month. Moreover, Yehudah called Leo of Zirio called a meeting and decided that they would discontinue sermons at his place for the winter, so that I was left with only half of my income with no other source. My wife and I had come to old age. Blessed be the Lord who was with me and caused me for the past four years to forsake my gambling activities.

Rosh Hodesh Adar Rishon 1639. I betrothed my grandson Isaac to Esther, the only daughter of Yehudah Montiscudula, a wise man in the Torah and of a prominent family. My ^{wife} and I sought for him a good place where he could dwell after our deaths, ~~and~~ for we had heretofore acted

as his guardians, watching him carefully, May I merit to witness his marriage and his children.

During Purim my wife became ill. Her feet became stilled with paralysis and from that time on she walks along limping throughout the house, and also her arms are beginning to swell now. Old age is slowly creeping upon both of us.

Iyar 1639. The entire Yeshibah was accused of hiding a certain crime ~~and a certain misdemeanor~~ relative to lewdness and public criminality. Isaac d'Alva, a genuine transgressor, placed us in charge of the officers of the Cattavere, who gave an order signed and sealed by three of them, but it was he who accused us and brought us to court, eight rabbis in all. After much questioning and after we gave them bonds of 16,000 ducats, 2,000 for each, they dismissed us. We were wearied by the fear and dread, expenses and arguments, until they freed us entirely by the majority vote of two, on ~~Sivan~~ the 20th of Sivan.

Ellul 1639, the world was in a state of confusion.

Cheshvan 1641. About three men heads of the Spanish Talmud Torah died and the Yeshibah returned to its original status.

On the 15th of Kislev, I became ill with stomach trouble which lasted about twelve days and although I was cured, I still suffered with those same pains especially during the summer days of the year mentioned above.

On the ninth of Adar, my grandson Isaac was married. My daughter Diana and Esther visited with us for about a month and a half, when they both returned to their homes. Isaac was honored by the heads of the Yeshibah with the title of Chaber. He then left my house in order to go to live in the home of his father-in-law Rabbi Yehudah, in accordance

with the arrangements that he live with him for three and a half years, during which time he would earn his own expenses through preaching and printing, and at the same time continue his studies.

Rosh Hodesh Sivan. I went to Padua where was just finished the second printing of my book ג'ד' ג'ק'ג' with a new supplement which I wrote for it. I called it ג'ג'ג'ג'ג'. I constantly exerted myself in behalf of public welfare. Six months previously I had finished the work against the Kabbala. I called it, ג'ג'ג'ג'ג', selections from a number of my debates and in it I give vent to my anger against those books which speak deceptively against all the enlightened Jews and especially against the Eagle Maimonides, but it is not in print.

During the months of Tamuz, Ab, and Ellul, I suffered painfully and was not strong enough to study and to compose as I had done the past two summers during which time my mind was functioning well. But from the beginning of the year 1641 until Shebuoth, my strength was returning to me.

When Hanukah was approaching in the year 1641, my wife became critically ill which lasted about a month. During that entire winter she without cause became very despondent until Passover when she again became seriously ill. My daughter Diana came here from Padua, remaining here about a month and a half, when she returned and then about two months later she again came here, remaining until Rosh Hashonah 1642, for during that entire summer, my wife and I were sick and broken in health.

In the month of Sivan, a strange spirit came over my wife, and she began to become contentious and provocative. This has desolated me and undermined my wealth, my health, my honor and my soul. And now even if I should live for another 100 year, I could never retrieve them. The Lord knows that I am being provoked for naught, since I have done no violence,

have not been the cause of trouble or sin. I am unable to describe all the foolishness, but I shall mention some of the main occurrences. From the month of Sivan until after Succoth, she continually quarrelled with me until I cried out in anger, and maddened until my blood was astir and boiling, and my head was dizzy and my bowels were in a tumult. Time and time again death was about to silence me but then I was again restored in order to be mocked. This continued the entire summer of 1641 through the month of Tishri 1642. On the fourth of Cheshvan 1642, she and I went to Padua only on the condition that there be peace between us. We remained there with Diana for five days and immediately she began her arguments as heretofore. I could not stand it any longer and I became ill in bed, remaining there about half of the month of Kislev. I had fever and pains and was in a critical state. Asthma especially troubled me and in Tebeth the doctors gave me up to die, and I ~~made~~ made confessions. In the synagogues they prayed in my behalf but God was not willing to let me die and so my illness was prolonged. The Asthma and the pain became more intense until I was disgusted remaining in bed. I got up in the month of Shebat, after having been abed for almost a year, about seven months, for I very much wished to converse with people, pray and preach publicly as I had done for 49 years. My expenses until Rosh Hodesh Shebat amounted to about 130 ducats due to my illness. My wife continued to distress me day and night until I became angry to the extent of going out of my mind. I therefore returned to the sin, spoken of many times previously, gambling, which have consumed and destroyed me. These losses were greater than those incurred previously, for in that one year I lost 600 ducats, more than 300 of which I am still obligated with and I now lack the ordinary expenses of the household.

Rosh Hodesh Nisan 1642. It became necessary for me to move from the good home belonging to Mayer Zugala where I had lived for 17 years. Due

to shortness of breath, I was not able to climb steps and I so moved to the house of Moses Luzzatto next to a store. The place was very dark. I called it the caves of Machpelah. The expenses and the rent were great and I became severely ill here, but it was brought on while I lived at the other place due to anger and provocation which had taken away my health, and gave me an illness which did not permit me to climb steps and so now I have to live in this humble, dark and unlighted house.

Iyar 1642. I received a letter from my son Isaac from Brazil telling me how he had become rich and a big business man, and that he owns more than 4000 (Real) and Ethiopian slaves, and that he intended to return home again to be with his wife, and further that he was sending gifts to me and to her. But eight months have passed and I have not seen a letter, may he live and prosper, for after all, he is my son. At the end of 1643, a report confounded me, which stated that he gambled and lost everything. Now it is Nisan 1644 and he has not written again.

Sivan 1642. I went to Ferrara with Diana, her husband and son to attend the wedding of Moses, the brother of Rabbi Jacob Motta, my son-in-law. We remained there for eight days at the home of my daughter Esther and then returned safely. I had both a great deal of expenses and also a great deal of trouble from Moses of Saltero, my son-in-law.

When I returned I began to eat and drink as I was accustomed to do prior to my illness. And so part of my ailments passed away especially Asthma and insomnia from which I suffered exceedingly for the past eight months. It appeared to me that I had been healed according to God's mercy but before long I was troubled with my lungs from which I was spitting blood, but this passed away. Nevertheless all my illnesses aged me considerably.

1643. From Rosh Hashonah until the 16th of Cheshvan I indulged in gambling, sinking lower and lower until I was heavily in debt, and all

the vows I have made did not restrain me.

Ellul 1642. I reprinted prayers which I published twenty years previously. I called them פירוש תפילות and added a supplement. I gave them to the Holy Congregation at Rome. I received a gift from them for this amounting to 25 ducats. I printed the names of the wardens in the wrong order, so I again reprinted them but for that they held themselves distant from me.

Ellul 1642. My son-in-law Moses sinned greatly against my daughter, his wife, and I was upset on account of this. It has been four months since I have received a word from him.

From Sivan 1642 and on I sold many of the books of my composition, realizing more than 100 ducats from them. I also gave some of them as gifts to my students and friends. The sale of these books continued throughout the year 1643 during which time I received more than 150 ducats.

From Cheshvan 1643 through Adar 1643 I was able to do some work thanks to the grace and help of God. At the end of Adar, I moved from the house of Moses Luzzatto, and went to live at a distant small house, owned by Isaac Obadiah in the proximity of the butcher Isaac called "Red". I got no rest there because the house contained a lot of children and women. For a period of three months, for various reasons, I kept quarrelling with my wife.

Those six months that I lived there I did not earn six ducats, all because my work was frustrated and fruitless by the tumult of the neighbors and other disrupting influences. And so from there also I was forced to move. Rosh Hashonah 1644 I came to live in the temporary dwelling of Naphtalai Cohen Sekuko with whom lived Abram Stella. He permitted me to live there for eight months time, at the end of which, it would be necessary

for me to find another house. So then I exile was decreed upon me even tho within the city.

From Rosh Hashonah 1644 until Hanukah, my life was embitted by my fruitless efforts to bring my son-in-law Jacob Motta from out of banishments into Venice, for he was banned due to the battle with the Pope. It was announced that by a payment of a fine, the banished might return to the city if they would remain under the probation of ten officials. But he was refused at Erev Hanukah. I was very much grieved over this but I aggravated it by returning to the cursed gambling on the night of Hanukah. And I continued with this, suffering great losses. Such great misfortunes were never experienced by me and of course added to this were the quarrels at home.

In the month of June 1643, my daughter Esther came here because of the war in her vicinity and she remained here for eleven months during which time she found the usual evils. After that, on Rosh Hodesh Nisan she returned home and my daughter Diana came here, remaining until Shebuoth. She also came at a time of sorrow and suffering caused by the contentions with my wife with whom God forced me to live.

Adar 1644. I refrained from gambling and spent my time searching out the significance of certain three verses of the Tanach. During this time I was unable to get even younger students and now God had shut out all from every side any income.

After Shebuoth, during Sivan, I moved from the home of Napthalai, and went to live in the home of Moses Luzzato where I had previously lived until Adar 1643. Here too I lacked everything since there was no income. I did not know what further obstacles God would place in my path.

21. The printing of my own compositions. 22. The printing and publication of other books. 23. Teaching the secrets of amulets. 24. Selling of books which contain the secrets of amulets. 25. Agent for buyer and seller. 26. Matchmaking.

Who will give a lamentation or dirge by which I can express myself as to the extent of my evil fortune which is far worse than [✓]most men. For it began from the day of my birth to terrorize me and continues to do so. Without a letup for 76 years, it indeed has been continuous, until now, each day is a greater curse than the next; on heaven and earth my lot is incomparable. During Tamuz 1645, my dear son-in-law Jacob Motta, 45 years old, of Ferrara, died at the peak of his fortune, for he was acquiring wealth and honor all the time. It was with him that I had hoped to go to live and find solace in the city and in the community which was dear to me, and I to them. He was smitten down like grass. My heart is dried up and my soul has left me. I went that week to Ferrara to look after the dowry of my daughter, and on this account I quarrelled with the brothers of my son-in-law. I set the time for the payment of the dowry which was to be a whole year. When it was due, they paid her off with great ~~sting~~ reluctance which was in accordance with the will of God. In the month of Cheshvan 1646 they released her by means of Halitza in Ferrara and immediately she returned to my house, a widow and in ~~gr~~ grief. Now she is here with us to minister to her father and her father, may God repay her good deeds.

Nisan 1647. My wife became ill with paralysis. My daughter Diana came here and was detained until Shebuoth. She had come during Hol Ha Moed Passover in Nisan.

From the time of the death of my son-in-law until now Sivan 1647 I have been in continual trouble. Although the necessities of the house were not lacking, there has been constant quarrelling, my wife always attacking me and humbling me. Now it is a day after Shebuoth 1647. I have no property, no hope of further life, and my debts are piling up.

Despite all of this I continued to go on all that summer. In the month of Tishri 1648 I experienced some happy days. None of the necessities were lacking for the Lord helped me. I earned money writing documents, and so on, I myself don't know from what and although I spent a good deal there still remained some money with me. How it was is beyond me, for my wife was always on the sick bed suffering from paralysis and catarrh and her expenses were very great. It is now about a year since she has been in distress from this critical illness, the like of which she has never known before.

I too, suffer every night because of illness in my chest and asthma, from which I weep bitterly. By the end of Cheshvan 1648, my illness took a turn for the worse, to the extent that I am in agony day and night. I cannot remain silent but yet I cannot even write of ~~the~~ extent of its distress. Moreover, all summer and winter up to this time, I have in distress because I was a surety for a certain butcher and this cost me a good deal of life. And on the 25th of Cheshvan 1648, Sabbath of 22C 10 I fell on my bed. I summoned doctors because of the illness of my chest and Asthma but all their medicines did me nothing but harm. My temperature was very high, and fearing for my life, they asked me to make confessions. On the 28th of Cheshvan, in the presence of thirteen rabbis, I executed my will. But I lingered for three months. Since Kislev I have been getting up out of bed day and night, constantly growing worse, and added to this is another pain gnawing at the lower part of my body which makes

me roar like a lion.

It has been now about three months that I brought my daughter Diana here. She, Esther, and my neighbor are ministering to my wife and I, for my wife also like myself is growing weaker, without any comfort either day or night. And one can imagine how my expenses have mounted up in the last three months, and the conditions in which I find myself at this writing.

Letter no.[5]

To the Prince Joseph Fano:

Greetings to a great leader in Israel:

Righteous piety clears up my path when I come today to reveal to his majesty that Mr.Porto sent me some letters containing some evidences and stories concerning the matter which is known to your honor. Mr. Porto asked me to watch the matter carefully and he agreed to accept and fulfill my decisions. I have seen the letters. And I did not look into the letters at all, since they would only lead into unnecessary quarrels. I have sent him a letter containing a mild and pleasant answer which I think will bring about love and friendship. I hope that the corresponding scribe will make a copy of the above mentioned letters, so that I will be able to send them to you; all I wish is to lessen the unnecessary quarrels. Wouldn't it really be nice if both of the parties concerned would come close to one another: I therefore deemed it as wise to ask your honor to write a letter to his dignified brother-in-law, the doctor, and ask the latter to speak to him and persuade him to give up all strife and seek peace, for after all man's nature is not to be too stubborn. The same kind of a letter I wrote also to the above mentioned Porto and I would be pleased if Porto would write to any man of that place or perhaps to one of the scholars of that place, to be an intermediary in making both parties give up their quarrels and come to peaceful terms. This is what I ask of you and if I have any power at all, I would command you to sympathize with me in performing this good deed, so as to extinguish the fire and so that kindness and mercy would reign among them.

A hearkening ear dwells among wise men and wisdom will be found there along the whole curtain, but my words will be few, for I know that the Heavenly blessings will not be withheld from me; I bless you and spread out upon you a tabernacle of peace.

Letter 6

To the divine Fano in the name of the Gaonim.

To the most revered man of God, Greetings:

Truth grows out of earth and it will show and reveal the Lord God of Israel to the doer of righteousness and speaker of truth as spreading his Peace just as the heavens exist. For we have decided to testify for this man who is going to Rabbi Rachamim (may the Almighty God protect him) to plead for the poverty stricken Jews, the inhabitants of Palestine, we are testifying that he is a just and righteous man, guiltless and possessing a good heart; we have heard a little about him as his place of birth in Rome, and we still remember the distress which befell him lasting not a day or two days, but for a very long time; these trials and tribulations however have shown clearly that he has the utmost love for the Lord, the God of Israel, who directed his heart to pass over seas and to go to the beautiful land where he made a living for himself and his household; and because of his desire to do justice and righteousness he was chosen to the Lord and he has consented to come from a distant land on his own expenses to these provinces in order to ask for food for these unfortunates in the Holy Land, whom we should help on every occasion, and there is nobody who could disqualify his honesty and the many letters of recommendation which he has from the sages of the Lord of Israel. Many of these letters reveal his personal glory and also tell that he was their agent who performed his duty faithfully; therefore (I would suggest to you) to help him out in his mission, when he comes to his honor (Fano) and especially would it be gratifying, if his honor would help him out to make his endeavor successful, for he, (the agent) is a lover of justice and his name is named after the city of God; for all this God will give his offspring a long life.

Letter 8

To the wise Rabbi Leo Levi, teacher in Montagnana.

- He who dwells in the mysterious abode on high and who lives in the shadow of the almighty, will always direct my thots towards the glory of the Torah and my heart advises me to awaken the spirit of love in the letters of communication concerning some matter of Torah, for I must learn, as we have agreed upon before, to do it and fulfill it, but the troubles which came over me have put an iron separation between me and my desires, three in number; soul, wisdom and boyd. But I am myself with them all day long so that I had no time for carrying out my wishes since Rabbi Zerach left town, but now I will ask him to explain a passage in Rashi in the Sedra פ' וַיִּבְרָא ב' י"ט in the verse פ' וַיִּבְרָא ב' י"ט for we learn Rashi in our academy during every day of the week, yet I never heard a satisfactory explanation of this verse except in the commentary of Rabbi Nathan of Horodona (Poland) and I like to know how he interpreted the term וַיִּבְרָא for I understand he can interpret any passage in Rashi, let him therefore send his opinion and then I will give him my interpretation. May God be with him and spread his tabernacle of peace over him.

Venice 1589.

Letter 21

To his teacher Samuel "rchevolti, Rabbi in Padua.

Crown of Torah, tiarra of wisdom, glory of cleverness, Greetings:

I have observed three things and I almost missed my chance of presenting this song before His honor. Whence did he come? From a rascal and a despised person, and he sang only those poems lacking a subject and a predicate, but how should I have known about it since I am only a boy, hailing from a small town which is inhabited by very few educated people and even they take no interest in anything at all but money. But why should I argue, since there is really no demand for it.

"And whither is he going?" To a large city inhabited by wise men.

And before whom is he destined to give an account? Before the Kings of poetry; since I am like a sponge absorbing all wisdom and knowledge, therefore I also learned poetry, altho I did not have extraordinary abilities. While I spent some time in Padua I intensified my desire for composing poetry. I saw Rabbi Aaron's poetry about the vicissitudes of life. I decided to show this poem to his honor and ask him to be like a father to me and inform me about my mistakes, so that I may improve. I would also ask for his pardon for my aggressiveness. May God inscribe him in the book of Good life with all Israel. Amen!

Montagnana 1586

Letter No. 22

To Samson Meshullam of Ferrara.

It is my intention to inform his honor that I arrived home in peace and with security and I naturally have to praise and thank the living God who showed me mercy, who has helped me and who was with me wherever I went, and He blessed me and led me in peace in all bad highways without causing me any injuries. I am sure that He will continue doing so and He will let me hear good news from you and that He will bless you just as Moses blessed Yeshurun.

This place is very uncomfortable for me; after I made it a habit to live in a city, what can I, a living person do, and even Moses a great and revered personage would be hindered in his scholarly pursuits if he lived without neighbors.

This circumstance led me to abandon my studies for a while, but the Lord knows that I studied quite a bit when I lived in a city inhabited by scholars and wise men.

If it isn't so (if I am mistaken in my ideas), then I pray you, remember me and visit me with your letters according to the custom of Israel in their relations one to another, so that distance is compensated by correspondence. You will do me a favor if you will inform me all the news, especially if Mr. X did before his death as I heard.

I send my greetings to all members of my master's family and I will bow to him.

Montagnana.

Letter 23

To the wise man Salomon Sferno in Venice: Greetings to the glorified one and praised one. An understanding heart would know that due to my foolishness I would sacrifice strange incense upon an altar of stones. It is better however to sit in a corner of a roof than to send a letter full of confusions to a father of Torah.

He composed an Elegie for the Pope immediately after the latter's death. A Christian clergyman included it in his collection of poems (1596)

Letter 24

To the readers of the community of Mantua for

Abraham Levi from Montagnana.

O Rocks who are the protection for Rabbis: O nation of righteous people, guardians of the faithful. O Chief Rabbis who are charged with the duty of looking out for the welfare of the holy congregation of Israel in Mantua. O officers of the Lord may you have a spirit of kindness and be in good health until the stones will be gathered for the building of Jerusalem to the end of days:

I, who address you, am one of the youngest of your servants, and I am sojourning in your city, am fighting the battles of the time and earning a livelihood for myself and for my children which God has given me most graciously but after I have realized that I have wasted too much energy in providing for my family and decided to go back to my native land and city, because I would be there more prosperous than here, but Chanah my wife refuses to follow me; she insists on staying here. Matters have gone so far that I have lost a lot of strength and since times are very hard, there is nobody who could help me except if I wished to take alms. But I wish to help and sustain my family despite all difficulties; therefore I decided to live in my home town perchance the Lord will help me; besides I have my father and brother there who will help me. Furthermore that enormous congregation could support me, for I can take care of the slaughter business in that city and not have to worry whence my help came.

Since a woman is obliged to live with her husband and since the Torah has commanded that a woman live with her husband, I too have married her to live with her.

Letter 24-continued

I intend to leave this city and go to a better town, therefore I ask you to talk to my wife and to either persuade her or to compel her to come to my home town with our children, for if she comes and will work very hard and God will be with us for he gives bread to every living person and the help of my brother and my father's household, and the wages from the community whose signatures are appended will testify, that I have spoken the truth and if my wife will refuse to follow me, then I will be pure and innocent and it will be your duty to support my wife and children.

Therefore, O heads of the community, you who are imbued with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, should read my letter most carefully and persuade her to follow me. May my words be pleasant to you and I would not want to burden you with too many words.

May you have happiness, peace and calm without limit.

Your obedient servant---

for Abraham ben Joshua Menachem Levi

from

Montagnana¹

1. Leone earned money by acting as a scribe for others. This interesting letter was translated to present a situation which the rabbis were asked to solve.

To his father's brother Abtalion Modena in Ferrara.

In accordance with the general custom of the world to raise one's voice on the outside, a voice of joy and happiness to one's relatives as well as close neighbors and distant brothers, so that they may tell one another to come to the Chuppah, I, an officer of the Lord am hereby announcing that we fixed the date of my wedding for the 13th of Sivan with the help of God. And in order to be honored by your fame I have taken the liberty to ask you to come and honor me in the presence of the elders of our people in Venice at the appointed time, to be happy at the wedding of one of your offspring, and the joy will be doubled when all the leaders of the community will assemble. I would also enjoy it very much if the gentleman (Judah Saltero of Fano) and his wife would be at my wedding.

Let your face shine upon your servant and since I do not want to miss the mark by continuing my story I will bid him farewell.

1590.

To Samuel Arcevolti in Padua:

I was very much pleased when I learned about your love for my father, and I have decided to inform you, that we have set the date for my wedding, and I will ask you to be in Venice on the day of my wedding, just like a father wishes his son, if it is true that disciples are called sons, and that Torah, wedding, and good deeds are included in it. Then the first Torah I received from you in your house, if I received very little Torah, it is my fault. The second concerning chuppah--I would like to see my teacher. The Third (good deeds)--I hope that your kindness to your servant will be rewarded and I wish you a lot of gratification. God will keep your throne erect all the time with all your household living a long and happy life.

1590.

To Judah Kutzermellenbogen, Rabbi in Venice.

A king will establish a land thru justice. Greetings:

Behold there standeth before me a messenger, apparently sent by you, and from his letter I have been able to gather what you wanted and how happy was I to read it, for I said to myself, you certainly watch me a broken vessel.

I didn't disobey your command; ~~on~~ the contrary, I immediately called that person and inquired from him about the contents of your letter. I questioned very strongly in order to find out the truth. He, after giving some thought to the matter admitted that he had sent neither sheep, nor oxen to Venice for a very long time. Somebody must have told about him; these were the words of the person, and he didn't lie to me. I will be very happy if your honor will give his servant commandments to the best of his abilities, and as long as my soul is still within me, my hands will be stretched out towards heaven in order to establish and keep up the throne of your honor in peace and justice. May nations serve you for many days and in peace.

The Youngster.

Letter 43

TO GERSON COEN COLONIA (Montagnana?)

Greetings, O dear one.

This uncircumcised person who comes to meet you is already known to you. He is our artisan and he built the ditch (in German phalwerk) for us, which you have seen and he is supposed to finish it as I have told you. Now he and his father are coming there in behalf of a kotuba which caused an argument because of inheritance and a great quarrel; and since I know that you are a faithful friend of mine, which was evidenced when we ate at your table, I ask you to be a guide to him and to find for him a man who would take sufficient interest in him, and who would help him for which the latter would be willing to pay.

For these reasons I obeyed him and wrote you about him. If you shall do this, the good derived from it will be mine and not his. I will also thank you and praise your name forever.

May the Lord our God be with us and Peace be unto you.

Letter 44

Greetings to the counsellor of wonders.

The thoughts of man which are vain will go up heavenward, will go down to the deep; they will be forgotten and vanish, then they will be remembered again. The thought to send this letter came as a result of my desire to bow before His Majesty and to wish him peace and success wither he turneth. May he have blessings everywhere. I would like to inform him that I settled with my family in Venice about six months ago after the many trials and tribulations which came over me and especially because of the death of the Righteous One.

And the Lord wanted either to favor me or to oppress by making a tutor out of me. The Lord has made me gracious in the eyes of the people of Venice; they ever asked me to preach, since, they claim, I possess besides Hebrew, also Christian scholarship, and would therefore influence many disciples, who in turn would be thankful to me. I have accepted this invitation (after having declined three times) and I have agreed to hold forth a sermon on Shabuoth. And you, Honored One in Israel, if you wish to honor me with your presence, I would be glad for you will surely tell me my mistakes. Therefore listen to the voice of your servant who prays unto the Lord to lengthen your days in happiness and blessings. Goodbye.

To Gerson. Coen Colonia

Many greetings to you.

What shall I say and why should I speak when the Heavenly hosts are against me; they are my enemies and wherever I go I am smitten by them. Thus the objects which were sent to me by you were seized by the customs-officer. You made a mistake, for you shouldn't have sent the objects thru this messenger without telling him the worth and monetary value of these objects. I always considered you a wise man who is able to foresee the future, but it seems that sickness retards the wisdom of the sages and for this reason you exercised too much faith in the gentile messenger boy. Yet may the Lord God of Israel be blessed.

Hearken to me my friend; my heart is filled with coal-fire because of the calamity, therefore I cut my letter short; but you should not feel bad, because the Lord will supply you with goodness, for his mercy has not ended and He will give you peace.

Letter 84

To His son, MORDECAI, in Venice.

(Ferrara, January 5, 1607)

To my son Mordecai in Venice, Greetings my dear son:

Your writing-half of it is manly, half of it is goatly, and all of it is animal like-I have received and I am analyzing your letter in this peculiar manner, for it is on the one hand written in fine language, some of it is written in a very stilted language; but most of the letter is full of mistakes.

Besides let me inform you and enlighten you that in writing ^{in '60'} in Hebrew you should write it with a ~~ו~~ and not with a ~~ו~~. The same applies to all Christian languages transliterated into Hebrew. I want you to continue to write to me in Hebrew for only thru his mistakes can one learn. The man through whom you expected to send the sermons hasn't arrived yet, but when he comes to us he will deliver the errand. I am very sorry for Mr. Abraham Cammeo, but what can I do if, whomever I like leaves the universe (dies). Nevertheless you should still have hope as long as he is living. It would be well indeed if you would visit him and tell him that I am praying for him, for I am in great need of him-since we are very much troubled over the sickness of your sister Esther who is afflicted with Bladder-trouble. I sometimes doubt if she will even recuperate, in the meantime she suffers, she neither eats nor sleeps. Besides many people in the community are dying from it, so that your mother and I are troubled over it. May God show her mercy and give her, her former strength. I am looking forward to your letters as an answer to my inquiries, giving me detailed replies to all my questions.

Letter 84-continued

The famine is already in the land, bread is diminishing daily and money flies from the pocket like eagles. You may receive a letter from your brother Isaac which is written with swine fingers, for his heart turneth to evil only and all his sins have become permissible to him and I am tired of exhorting him.

Give my regards to all my acquaintances who ask for me and send my greeting to your brother Zebulun. You my son be a master and do as you told me and study continuously and pray for my health as well as for the health of your mother brothers and sisters, all of whom send you their regards.

January 5, 1607.

Letter 65

To ABRAHAM CAMMEO in Venice

Dear one and beloved one, Greetings!

I have not written to you for the last thirty days, because I heard that you were sick and I thought it would not be right to criticise a sick person in writing, therefore I asked my son to tell you all that I wanted to tell you at the time; now you made me feel well for I saw your handwriting and I heard that you got out of bed. I said: "blessed be He who gives the weary strength, He will give you sustenance and power; and verily I was very sorry to hear of your sickness because of you and and because of the retardation of my son, for I did not like to see my son being detained in your city in idleness altho he himself would enjoy idleness; for this very reason would I be glad if you would let him go home.

I have some news which I want to divulge to your honor, altho I hesitated putting it down on paper but since you live in Venice, I decided to tell you about it. There is a man here who hails from a far country and who showed me an amulette in the form of a full moon which cannot be burned nor can it be drowned in the water; this amulette has stood nine tests, failed one, and is good for any endeavor. The man is willing to sell the amulette for half a ducat and he would like to know how many amulettes he could sell; this is no superstition but truth itself. Will you kindly inform me what your reaction is in the whole matter. Meanwhile keep it as a secret.

My wife is sick; she has fever for the last three days and there is no one to serve her, since she has no neighbor nor relative. Yet my eyes are turned to the Lord who will send her healing. Be strong and tell me when we will see one another face to face. Lots of luck.

Ferrara, 1605.

Letter 1-5

Invitation to double wedding-on Fri. Elul 8, 1597,-in name of Bridegroom--. On same day, his niece will marry Yom Tov Coen. Skillful writing style of Leos characterized this piece of work for on this same occasion, he set up 20 different invitations.

Letter 5-6

TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW

Letter 7

To Menachem Marcaria in Capo di Istria-

Ordered in the name of the Venetian Rabbinate, under threat of excommunication to appear at the festival, and to effect the reckoning which he has with orphan-children and with their guardian.

Letter 8

TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW

Letter 9-10

TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW

Letter 11

Preface to נשוא which is published. The preface itself is not communicated. In the Hebrew notes there is a conjecture about this preface.

Letter 12

Summons to a delegate to the Welfare Bureau, to take care of his obligation- he having paid nothing for more than three years and owing moreover more than 10 ducats.

Letter 13

Letter of his student, Menachem bar Schemaya. Content not altogether clear, - concerning acquisition of insignificant amount of money.

Letter 14

Concerning the Form of a Benediction Shema S.

Letter 15

To Jacob Jechizkija

Leo makes a statement concerning the marriage of his son, still young and tender that he (Leo) is ready to enter into negotiations. Does this with regard for the mediator Jacob, who taught him. He says also that friendly relations have existed between the two families for many years, yet he has never met Jacob Jechizkija.

Letter 16

Epistle to the Community of Verona

In which is encouraged, the continuation once more of the discontinued preparation of the ritual wine. Many Venetians had already pledged to use only 202 /" for Kiddush and Havdalah (1600).

Letter 17

Letter of recommendation for an unfortunate poor man.

Letter 18

Letter of recommendation to the Rabbinate-in the interest of a Venetian, who against a delegate of that community, made a summons for (his) money-1600.

Letter 19

Summon to the Jews in Capo di Istria-That they visit the Synagogue 1599.

Letter 20

To his step-brother-Abraham Paronzo in Ancona---Long excuses, why he had not written.

In the small community of Montagnana, little news and activity. (1586).

Letter 21-22

TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW

Letter 23

To Abraham Parenzo in Ancona - Happy receipt of a letter. Declines the expressed praise over his writings.-(Montagnana).

Letter 24

To the same. - (In Aramaic.) Friendly letter- (Montagnana).

Letter 25

To a Levantine Poet in Ancona. - A writing in blank verse, that Leo had composed in Ancona (while visiting his brother, before 1586).

Letter 26

Plaint on the death of his brother. Abraham Parenzo.

Letter 27

To Jacob Cohn, living in Venice. Reproofs because he had neither written nor consoled him (Montagnana 1586).

Letter 28

To the same -Leo is already a bit consoled. He refuses to send the refutations of Christianity since it is dangerous. He will communicate this verbally. (Montagnana).

Letter 29

To Joseph ben Immanuel Conian. Friendly letter- with a poem, that was found in Leo's Divan. (Montagnana).

Letter 30-31

To Ascher Clerlo in Venice. Friendly letter- sending to him his elegy on his teacher, Moses Basula della "occa (a poem of eight lines) which can be read in Hebrew and Italian alike. "This thing is new" says Leo and therefore the speech is somewhat obscure, for the thing was very tiresome and exceedingly difficult. (Montagnana).

Letter 32

To Samuel Bak in Venice. Sent upon his request for the Elegy. The address belongs to a well-known family, but is nevertheless unknown to me. He was younger than Leo. (Montagnana).

Letter 33-34

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW

Letter 35

To Simson Cohn in Mantua. Recommends to him a countryman. The addressee is not identified.

Letter 36-37

To Aschor Clerle in Venice. Companion - letter to his two-fold epitaph for the dead brother of the addressee. This letter was written about 1590 in Montagnana as were the following 4. 37 Friendly letter. His father went for two months to Bologna and he is worried with the household duties.

Letter 38-39 -40

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW

Letter 41

To Gerson Coen Colonia in Montagnana. Reproofs to his boyhood friend, because he had not written. Gerson preaches every Sabbath in the synagogue. Received little money from him. Venice 1590.

Letter 42

To Samuel Archevolti in Padua. Sent him fruit as gift. Migrated to Venice where the Spanish Jews brot him over 150 ducats. Pleads for a tombstone for his father. Venice 1592.

Letter 43-44-45

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW

Letter 46

Exegetical and philosophical notations.

Letter 47

The Jews were banned out of the Papal State and could remain only in Rome, Ancona and Avignon. In Bologna were found 7 or 8 broken crosses and only the efforts of the governor saved the Jews. Leo goes to the Committee of the Teachers where the dispute between the Jews and Christians were being carried on.

Letter 47 - continued.

But he dared not write about this. He asks Gerson for a certain poem which he sent to him because he must use it to write some more poetry. At a wedding he composed some witty Hebrew verses about the Italian name of some proffered food which aroused general merriment.

Letter 48

Exegetical; concerns the explanation of the seven sciences but he finds it necessary to seek an explanation of the ten Sephiroth through which he might receive a revelation.

Letter 49

To an unnamed one -- Words of consolation over some misfortune. He awaits a message from someone whose name is illegible.

Letters 51-52-53-54-55

To his father. Letters of the ten year old Leo, apparently from Ferrara. A non-Jew Marco Malvessi (the family exists even today in Venice), sends greetings, shares knowledge with him.

Letter 56

Elegy on a persecution of the Jews

Letter 57

A letter of Joseph Levis of Montagnana - to his "second brother" (really his nephew). Friendly answer and exhortation to study.

Letter 58

To an unnamed - Seeks immediate support, with which he can take up a certain line of study.

Letter 59

To Moses, unknown to me. Seeks the sending of a Poem, which he showed to the Christians that the Jews might also poetize in their own language. The letter must be from Ferrara or Montagnana and sent to Venice.

Letter 60

To his father. Thanks for money received. Learning singing and Latin, writing of which at the opportunity he will send proof. Failed three times to procure a cap. Warms himself, however, at the fire in the study house.

Letter 61.

Leo shows here a respectable Halachic learning for a ten year old boy. During the service in a synagog, the tenth man of the minyan left and stopped the services. Leo puts the entire blame on the Bal Tefillah.

Letter 62

To Rome concerning Samuel Corcos in name of Venetian Rabbinate. The Rabbinate reclaims Samuel's residence rights through a residence in Rome. The community convenes with rightful conclusions and threatens the unnamed one in case of refusal with energetic measures. Venice 1599.

Letter 63

First part from an unnamed person who desired a rabbinical decision without paying for it. Leo answers him by saying, my meals cost me so and so; rent so and so; a certain book so and so. He further tells him that he was entirely out of funds and must on that account go to Ferrara as a private tutor. Venice 1604.

Letter 64

Abraham Lombroso to his relative Samuel Rovio. Friendly letter, in which he entreats that he means be given him and that he seeks only one occasion where he might support himself through work... Marin Grimani may by popular proclamation be elected to the Doge.

Letter 65-

To Salomo Sferno in Asti. Leo announces in case of a struggle, a letter would be published in which Sferno would appear in a bad light. He asks for explanation and that the writing be burned. Venice June 24, 1596.

Letter 65

To Hayim Poggeto in Asti in the name of Jehuda Katzenellenbogen on same matter. Katzenellenbogen seeks Pogetto in the strife between Sferno and a physician in Asti in which Abraham Provenzal, Rabbi in Casale had come to the side of the excommunicated physician- to step into the breach and establish peace.

Letter 67

Abraham Luzzatto to Josef Levi in Montagnana.
Mazel Tov on Bar Mitzvah

Letter 68

David Coen to the same. Friendly letter Venice 1596.

Letter 69

To the rabbi of Prague at the request of the Widow of Cesana in name of the Rabbinate. Jacob Cesana of Venice died in Prague. And his brother Naphtali in five months has not set in order his affairs there. The Venetian rabbinate requests an acceleration of the court decisions.

Letter 70

Rabbinical opinion. That a man after ten years of childless marriage must separate himself from his wife.

Letter 71

Rabbinical opinion against Bigamy.

Letter 72

To Monasche Montagnana at the request of Moses ben Jechiel Tardial.

Letter of excuses. He has damaged the traveling bag which he loaned Tardiol, Venice 1595

Letter 73

Letter of recommendation for a poor student in the name of the Rabbinate.

Letter 74

Circular on the occasion of the acquisition of a cemetery in Porto Gruaro.

Letter 75

To Triest on request of Joel Belgrado. Two brothers had a case at court, which was being carried out in Triest. The one party put into custody, because the Triestians stood in impartial relations as relatives (took more of the estate than due). Belgrado wrote also to Padua, Verona, Mantua, Ferrara.

Letter 76

To the Carmi Brothers, Venice. Nathan Ottolengo had a note against the Carmi brothers. When these separated each referred the other to their creditor, the learned Ottolengo. The case was prolonged, because the debtor did not appear in court. Many rabbis intervened but without success. The Carmi family was distinguished and well-known. The foregoing writing was set up in the name of the Venetian rabbinate, as the confirmation of the decision of the rabbinate of Ferrara.

Letter 77

To Abraham Provencal, Rabbi in Casale, on request of Nathan Ottolengo, in the name of the rabbinate. The same circumstance.

Letter 78

To the same and to Moses Coen. The same circumstance.

Letter 79

To Liwa (bar Bezalel) Rabbi in Prague, in the name of the Rabbinate.
Moses Segala of Venice had a note for 1176 Tzeni and 12 venetian dukats
on Jacob Montikir and Israel ben Perez whom he had urged for two years
in vain. Wants immediate payment.

Letter 80

To the rabbi in Cracow at the request of the same. The note amounted
to more than 500 dukats which Segala had a settlement. Fact known to
Pinchas Horowitz. The Cracow Rabbinate should lessen the bitterness
of the dispute, otherwise the judge will turn to the lay court.
Venice 1605

Letter 81

To Chizkija Finzi, Rabbi in Ferrara in the name of Josef Pardo.
On occasion of a marital separation.

Letter 82

To his uncle Abtaljon Modena in Ferrara. Recommends at request of the
rabbi of the levantine congregation a visit from the Palestinian Jews.
Announces the birth of a son (Zebulun) whose circumcision is to be celebrated
6th of Iyar, Venice 1601.

Letter 83

His son Isaac to his grandfather Isak Simcha in Venice. Family letter,
Ferrara, July 20, 1605

Letter 84

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW

Letter 85

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW

Letter 86
To Iuliano Alatrino.

Leo has raised his hand against him, because he (L. A.) had slandered him. But for the sake of his father, to whom he is bound by many ties, he will again accept him in friendship.

Letter 87

To Azaria Pichio (Figo) in Venice. A letter in extremely erudite Hebrew in which the word דִּיּוּא (egg) in all its possible meanings is discussed. Seeks explanation from Venetian rabbi, a Talmudic example of case in Berachos 44b and speaks openly of a bill which he owes for some eggs. (Ferrara).

Letter 89

To Moses Porto-Coen in Rovigo. Concerning the receipt of a scornful letter which he has turned over to the man for whom it was intended. Ferrara June 25, 1605.

Letter 90

To Salomo Sullam in Venice. A writing of thanks in which there is also a reference concerning an exegetical note of the addressee.

Letter 91

To Abraham Cammeo in Rome. Sorry that Cammeo has to leave Rome. He would like to return soon to Venice, but the affairs of Ferrara hold him fast. Ferrara 1606.

Letter 92

To Rabbi Benzion Zarfathi in Venice. Concerning a German youth who was ostracized and is to be baptized. He wants in consequence of this to be brought into the Neophyte-house. No Jew has the courage at this time to make a breach because the danger is great. Ferrara 1606.

Letter 93

To his relative Jehuda Saltaro Fano in Venice. Desires a circular concerning the great strife which has spread over the ritual bath at Rovigo which he had discussed on the road from Padua to Rovigo.

Letter 94-95

To the Carmi brothers.

Letter 96

To the Roman community in the name of the Venetian Gaon. David Amaru, an envoy from the Holy land, proposed in Rome that on Friday before night-fall is to be stopped for the carrying out of which 36 delegates from the congregation should be appointed who on the next Sabbath will remind the people. In Venice sufficient time before the break of the Sabbath, in the streets, cessation of work will be ordered- In German, Italian and Levantine. The rabbis heard with regret that it had been broadcast in Rome that they had used 'Trefeh' cheese. This would be a calumny. They forbid this strenuously. Some one did it in secret, so they cannot set aright this wrong.

Letter 97-98-99-100

To Menachem Azarja Fano. Negotiations concerning the printing of Seder Aboda, by Fano, its costs and revenue. (Venice 1596?).

Letter 101

To Samuel del Vecchio, Rabbi in Ferrara, in name of Rabbi Jehuda Katzenellenbogen in Venice. Katzenellenbogen ordered Laudadio Rieti (otherwise unknown to me at the wish of dal Vecchios to take care of his obligation to the Talmud Torah in Ferrara. Also at same time makes light reproofs because Vecchio did not take care of the matter himself, while Rieti was still living in Ferrara.

Letter 102

To the Carmi brothers. See no. 76. Foregoing letters must at any rate be composed in name of Katzenellenbogen.

Letter 103

Rabbi-diploma for Salomo von Lugo. Salomo is otherwise unknown to me.

Letter 104

To Samuel Soncin Rabbi in Constantinope in memo of J. Katzenellenbogen. Katzenellenbogen had property in Constantinople which he wished even in his lifetime to turn over to one of his descendants. That no Jew should seek intervention of the law court. The Constantinople community. Katz backed the congregation except in regard to this one question. Katz thankful to Soncin for his help.

Letter 105

Greetings of the Doge (Marino Grimani) in the Priest's Seminary (San Antonio). Leo remarks in Divan 211 he has composed these Hebrew speeches at the wish of a priest in whose name they were sung before the Doges who appeared.

Letter 106

Letter of recommendation for the Palestinian Ambassador, David Amaru who collected the money for Palestine. See no. 96

Letter 107

Joseph Coen (Venice) to Joseph Levi in Montagnana. Friendly letter. Venice 1597.

Letter 108

To the Carmi brothers in favor of (Nathan) Otelleng. See no. 76. Apparently in name of Katzenellenbogen.

Letter 109

To Borgo in favor of Abraham Morturas: Admonition to pay a debt. The recipient is not named. Venice 1605.

Letter 110

Preface and Dedication to Raphael Civald at wish of Zalmon Burdelan. Author and work (calendar content) not known- Concerning Raphael Civald see no. 210. Leo evinces similar services of love for many authors. Samuel Diesos printed Leo's words, corrected by him under a certain name, just so did Samuel Lusitano in the case of Leo's preface.

Letter 111

To his teacher Moses. Returns him a borrowed note-book. Venice 1597

Letter 112-113

Witty Purim verse---needs clarification.

Letter 113-114

For a Jew, who afterwards was hung in Montagnana. Unfortunate one Chayim ben Moses accused of decree, must remain hanging at cross-roads with red cap on his head. The Jews of Montagnana sought to avert this decree. Turned to the "Brethren of the Faith" and to the "Union for the Freedom of the Imprisoned" in Venice. Their efforts brot little success. Later custom, to hang Jews in red hats probably originated here.

Letter 114

To Pinchas (Horowitz) in Cracow. An unnamed one who enjoyed the good graces of the addressee asks concerning past thanks and praise for his services. Venice 1806. The writer of the letter is probably Eliezer Chayim Nizzo who not long afterwards as envo. of the Roman congregation visited the Polish congregations especially Cracow.

Letter Letter 115

To Menachem Azarja Fano in name of Joseph Morteira. Letter of appeal at the distribution of money spent sooner than intended.

Letter 116

His son Mordecai to his brother-in-law Moses. Thanks for clothes. Who will take his role in the comedy, whose time is nearing?
Ferrara 1814-1835

Letter 117-118

His son Isaac to his grandfather. Studies tailoring by day, Torah by night. Asks for a pair of Tefillin, expensive in Ferrara.
Mordecai sick as ever. Ferrara 1804-1805

Letter 119

Leo to Simcha Luzzatto in Venice. Asks Jehuda Canarutti and also others to show his writings (pledged by him) but to take care that they made no copies. Luzzato shall be free from loss. Ferrara 1808.

Letter 120

Leo to Gerson Coen Colonia in Cracow. Concerning conditions in Ferrara. Joy over the greetings which Uziel ben Moses brot him from Coen. Asks for 40-50 copies of his Midbar Jenuda for sale in Poland and Ferrara. 14 Kislev 1607.

Letter 121

Leo to a teacher. Name illegible. Advises him to settle amicably the strife between him and the famil,, Belgrade. 3 Tebeth, 1602 Venice.

Letter 122

Asks for him a ticket to the Regatta. The sad days of mourning for the destroyed Temple now on, but all good wishes for the future. Venice 1607.

Letter 123

Recommendation for Naftale Ashkenazi's book 206 70/10 Venice 1604.

Letter 124

A letter never sent, in which he reproves Luzzato because he sold some of his writings too cheaply. Further he has commissioned his relative Joseph Morteira to make a copy of Leo's Pastoral. Ferrara.

Letter 125

Abtaljon Modena to Abtaljon Rovigo. Concerning the ritual bath of Rovigo. Ferrara 1605

Letter 126-127

Letters composed for an unnamed student in which it is reported that God predicted cool weather on the Fast day on 17 Tammuz 1607. The rainbow was visible even before the flood, now it serves only as a sign. Venice 1607.

Letter 123

To the Jews of Terra Firma. The Venetian rabbinate orders at the wish of four nameable persons- all the Jewish inhabitants of the Venetian mainland on 15 Cheshvan 5508 (winter 1607) to appear in Venice at which through a general council, all common resolutions will be decided upon for use and advantage. These will be lawful over even the absentees.

Letter 129

Friendly letter of an unknown to an unknown. Venice.

Letter 130

Abraham Osimo to his brother. Letter of a student of Modena.

Letter 131

Leo to Menachem Azarya Jano (in Padua). Letter of recommendation for a widow Speranza who seeks an establishment in Padua her former residence as a dowry for her daughter.

Letter 132

Leo to Samuel Sanguigne in Modena. Instead of the desired Hebrew Italian elegy he sends the addressee his collection "Midbar Jehuda" where he published it, because many desired it. Venice Sivan 25, 1605.

Letter 133

To the community of Ferrara concerning Laudaio dei Rossi who afterwards was converted. The inscription has ה'ש'כ"ב פסח תר"ב Rossi had a Christian believer imprisoned for debt. The unfortunate one asks support from the Venetians but yet were lacking 15 ducats which were requested from his brother Samuel. Venice 24 Cheshvan 1603.

Letter 134

To David del Bene (in Ferrara). The name of the sender is illegible- possibly Ibn Ree. Thanks for recommending a scholar. Venice 23, Tammuz 1602.

Letter 135

Meir Luzzatto to Samuel Archevolti, Rabbi in Padua. Asks to accomplish it that Eliezer Chayyim de Nizza might retain his household right against the ordinance, even after the emigration. He might send his children to Archevolti to school.

Letter 136

Leo to Samuel archevolti in Padua. A woman had spread slander against the wife of Eliezer da Nizza. Archevolti should take up the cause and accomplish the revoking of the evil report. Otherwise Leo would be forced to accomplish the chastisement of the guilty woman thru the non-Jewish powers, with whom he was on friendly terms.

Letter 137

Leo to Israel Conian-- Asks his services since he is on the point of leaving Venice. It is questionable whether Conian signified the residence of the addressee.

Letter 138

To the congregation of Siena and their head Isak Rieti. Chamol Mazliach da Viterbo asks of Pacifico in Castel Vittorio a business allocation to which he had a right. The addresses might stir Pacifico who had already brot the case to Rome to bring it to court in Siena. (The writing is in the name of the rabbinate).

Letter 139

To Montagnana. Witty letter about the improvement of a presented Shofar.

Letter 140

Letter of recommendation for those who remained of the martyrs of Mantua. In Mantua, August 1602, seven Jews, because of insult to Christianity were held over for judgment, while all the others were burned. Venice 1602, Winter in name of rabbinate.

Letter 141

Character letter for the Dianora woman who's a witch was punished by the Venetian magistrate. Venice 13 Teveth 1603.

Letter 142

Leo to his teacher Moses. Recommends to him the Publisher PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE by Ibn Adret.

Letter 143-144

Recommendations for the above-named work. Published in Venice 1608. Leo had many connections with the printers and publishers.

Letter 145

Ibn Ree (?) to a relative in the Levant. His father had reproved him since he had gone from Constantinople to Venice without taking leave. Has not yet received tuition promised him from rich layman. Hopes that after consideration his father will approve of the step he has taken since in Venice he can develop himself well.

Letter 146

For Jekuthiel Carmi concerning the money in Milan. Phillip II in 1597 drove Jews out of Milan, laid aside a certain sum by which the innocent should be maintained. Carmi, head of Milanese Jewry and Kalonymos and Samuel Coen came to Venetian Rabbinate about matter. (Previous decision of Mantua Rabbinate had had no effect). Venetian Rabbinate decreed that it be published in its name that everyone having any claim to the money in question should appear at Viadana in New Moon of Iyar. The assembly would decide what to do with the money. Those not appearing must agree to will of assembly. Venice 8 Tammuz 1604.

Letter 147

Missive to the German congregations on behalf the poor of the Holy Land. Palestinian Jews in debt. Ship bring them money and supplies had capsized. Congregations should send money to Venice so the Palestinian Jews should not die. Winter 1600.

Letter 143

Recommending Joel Belgrado in cause of revision of taxes, asks a new assessment. Time ripe for it-burden of taxes unbearable unjust.

Letter 149

Josef Pardo to community in Vienna in behalf of Jews imprisoned. R. Judah Zarfathi and companions Levantines in Jail. The Vieneses had refused their pleas. Levantines and Sephardics of Venice had spent considerable money for their freedom.

Letter 150

The Levantines of Venice to the Vieneses on the same occasions- Levantines collected 170 ducats, Sephardics 31, Promise from him that money be used for purpose intended. Sent two letters to Prague in interest of the prisoners.

Letter 151

To all the congregations concerning one half shekel for Palestine. Venetian congregation decided to send one half shekel per head yearly for Palestine Jews. All congregations should follow example.

Letter 152-153

Josef Pardo to Chizkija Finzi in Ferrara.

Letter 154

Leo to Isaac Uziel, head rabbi in Amsterdam. It appears that Amsterdam youths on occasion of a festival had donned women's clothes. Uziel enraged over this. In meantime came decision to which Modena and his colleagues Luzzatto and Lombroso gave their underwriting. Pamphlet spread in Venice which Leo opposed. He reproved Uziel and his colleagues. An interesting document.

Letter 155

From the same to the same. Uziel answered- he placed the pamphlet far from him. Leo greatly rejoiced over this, that Uziel had cleared up the affair to his honor.

Letter 156

To the head of the Hamburg congregation-concerning a heretic. A man of Hamburg had sent to Venice slanders against the Jewish traditin- ansers also came from Venice to Hamburg. Guilty one unnamed shall be banned.

Letter 157

Leo to Menachem Azarjo Fano in Reggio. Asks the sharing of his expressed permission to fold the Talis on Shabbos. Venice 1837.

Letter 158

Leo to Sangigne in Modena. Leo proposed to write a thesis on Hebrew style. Sangigne sent him some letters for this purpose. Must be Phobus Sanguigne.

Letter 159

Leo to Samuel Archevolti in Padua. Leo is irritated, since he has heard in Venice, that Archevolti had also the intention to produce a work on Hebrew style. Claimed priority since orally and written he had already for ten years communicated to him his ideas.

Letter 160

Leo to Benzion Zarfathi in Venice. The addressee asked Leo to buy him a garment in Ferrara. Merchant wanted ten pieces of money. questions concerning the decision, that phylacteries do not need to be investigated. Ask further services. Ferrara.

Letter 161

To the rabbinate of Ancona. Schemtob Pitigliono- had taken by force money owed to him by a certain Civald. Protest against this action Pitigliono should come to Venice and bring his case against Civald to court then. (The writers of this letter without doubt Venetian Rabbinate. Venice 1600.

Letter 162-163-164

Avigdor Cividali (Rabbi in Venice) to Samuel Archevolti (in Padua). Quarrel between Archivolti and Salmaan Luria, Parnes in Padua. Cividali, head-rabbi in Venice, wanted to establish peace, as his predecessor, Katzenellenbogen had often done. He desired that they appear in Venice; and receive his decision, which he had written down- But the feud broke out anew, and even the use of the ban did not assuage it.

Letter 165

Announcement against the slanderer of Eliezer Chayim Nizza. Evil report in which war lies, spread in Padua, home of Nizza. Testimonial of character set up and his accusers threatened with the ban unless they retracted. (Surely composed in name of the rabbinate).

Letter 166

The rabbis of Venice to the Head of Congregation at Padua in the cause of Rabbi Archevolti. Struggle carried on with vehemence to such an extent that writings composed in his cause were already in the hands of non-Jews. Venetian rabbinate once more warns that the case should be kept as far as possible from the lay courts. (The case seems already to have been brought before the court at Venice). I surmise Eliezer Chayim Nizza was at bottom of it; was teacher in Padua and slander had been broadcast against him. Letter 165 also has reference here. Also slander was brought against Nizza's wife, so that Nizza left Padua. Perhaps his choice lay with the delegates of the Roman congregation to the Polish congregation to the Polish congregation, since residence in either Padua or Venice was unbearable. An inquiry in Venice over the Archevolti-Luria quarrel led to little result.

Letter 167

Leo to Benzion Sarfathi rabbi in Venice. Asks for an under-writing for a letter of recommendation for a poor man. Ferrara, winter 1604.

Letter 168

Leo to Nathan Ottoleng (in Venice). Asks for a recommendation for the same man. Ferrara 1604.

Letter 169

Leo to Leb Sarval, Rabbi in Venice- Same plea.

Letter 170

Message to the congregation concerning the publication of the Talmud. The letter begins: From the Rabbis of Turkey; from the congregation of Salonika. The Talmud is to be printed in Saloniki. The great cost of the work necessitated gifts and loans from all congregations. In case of loss of first Talmud copy of the new edition the loaner may ask that his money be sent to Palestine for the poor or that it be returned to him, or that he get other copies of the Talmud. The printer will also print a book listing the contributions in case of loss the money will be returned to Venice thru Josef Pardo who will give all the contributors a certificate. Venice 1600.

Letter 171

Leo to Salomo Algazi, Rabbi in Smyrna. On occasion of the publication of Halicoth Olam with Josef Karo's- 'Kelale Hatalmud and with Jabin Schemua of the addressee. Venice 1639. The redactor was Leo. Venice Winter 1638. The following extracts to 204 come out more or less from years (winter 1630-1640).

Letter 172

Poem for Barchiel Fano with an acrostic of his name.

Letter 173

Leo to Salomo ibn Moses ben Gehawwal in Tunis. Addressee wished that Leo would publish his poetical and prose works in Venice. Leo answered it was twice as expensive as before the plague and he should not count upon support.

Letter 174

Preface to Samuel Lusitan's book.

Letter 175

Poem to praise to the Dominick Vincenzo Comonymo Raguseo.

Letter 176

Epigram concerning Abraham Stellas 100 sonnets about a beautiful tearful woman.

Letter 177

Rabbinical decision concerning: "Jacob had three sons."

Letter 178

Satire upon Facob Beshalom's Sephardic poem.

Letter 179

Poem of praise for Thesauras of synonyms

Letter 180

Leo to the Bar Family

Letter 181

Leo to Gerson Belgrado who sent him four tongues as a present.

Letter 182

A count of his excellent students. Including 15 who assembled the necessary material for the Hebrew noted.

Letter 183

Treaty of the Venetian rabbinate in behalf of the protection of their rabbinical rights.

Letter 184

Witty inscription for a poor man who had his hands chopped off.

Letter 185

Rabbinic diploma for Moses Solima.

Letter 186-187

Two epigrams.

Letter 188

Decision concerning the right of the Venetians on the stores in Ferrara.

Letter 189

Leo to the Italian Jews in Safet. Regarding the 40 ducats to be collected which Sam Masud, Rabbi in Venice will turn over to them.

Letter 190

Tro lined puzzle - not clear to me.

Letter 191

Decision concerning the purchase of a part of a house for enlargement of the synagogue. The rabbinate decides that free rights be given in the home to its former possessor.

Letter 192

Concerning a decision of Isaac Padovanos in Rome. Concerns whether י"ט ט"ו should be said on a holiday occurring on Friday.

Letter 193

Leo to Nathaniel Trobatto in Mantua. Trobatto was interested in Modena's עניני אשכנז which at time was being published in Padua.

Letter 194

Leo to Moses Samuel Coen from Padua, in Cracow. Leo has packed for him three copies of his book "Beth Jehuda" Venice 1635- but retained one copy against loss. Asks for good interposition. 8 Kislev Venice 1639.

Letter 195

Rabbinical decision at Pisa. How a father can leave his estate equally to his two sons and need not give two portions to the elder as the Bible proscribes.

Letter 196

Leo to the young Jechiel Pormif (?) in Rome. Thanks for a present received and the assurance that he would take pride in him as a father his son when he announces further progress in his work. Venice 1639.

Letter 197

Conclusion of an Italian writing. Two citations from Philo, concerning the existence of the soul.

Letter 198

Giving title of Chacham to the physician, Samuel Jeschurun in Padua at request of Josef Ibn Dana.

Letter 199

Leo to Nathanel Trabotto in Mantua.

Letter 200

Leo to Gerson bar Joel Belgrado. Thanks for three tongues sent as present. Complaints over his condition. Leo's disputation with the monks.

Letter 201

Leo to (an otherwise unknown) Mazliach ben Nachman. Exhortation to bring his case to trial, either in Pesaro or Sinigaglia, in any case, take it to the lay court. Reference to an earlier letter which had made an impression on the addressee. 1540.

Letter 202

Concerning wedding. Bridegroom Moses ben Azriel of Cantarini, Bride Rachel, daughter of Jacob Calleo.

Letter 203

Letter of recommendation for a poor man.

Letter 204

The same.

Letter 205

To the congregation of Poland at request of Eliezer da Nizza. Polish congregation had promised Roman congregation a thousand dollars. Ambassador of Roman Jews was Eliezer da Nizza. Had brought some of the money with him (it seems). At request of Roman congregation the Venetian Rabbinate wrote the following recommendation, praised generosity of Polish congregation, asked that remainder of money be sent to Rome, since need is great. Letter sent about 1602.

Letter 206

To Pinchas Horowitz in Krakow at request of above. Concerning same occasion. Horowitz might win the cooperation of Katzenellenbogen with whom he is related. At any rate will write him.

Letter 207

To the Polish congregation--From the Venetian Rabbinate concerning same.

Letter 208

Josef Pardo to the Rabbi of Frague. (see 149).

Letter 209

The same, to an unnamed one in Frague. Same matter.

Letter 210

Declaration of bann on occasion of the scholar Raphael Civald (in Mantua). A pamphlet was published against Civald and he asked the Mantua Rabbinate to declare bann on anyone who possessed this and secreted it. Mantua Rabbinate divided as to issue. Civald appealed to Venetian rabbinate concerning matter.

(Avigdal Civald, one of them was his brother)- confessed to possess this pamphlet. The Venetian rabbinate ordered a bann, showed it to Civald, demanded a copy- and that he nor any one else could change the "authentic writing." Venice, 1600.

Letter 211-212-213-214

Concerning same issue. Am selmo Grassito Norlengo did not hearken to the bann for which offense he was called to judgment by the Venetians. In order that he should suffer for his stubbornness, was excommunicated. (211)- The pamphlets concerning the bann were snatched away from Grosseto; the Mantua Rabbi was deeply involved in the matter. (212) The Venetian Rabbinate brot upon itself the reproof of incompetence in this matter. (213) The same rabbinate drew up a testimonial of honor for Civald and gave him the right to continue his rabbinical functions.