Conflict between Jews and Converts in Aragon
Following the Persecution of 1391

New Testimonies from the Formulary of Yom Tov Ben Hannah of Montalbán

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Study and edition of a letter written in rhymed prose contained in the epistolographic formulary by Yom Tov Ben Hannah, scribe to the Jewish community of Montalbán, in the Kingdom of Aragon. Written a few years after 1391 by the scribe on behalf of the local aljama, the letter was sent to the trustees of the Jewish community of Daroca, and its purpose was to collect money from Yosef Caro, a Jewish smith who had fled from Montalbán to there, following a dispute with another elderly smith who was an apostate. A reading of the Hebrew text shows that the conflict goes beyond a simple dispute between craftsmen, and involves a clash between Jews and their former brethren. This new phenomenon of mass conversion is also corroborated by a Hebrew poem of the Montalbán’s Jewish scribe that is edited and translated in addition. The analysis of the text reflects the tension between Jews and converts in the aftermath of the 1391 riots.

Keywords: History of the Jews; 1391 Riots; Aragon; Daroca; Social Conflict; Converts; Hebrew Rhymed Prose.
cristianos. La tensión entre judíos y conversos aparece corroborada por un poema hebreo de este escriba judío de Montalbán, que también se edita y traduce.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Historia de los judíos; tumultos de 1391; Aragón; Daroca; conflicto social; conversos; prosa rimada hebrea.

The epistolographic formulary of Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah (Abenhanya), scribe to the Jewish community of Montalbán, in the Kingdom of Aragon, is partially preserved in a single manuscript (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, Neubauer 1984). The formulary was edited by the author’s son, Yosef, who prefaced each of the fourteen letters with a brief explanation of the circumstances in which it was written. I recently addressed the ties between Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah and an important group of Jewish courtiers in Saragossa, including Ḥasdai Crescas, Don Yosef Almali and his sons, Don Moses Alazar and members of the Ben Lavi (de la Cavalleria) family –notably Yehudah (Jahuda) de la Cavalleria (known as “the lion”), son of Don Vidal and Doña Orovida and brother of Tolosana, wife of the powerful courtier Benvenist de la Cavalleria.¹

Alongside the letters in Ben Ḥannah’s formulary, we find rhymed poems, by the author. Most of the letters and poems are not dated, although the dates of two of the letters are known and two more can be dated with a high degree of certainty. The oldest letter that can be dated was written in 1389, as a letter of condolence to Don Yosef Almali, on the death of his brother-in-law, the prominent Saragossan courtier Alazar Golluf.² Another letter was written in 1391, or 1393 at the latest, and is a letter of recommendation on behalf of a convert who sought to return to his


² See Ben-Shalom, “The Courtier as the Scepter of Judah,” 197.
home, following the persecution of 1391. The letter for the redemption of captives from the city of Pamiers in Languedoc (to which I will devote a separate study) was, in my opinion, written in 1394/5, and the letter to Ḥasdai Crescas was written in 1396. One of the poems in the formulary (a Baqašah) was written in 1401. Part of the formulary would appear to have been arranged in chronological order, although there are certainly deviations from strict chronological order, possibly to group together letters sharing a common theme, such as letters written to members of the Almali family. Most of the letters were written after the persecution of 1391 and in close proximity to it. The formulary thus sheds light on the new reality experienced by the Aragonese communities in general and the community of Montalbán in particular, following the events of that year—including the reconstruction of the communities of Aragon under the leadership of Ḥasdai Crescas, conversions, relations with conversos and with Christians, interaction between rich and poor, internal conflict and requests for assistance from other communities.

1. The Persecution of 1391 and Their Aftermath in the Jewish Community of Montalbán

This article will examine the relations between Jews and conversos in the community of Montalbán in the period immediately following the persecution of 1391, relying primarily on one of the letters in Ben Ḥannah’s formulary and one of the author’s poems, in which he explicitly addresses this issue. Before analysing these new testimonies, I will provide a brief overview of the persecution of 1391, and the state of the Jewish community of Montalbán in its aftermath.

On 4 June 1391, a mob, incited by the archdeacon Ferran Martinez, began to attack the Jews of Seville. Many of the Jews were slaughtered, some of the women and children were sold to Muslims as slaves, and many

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5 I will expand further on Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah and his collection of letters in a future study, to include a critical edition of the formulary.
converted to Christianity in order to save their lives. The synagogues were made into churches, and the homes of the Jews were given to Christians. From Seville, the violence quickly spread throughout the Kingdom of Castile, and from there to the Crown of Aragon. Dozens of Jewish communities were affected by the riots, which lasted about a year, dying down only in October 1391, but flaring up again in Aragon in early 1392 and, as late as April 1392, a priest who was a relative of Ferran Martinez sought to incite the people of Saragossa against the Jews. The Jews of Aragon fared better than their Castilian co-religionists, as the actions taken by King John I (1387-1396) against the riots –contrary to the impotence of the regency in Castile– served to encourage elements within Aragonese Christian society to defend the Jews to some extent. A look at the map of Jewish settlement after the persecution reveals that the communities in the Kingdom of Aragon (in the king’s immediate environment) were not that severely harmed, compared to the devastation experienced by the Jews of Catalonia and Valencia. This was certainly due to the authority of the king of Aragon and his ability to afford some protection to the Jews in the vicinity of Saragossa. These efforts were complemented by the actions of Hasdai Crescas who was, at that time, in close contact with the king and queen. During the course of the persecution, tens of thousands of Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. Many Jews chose martyrdom, killing themselves with knives and swords, jumping from towers and even going out to the streets to die at the hands of the mob (probably while fighting). Immediately following the persecution, there began to arise in Spain, a large group of conversos or New Christians. This group included some who remained loyal to the Jewish faith and others who sought to sever ties with their Jewish roots and assimilate into Christian society.  

In August 1391, the violence struck the Jewish community of Montalbán and the homes of the Jews were looted. In an edict promulgated by King

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John I on 30 August 1391, the officers of the Crown in Montalbán and the Christian residents of the town were ordered to protect the Jews and to restore the property that had been stolen from them. In 1398, the Jews of Montalbán suffered a second attack, at the hands of itinerant crusaders en route to fight the Muslims overseas. In July 1398, King Martin ordered the municipal magistrates to protect the Jews.

The description in a dowry Hebrew letter written in Saragossa in 1410, for Yehudah ben Yosef of Montalbán, may refer to the bearer’s ordeal during the persecution, twelve years earlier:

The intruder rose up, a band [of thieves] raided inside and outside. They broke forth and passed through Mont Alban, mountain desirable for dwelling, and they destroyed his home, and all that was within they took captive and looted. By morning light, [by] the light of the sun and not by the light of the moon [levanah], they did not leave him half-brick [levenah] upon brick, brick upon half-brick.

According to the letter, the incident involved looting and the complete destruction of the house. If this is indeed a reference to the violence of 1398, it may be seen as an example of the destruction wrought by the rioters in the homes of other Jews, as it is unlikely that only a single home would have been affected in this way. Bonastruc Desmaestre’s Hebrew account of the Tortosa Disputation (1413-1414), preserved in Šelomoh Ibn Verga’s Ševet Yehudah, lists a representative of the community of Montalbán by the name of “Abu Ganda [sic], among the representatives

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9 H. BEINART, “A Fifteenth-Century Hebrew Formulary from Spain” (heb.), Sefunot 5 (1961) 77-134: 97 (letter 12). The expressions “brick upon brick” and “brick upon half-brick” are borrowed from the laws pertaining to the transcription of Scripture – specifically the methods of spacing used to write certain poetic passages (see, e.g., bMegillah 16b).
of the communities of Aragon. As early as 1412, Church officials in Aragon— influenced by Vicente Ferrer—began to seek the isolation of the Jews in separate quarters, in the spirit of the laws enacted at Valladolid in Castile (January 1412) and revised at Cifuentes (July 1412). In light of this tendency, the Crown of Aragon, now under King Ferdinand I, ordered, in October 1412, the separation of the Jews of Montalbán from the Christians, in response to a petition to that effect by the municipal authorities. In this vein, the rector of the church of Alloza, Juan Eiximen de Huguet, ordered Christians residing near the Jewish quarter to leave their homes within ten days. In December 1412, however, the king came to the defence of the Christian householders and rescinded the rector’s order.

During this period, the Crown repeatedly intervened in matters concerning the Jewish community of Montalbán, which was subject to attacks by local Christians, apparently fomented by the reports arriving from Tortosa. In January 1413, Ferdinand I ordered the municipal magistrates to protect the Jews against violence and to inform him immediately of any future outbreaks, that they might be dealt with.

Both during and after the Tortosa Disputation and the preaching of Vicente Ferrer in Aragon (1412-1416), as in most Aragonese Jewish communities, many of the Jews of Montalbán converted to Christianity. These conversions often split families, and financial disputes over matters of inheritance arose between the Jewish and the converted sides. Over the course of 1415, the king promulgated a number of decrees for the protection of the Jews of the city. In July, the king was informed that the municipal authorities were seeking to seize the property still in the hands of the few remaining Jews in the city. He instructed the royal bailiff of

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12 The Tortosa Disputation. Regesta of Documents from the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. Fernando I 1412-1416 [= Sources for the History of the Jews in Spain, 6], comp. G. Escribá (Jerusalem, 1998), 16 (doc. 57).

Montalbán to safeguard his rights over Jewish property. In August 1415, Ferdinand I ordered the governor of Aragon to use all means at his disposal to protect the Jews of Montalbán against their attackers. In the winter of that year, however, the king granted permission to a number of Jews to leave the city and to reside wherever they wished. The reason given in the royal order for their desire to leave was harassment by conversos and Christians alike. In 1416, the Jewish community of Montalbán ceased to exist—suffering the fate of other communities in Aragon, including Daroca, Alcañiz, Tortosa, Besalu and Castello d’Empuries. The Jews of Montalbán settled in nearby towns, such as Oliete and Teruel. Communal property, including the synagogue and other real estate, reverted to the Crown, over the course of 1416-1417.\(^{14}\)

I have found no testimony regarding the fate of Yom Tov Ben Hannah during the period of the community’s extinction or in the days leading up to it. He may no longer have been alive at the time. His son, Jucef Abenhanya, on the other hand, who edited his formulary, was among those Jews who converted to Christianity, adopting the Christian name Gabriel de Santa Ana.\(^ {15}\)

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN JEWS AND CONVERSOS ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONY OF YOM TOV BEN HANNAH

One of the letters in the formulary was sent to the Jewish community of Daroca, in Aragon, in an attempt to locate a Jew from Montalbán who had moved there. This letter may have been written around 1395,
since it is located in the formulary, between a letter from 1394/5 and the letter to Ḥasdai Crescas from 1396. Based on the explanatory preface by the author’s son, and the content of the letter, the subject of the communication was a smith by the name of Yosef Caro, who had fled to Daroca, following a dispute with another smith, who was an apostate:

A further letter he [wrote] to the community of Daroca, [requesting] aid and assistance for Ḥayyim Moreno who had been falsely accused in a dispute between the smith [ṣoref] Yosef Caro and an elderly apostate smith, and the aforementioned Ḥayyim had been fined for this over two hundred dinars.\footnote{16}

The letter was written by the communal scribe, on behalf of the trustees of the community of Montalbán, and was sent to the trustees of the community of Daroca nearly a year after the dispute it describes.\footnote{17} The purpose of the letter was to collect money from Yosef Caro, to compensate Ḥayyim Moreno, who had been arrested immediately after the dispute with the apostate, and was forced to pay over two hundred dinars for his release from prison. Such incidents were not uncommon in Aragon, whether between Jews or between Jews and Christians. Caro managed to flee to Daroca unpunished, after having found refuge in the home of the bailiff of Montalbán:

And when Pharaoh sent his prison warden to imprison Yosef and to execute upon him a written judgement, he fled from him and escaped to the home of our gizbar [i.e. bailiff], and after a few days left there whole in body and in property, blessed be He who exempted him from such a great punishment.\footnote{18}

\footnote{16} וְעָלָיו וְעָלָיו הָעַלְיָבָל שֶׁעַל מָורִינוֹ, לְחָיִים וְלְעַעַיְלָה לְעַבָּר מַעַרְיָמָו, וּלֶאָרֶבֶת מַעַרְיָמָו עַל כַּהֲנֵי אֶדְמִי מַעַרְיָמָו. [Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155 [formerly 809], Neubauer 1984 [IMHM 19146], fol. 269r]. See the complete Hebrew text in App. A, infra.

\footnote{17} The incident occurred during the week preceding the “Sabbath of Comfort” (July-August), and the letter was written during the week in which the Torah portion “[And Moses spoke to] the heads of the tribes” was read (two-three weeks prior to the “Sabbath of Comfort,” and thus nearly a year later).

\footnote{18} וְהוֹי בְּשִׁלְשָׁל מִפְּרֵה שֶׁבֶט הֵמָּו לֶאָסָר אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׁקְלוּ, ולֶאָסֶר בְּכֵמָּו, בָּרָה מַעֲמָא מַעֲמָא כְּוַא מַעֲמָא מַעֲמָא בְּכֵמָּו, בָּרָה שִׁפֵּחַר מַעֲמָא מַעֲמָא, בָּרָה מַעֲמָא מַעֲמָא מַעֲמָא בְּכֵמָּו (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 269v).
The bailiff in question is the Christian bailiff (baile, baiulus) charged with carrying out the sentences of the Jewish court, whose role and standing enabled Caro to escape punishment.

Such appeals to respected and powerful Christians are known from similar cases in Aragon. One passage in the letter, however, sheds light on the particular circumstances in Montalbán at the turn of the fifteenth century:

And outside the Israelite camp, they found a rebellious old man, an enemy and a miscreant, who was a Jew, a hater of Israel, and especially those of his [own] craft, including the aforementioned Yo-sef, whom he wickedly libelled and defamed with accusations that do not bear repeating.

The passage describes a situation of constant conflict between the apostate Jew and Yosef Caro. The old apostate is portrayed as a “hater of Israel,” although an element of professional rivalry is also noted, and he is said to quarrel with other smiths in particular.

Was this an ordinary conflict between craftsmen, or was it already marked by the social tension that developed between some Jews of the community and some New Christians after 1391? The letter continues, offering further insight into the circumstances surrounding the dispute:

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19 On the use of the word *gizbar* for bailiff among the Jews of Aragon, see the contemporary Isaac b. Šešet (RIbaŠ) [Perfet], *Responsa* (Jerusalem, 1975), 126, *responsum* § 508, p. 126 (cited BAER, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 82-83); § 52, p. 22; § 249, p. 130; § 351, p. 194; § 395, p. 246; § 510, p. 160 concerns an appeal to Perfet by “the honoured gentleman who is the *gizbar* appointed over the Jews in Montalbán,” regarding a legal dispute between two of the town’s Jews. The Christian bailiff asked Perfet to sign verdict according to Jewish Law.


21 מַחְוֹר לַמַּחְוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל מַמָּוֶת יוֹנָה מִמְּרוֹן, עָרָר מִמְּרוֹן, אַשֶּׁר חֳלוֹר חַוָּוָּה שֵׁמַּא שֵׁמָּא, בַּמְּרָא פְּנֵי אַשָּׁמְמוֹ, בַּמְּרָא בּוֹתֵךְ בּוֹתֵךְ (רַבִּי), אַשֶּׁר עָלָּלָה בֵּית וּרְחוֹזָא עַלְיוֹ שֵׁמַּא עַלְיוֹ שֵׁמַּא (Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 269r).

And said sinful old man quarrelled, as was his wont, with Yosef, and as they were arguing, in his anger he [the old man] tore the cloak that he [Yosef] was wearing in twelve pieces. And the aforementioned Yosef, when he saw that his clothes were torn and his head bare, struck him [the old man] on the cheek, striking and injuring him, [drawing] blood, wounding him in the head.\(^{23}\)

Between the lines of this account of social conflict between two smiths we are given a glimpse of the tensions entailed in the passage from Judaism to Christianity. The tearing of Yosef’s cloak into 12 pieces would seem to imply ritualised violence, associated with the crossing of the lines between the faiths, since in so doing the apostate sought to imitate the action of the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite (1 Kings 11:30), who tore the garment of Jeroboam into twelve pieces as a symbol of the division of the kingdom of Solomon into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Even if we presume that the expression “twelve pieces” is merely a rhetorical flourish as opposed to a faithful description of reality, the story can, in any event, be placed within the context of discourse concerning conversion and crossing the boundaries between the faiths, as perceived by the scribe Ben Ḥannah, representing the leadership of the community.

The tension surrounding the crossing of religious lines in the incident recounted by Ben Ḥannah, however, need not necessarily be understood as a reflection of the new reality that developed in the wake of 1391. Indeed, the few years that had passed since the persecution may not yet have given rise to significant conflict between Jews and converts, as a group. The incident described in the letter would thus have been a product of the “old kind” of tension between Jews and apostates (converts for religious or social reasons) –who often harboured feelings of antagonism toward their former co-religionists and actively persecuted them–.\(^{24}\)

The phenomenon of apostate “haters of Israel” was not new. We know primarily of those apostates who took part in religious disputations, such as Pablo Christiani (c. 1263) who also engaged in missionary

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\(^{23}\) אפו בחרון ריבות, דברי מילי וממהדרי הנזכר יוסף עם כמנהגו ריוו את רב הנזכר הפושע והזקן על הכהו פרוע וראשו קרוע מלבושו בראותו.

activity after the Disputation of Barcelona. This was the context of missionary efforts by Jewish converts who preached to the Jews in their synagogues during the fourteenth century, formally licensed to do so by the Crown of Aragon. Worth noting for the purposes of this article are two brothers from Navarre –Pedro and Jimeno Perez de Tudela– who presented themselves to the Infant Peter in Montalbán in 1333, to request preaching licences. Late-thirteenth and fourteenth-century responsa literature from Aragon also attests to the constant friction between Jews and apostates. Such aggressive activity on the part of converts forced the Jews in various communities to appeal the Crown for privileges and edicts in order to minimize the converts’ missionary efforts and to prevent them from entering the Jewish districts (Calls). Nevertheless, primarily in light of a complaint poem (Telunah) by Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah that I will analyse below, I believe we can determine that the apostate smith described in this letter was in fact one of the converts baptised four years earlier.

It should be noted that the large wave of conversions of Spanish Jews in 1391 comprised, for the most part, forced conversions –contrary to events in Aragon during the Tortosa Disputation (1413-14) and particularly during the mission of Vicente Ferrer in Castile (beginning in 1411) and in Aragon (1412-16), which included voluntary conversions and conversions resulting from spiritual and legislative (Valladolid, 1412) pressure that limited the possibilities of Jewish existence.

Although the Crown disapproved of such coerced conversions, in August 1391, King John I ordered the converts of Majorca to cease associating with Jews, due to the dangers and ills that might arise from such contact. In September 1391, the Crown issued a decree prohibiting conversos from carrying arms or sailing to Muslim lands –both for economic reasons and in order to prevent them from returning to Judaism. According to Canon law, the conversos were considered Christians, and those who returned to their old ways (i.e. to their original faith) were considered heretics. In 1393,
King John I issued a number of decrees designed to segregate conversos from Jews (e.g. in Barcelona, Girona and Tortosa), stipulating separate habitations and prohibiting the sharing of meals, as well as sexual relations between Jewish men and Christian women. Having been informed that the Jews of Morvedre dress exactly like their converso brethren, the king wrote to the bailiff and magistrates of the city, instructing them to require Jews to wear a long outer cloak (túnica larga) and a round, red badge, in order to distinguish between them and the conversos. Converts were also prohibited from using their former, Hebrew names, and were required – on threat of punishment – to take new, Christian names. In January 1394, the king forbade conversos from leaving the realm, on pain of expropriation of all their property. In 1400, King Martin prohibited conversos from practising Jewish customs, such as observing the Sabbath and fast days, and celebrating religious holidays with Jews. The conversos were also placed under strict ecclesiastical supervision. Although there were few inquisitorial proceedings in this formative period, there were a number of trials initiated by the king’s representatives against conversos who had tried to flee Aragon or to observe the Mosaic precepts in secret, as well as of Jews who had helped conversos.\(^2\)

The conversos continued to live in the neighbourhoods where they had formerly resided as Jews. They were precluded from contact with their Jewish brethren and each group had to shape its attitude towards the other while, at the same time, re-examining its own boundaries and collective identity. As a consequence, a new dynamic was born in this inter-social/religious borderland and a new grammar for conversion had to be developed.\(^2\)

On the subject of relations between Jews and conversos, Yitzhak Baer clearly distinguished between the different kinds of conversos that began

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to emerge soon after the persecution of 1391, describing the relations that developed between Jews and conversos as follows:

Many of the conversos went over to the enemy camp immediately after they were baptized, though the outbreaks were still continuing, and tried to demonstrate their zeal for their new faith. Such people forced their families and friends to change their religion and became the chief instigators against the local Jews. Others wavered for many years after their baptism, and some of these even practiced a few of the Jewish rites in secret.\(^{30}\)

In light of this reality, it would be reasonable to attribute the dispute between the smiths in Montalbán to the new historical context of a certain group of conversos who had embraced Christianity and began to confront their old brethren and their own past immediately after 1391. It is interesting to note that the old smith is only identified explicitly as an apostate in the subsequent explanatory note added to the formulary by Yosef ben Yom Tov, and not by his father, the communal scribe. In his letter to the community of Daroca, Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah does not mention the old smith’s conversion, but hints at the fact, referring to him as “a rebellious old man,” “a sinful old man,” “an enemy and a miscreant”\(^{32}\) and “a Jew, a hater of Israel,” even placing the violent incident “outside the Israelite camp.” The author’s use of such ambiguous terms was not coincidental. Similarly vague expressions appear in Ben Ḥannah’s complaint (Telunah) poem in the formulary, which, according to the introductory note, was addressed to the wealthy members of the community, rather than to apostates or conversos. Closer examination of the text, however, reveals a more complex picture; that the poem was in fact aimed at the wealthy conversos.


\(^{31}\) Following Mishnah, Sanh. 11:2.

\(^{32}\) Following Deut. 21:18, replacing sorer (wayward) with sorer (enemy; used in reference to Haman, in Esther 3:10). Note that Ben Ḥannah associates the old smith both with the “rebellious elder” (zaqen mamre) and with the “rebellious son” (ben sorer u-moreh).

\(^{33}\) Used in reference to Mordecai, in Esther 2:5. Note that Ben Ḥannah associates the old smith both with Haman and with Mordecai.
3. **Yom Tov Ben Hannah’s Complaint Poem: An English Translation and Commentary**

For I have seen, in this generation, the rich people of the land are very evil and sinful against the Lord, and despise their brethren the children of Israel. While the children of strangers that join themselves to them, they love. They have turned to the arrogant rehavim. Alvan, Hemdan and men of Sheba. This is their way, straight before them. In their [own] eyes they are wise and righteous in their deeds. They see no fault in themselves. To spill innocent and righteous blood, they gush daily in counsels and knowledge. But condemn [their] soul in secret and in public. They do not sleep if they have done no evil.

And their faces are welcoming and they appear as friends. To those who curse their ways and evil doings. They bring them near, setting them above their chief joy, at the head of the guests. And they shun those who fear God, remaining silent when they are in distress, [as if] deprived of speech. And those who reprove them they answer impudently, afflicting their legs with shackles and bringing down prophets with bonds. For this my soul moans and my eyes weep. And my heart is faint and bitter. And I shall take up my homily and say:

Man of wickedness and of blood. His hands filled with snares and nets. To capture the sages. Heads of thousands of Israel.

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34 See the Hebrew text in App. B, below. 35 Following 2 Kings 24:14. 36 Gen. 13:13. 37 Isa. 56:6. 38 Following Ps. 40:5. 39 Gen. 36:23. 40 Gen. 36:26. 41 Joel 4:8. 42 Ps. 49:14. 43 See Prov. 14:12; 16:25. 44 Jer. 4:22; “wise to do evil”; Isa. 5:21. 45 Following Ps. 106:38; Deut. 19:10; Isa. 59:7. 46 Ps. 94:4; “They gush arrogance, speak it, all the wrongdoers boast.” See also Ps. 19:3. 47 Prov. 22:20; see Jer. 7:24. 48 Following Ps. 94:21. 49 Following Deut. 13:7: “a companion who is like your own soul incite you in secret, saying ‘Let us go and worship other gods’ that you did not know.” 50 Prov. 4:16. 51 In what would appear to be a copyist’s error, the word “u-fnehem” (‘and their faces’) appears twice in the manuscript, at the end of one page and the beginning of the next. 52 Jer. 23:22; Hos. 9:15. 53 Following Num. 16:9. 54 Following Ps. 137:6. 55 Following 1 Sam. 9:22. 56 For example, Ps. 107:6. 57 Jer. 5:13. 58 Following Prov. 18:23. 59 Ps. 105:18. 60 See 1 Sam. 10:5. 61 Ps. 42:6. 62; 43:5. 62 Following Lam. 1:16. 63 Following Lam. 5:17. 64 See Num. 23:7; 23:18. 65 Following 2 Sam. 16:7. 66 Following Eccles. 7:26. 67 Following Job 5:13; Jer. 8:9. 68 For example, Num. 1:16.
In his pride [and] highness of heart. With his abundance of silver and gold. Fearing neither the Lord and His goodness. Nor the elect of the children of Israel.

A lion cub lurking. He kills the innocent with false accusations. His ways are set with liars and sinners of Israel.

He places grumbling words in his heart. Like the law of God within him. And babes rule over him. The youth of the children of Israel.

One who walks blameless and does justice is like stings in his eyes and brier. And like thorns in his side any who uphold the maintenance. Of the House of Israel.

And he loves and brings close the enemies of the Lord. Gebal and Ammon and Oreb. [Pleasant] to his own kind, and a bear lying in wait. For the scattered sheep of Israel.

Arrogant [and] brazen in his anger kept forever for the people of his inheritance. The sceptre of his fear and terror will not depart from the tribes of Israel.

A sinner and inciter to sin to accomplish his will. Sated to do ill to the law of his Maker. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity. Before the eyes of all Israel.

He presents himself [as] pure, and his hooves are like a pig’s. As he

69 Deut. 17:20; following Jer. 48:29. 70 See Deut. 17:17. 71 Following Hos. 3:5. 72 Exod. 24:11. 73 Lam. 3:10. 74 Ps. 10:8. 75 Deut. 22:14. 76 Following 2 Chron. 27:6; Deut. 19:3. 77 Following Ps. 101:7. 78 Prov. 18:8 79 Dan. 1:8. 80 Following 1 Kings 3:28. 81 Following Isa. 3:4. 82 Exod. 24:5. 83 Ps. 15:2. 84 Num. 33:55 85 Prov. 15:19; Mic. 7:4. 86 For example, 2 Kings 12:8. 87 Ps. 83:8. 88 Judg. 7:25. 89 Following Lev. 11:15; Deut. 14:14: “every raven [orev] according to its kind.” There is a double play on words here: Oreb/orev, and orev-raven/orev-pleasant – the final word of one line (Oreb) leading into the next line (“to his own kind”), just as “lying in wait” leads into “For the scattered sheep of Israel.” The word le-mino (“to his own kind”) offers a further play on words, as the word min may also mean ‘apostate.’ 90 Lam. 3:10. 91 Jer. 50:17. 92 Following Prov. 21:24. 93 Amos 1:11. 94 Following, for example, Ps. 94:14. 95 Following Exod. 15:16. 96 Gen. 49:10. 97 bSanhedrin 107b. 98 Following Prov. 11:1. 99 Job 20:27. 100 Deut. 34:12. 101 See Genesis Rabbah 65:1: “Why does he compare it [Rome] to a pig? Just as a pig, when it lies down, shows its [split] hooves, as if to say ‘I am pure’, so this wicked kingdom [Rome] that robs and despoils, pretends to execute justice.” Ben Hannah’s use of this particular metaphor is probably not a coincidence, as Rabbinic tradition clearly
wraps himself in interwoven contempt. Can one who drinks to intoxication be called a Nazirite? One who is uncircumcised by the name Israel?

He appoints overseers over his [own] people. Born in his household, who eat his bread. To destroy with his anger and rage. And deceit, the House of Israel.

The glory of his riches and the multitude of his children. To crush under foot the poor. The abject and the humble. And the sojourner who sojourns in Israel.

He denies the tenets of the Law. Darkens God’s pure command. Speaks with imperiousness. To every man of Israel.

To the Jews, to destroy them with hatred. He banishes them from his land, [which] he makes desolate. And decides their judgement (yeḥerāṣ din). Dog, thief and informer. These are the names. Of the children of Israel.

He believes every iniquitous thing. And strikes with a wicked fist. His children are distant from rescue. And the Lord will rescue Israel.

He takes honour in the shame of his fellow. He wears the disgrace of his neighbour [as] a royal raiment. And the spilling of the blood of the humble [as] his cloak and kingdom. Is Israel a slave?

All who are learned are despised in his eyes. His rebuke comes down on any who understand goodly words. Yet he does not know the difference between Ephah and Epher. And between the children of Israel.

identifies Rome with Christendom. See Exod. 28:6. The word buz (‘contempt’) is reminiscent of the word bus (‘linen’; see e.g. 1 Chron. 15:27), giving rise to the image of “interwoven contempt.”

Following Ps. 19:9. For example, Deut. 27:14. Ps. 46:9. The word yeḥerāṣ in the expression yeḥerāṣ din (‘decide judgement’) also appears in the expression yeḥerāṣ lešono in Exod. 11:7, where it refers to the snarling of a dog.

His soul is of little worth in his eyes. And the greater part of his wealth and possessions. Is dedicated to his wood and stone. To cast at Israel. His heart is staunch with the worshippers of Asherah. And their abominations are pure in his eyes. And he calls unclean unclean. All that is pure in Israel.

He acts in arrogant anger. Fomenting strife. With a man of strife. He mocks the clatter and the javelin. For the disputation of the children of Israel.

He casts off the yoke of the Kingdom from his neck. And loads and places [it] on [the neck] of his fellow. In the blackness of night his lamp will expire. And there will be light for the children of Israel.

[His] mouth speaks obscenities. Calling the most upright of women whore and degraded one. May angels of destruction strike him. And peace be upon Israel.

He who executed the Lord’s righteousness. His eye did not pity [him]. He gave to plunder. Jacob and Israel.

Enemy of the Jews, and his faith. [From which] he has departed, changing his religion. And he and that for which he is changed stand. Opposite all Israel.

He speaks in the streets. Slanders and condemns innocent blood. He informs men. That Israel has sinned.

First of nations was Amalek. To pursue the people of my sainted ones. Like him, this one too opposes. And fights against Israel.

The joy of our heart is ceased. Since our exile at the hand of our captors. And now our destroyers and devastators. And also the Eternal of Israel.
Let my song of prayer come before you, O Lord.\textsuperscript{155} Deliver me from the evil man.\textsuperscript{156} And may all of my adversaries be like straw before the wind, and before my eyes.\textsuperscript{157} Wreak the vengeance of the children of Israel.\textsuperscript{158}

Give me strength, O Rock of my refuge.\textsuperscript{159} Give me joy on the day of my sadness. When the righteous man rules\textsuperscript{160} my heart will rejoice.\textsuperscript{161} Jacob will exult and Israel will be glad.\textsuperscript{162}

A good sign by the number of the children of Israel\textsuperscript{163} / which are twenty-eight strophes full of all good things.\textsuperscript{164}

In the letters of the holy tongue and its accents. / My poem reveals to his people.

The actions of a man who loathes his soul.\textsuperscript{165} / For he himself attested to his defect.

When he put his trust in his strength, all the days of his vain life.\textsuperscript{166} / And placed his faith in his abundance of fat and blood.\textsuperscript{167}

And when he exchanged his faith for his wealth. / And declared the power\textsuperscript{168} of his works to his people.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{155} Ps. 119:169. \textsuperscript{156} Ps. 140:2. \textsuperscript{157} Ps. 83:14. \textsuperscript{158} Num. 31:2. \textsuperscript{159} Following e.g. 2 Sam. 22:3. \textsuperscript{160} Following Prov. 29:2. \textsuperscript{161} Following Ps. 28:7. \textsuperscript{162} Ps. 14:7. \textsuperscript{163} Deut. 32:8. \textsuperscript{164} Deut. 6:11, playing on the dual meaning of the word \textit{bayit}, ‘house/strophe.’ The number 28 is a good omen (sign) in Hebrew numerology (“the number of the children of Israel”), equivalent to the word \textit{koaḥ}, which means ‘power, strength.’ Furthermore, the numerical value (73) of the words \textit{hem koaḥ} (‘are 28’ or ‘are strength’) is the same as that of the author’s name, Yom Tov. \textsuperscript{165} Following Num. 21:5. \textsuperscript{166} Following Eccles. 6:12. \textsuperscript{167} See Lev. 3:17. \textsuperscript{168} The numerical value of the word \textit{koaḥ} (‘power’) is 28 –a further reference to the poem’s 28 strophes. \textsuperscript{169} Ps. 111:6.
The rhymed text comprises an introduction and the body of the poem, the twenty-eight strophes of which correspond to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, including the five final forms (kaf, mem, nun, sade, peh) and a closing line. In the separate rhymed and metered stanza that follows the body of the poem, the poet describes its structure and content. According to this stanza, the poem exposes the actions of the man who “exchanged his faith for his wealth.” In other words, the conversion in question was not to another religion or faith in another god, but a passage from belief in the spirit to belief in wealth and material goods. The introduction evokes a similar image: “For I have seen, in this generation, the rich people of the land [are] very evil and sinful against the Lord, and despise their brethren the children of Israel. While the children of strangers that join themselves to them, they love.” The complaint would thus be aimed at the wealthy members of the community who despise their Jewish “brethren” and love the Christian “children of strangers”—that is to say that they have not yet crossed over—.

The next line: “They have turned to the arrogant. ‘Alvan, Ḥemdan and men of Sheba”—following Ps. 40:5, “and has not turned to the arrogant, nor to such as fall away treacherously”—may indicate abandoning the Jewish faith, as the word rehavim (‘the arrogant’) was used at the time to denote conversion from Judaism to Christianity, or it may (as in David Kimḥi’s commentary on the verse in Psalms) simply be a reference to the gravitation of the wealthy to the powerful, as the expression is indeed used in another letter in the formulary.

The body of the poem, however, evokes a different image. Alongside the central, recurring theme of the persecution by the wealthy of their Jewish brethren, we find a number of expressions that explicitly place the wealthy in a different category, even ascribing a different faith to them and the crossing of religious boundaries. Although this group bears affinity to the Jewish community, it is distinct from it and its members are

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170 See e.g. R. BEN-SHALOM, “The Disputation of Tortosa, Vicente Ferrer and the Problem of the Conversos According to the Testimony of Isaac Nathan” (heb.), Zion 56 (1991), 21-54: 45.

171 See Kimḥi’s commentary on Ps. 40:5.

172 Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, fol. 262r: “in the haughtiness of their hearts they turn to the arrogant” (rehavim).
not called Jews, but “the rich people of the land.” Their attitude toward the Jews is said to include the intention “to destroy them with hatred” and to expel them (“He banishes them from his land, [which] he makes desolate”). This group is thus not merely a heretical current within the communal collective, but rather external to the community.

The wealthy man is described as “one who is uncircumcised [called] by the name Israel” and “denies the tenets of the Law.” “His heart is staunch with the worshippers of Asherah [i.e. Christians],” and “their abominations [i.e. the Church and its ritual objects, such as images of Jesus and the saints] are pure in his eyes.” Although these expressions could be interpreted as metaphors for religious heresy falling short of actual conversion, the words “Enemy of the Jews, and his faith. [From which] he has departed, changing his religion. And he and that for which he is changed [stand]. Opposite all Israel” leave no room for doubt, as they explicitly refer to a crossing of religious lines.

Ben Hannah’s complaint poem describes the hybrid situation of Jewish society in the first decade after 1391. In the communal consciousness (and apparently among the wealthy conversos themselves), the conversos existed in the liminal space between Judaism and Christianity. Their identity is ambiguous –neither entirely outside the Jewish camp nor fully part of the Christian camp. The poem thus places them squarely among the enemies of Israel, but also finds it hard to define their precise social standing. They are still brothers, from whom more is expected than from Christians. Rather than seeking the company of Jews, however, they try to find favour in the eyes of the Christians –despite the fact that the Christians themselves do not trust them and object strongly to their ways: “And their faces are welcoming and they appear as friends. To those who curse their ways and evil doings”– alluding, perhaps, to Christian criticism of converso “judaising” that, as noted above, began soon after the persecutions. Converso ways also elicited criticism from within the Jewish community, although those who admonished them on the community’s behalf encountered fierce personal opposition from the conversos, who would inform on and bring about the incarceration of Jews: “And those who reprove them they answer impudently, afflicting their legs with shackles and bringing down prophets with bonds.” The Jews had expected them to support the rabbis, but they actually persecuted them and set traps “to

capture the sages.” They had hoped that the wealthy conversos would support the community’s institutions, but the latter could not stand “any who uphold the maintenance.” Yet, the figure represented in the poem still tries to appear pure, presenting his “hooves … like a pig’s.”\textsuperscript{173} In other words, in his own mind, he still retains one foot in the Jewish community.

The poem gives particular attention to socio-economic tensions. The wealthy conversos appear to continue to conduct much of the community’s affairs. This phenomenon, during the years immediately following the mass conversions, should not come as a surprise. Years later, even in the second generation, the Jews of Majorca, for example, would approach important conversos and involve them in various internal affairs of the Jewish community. This custom led Šim’on ben Šemai Duran (1361-1444) to issue a demand (sometime before 1435) that converso dignitaries should not be brought into the Jewish community’s social disputes. He even demanded that this prohibition be instituted as a special ordinance bearing the penalty of excommunication.\textsuperscript{174} His remarks in this instance are revealing of the extensive involvement of the conversos in community life and of the desire on the part of the Jews to turn to them for assistance during moments of crisis.

The religious aspect of conversion is raised in the poem, but would appear to be a marginal issue (perhaps due to the coercive nature of the conversions). Ben Ḥannah’s primary orientation is ethnic-tribal: religious conversion is irrelevant to the question of identity, following the Talmudic principle that “although he has sinned, he remains a Jew.”\textsuperscript{175} In the eyes of Ben Ḥannah, the conversos still bore responsibility toward the

\textsuperscript{173} That is attempting to convey the appearance of purity, based on \textit{Genesis Rabbah} 65:1.

\textsuperscript{174} Šim’on b. Šemai Duran, \textit{Responsa}, vol. III (Lemberg, 1851), § 227, pp. 36a–b: “What is this confidence you have in pointless hatred amongst you, because of which your words are heard by the notables among the conversos (\textit{amusim}) ... Create a boundary here by means of excommunication and a ban so that no one will involve one of these conversos in his interpersonal disputes.” Duran sought to establish social and political boundaries between the two communities at a time when such boundaries seemed to be losing their importance in Majorca.

\textsuperscript{175} \textit{bSanhedrin} 44a. See J. Katz, “Though He Has Sinned He Remains a Jew” (heb.), \textit{Tarbiz} 7 (1958), 204-217.
community, and he perceived their turning their backs on it as a betrayal, for which he expected them to suffer divine retribution.

Regarding an ostensibly similar group of Jews baptised at Valencia and Barcelona in 1391, Isaac Perfet—a rabbi and halakhist who resided at Algiers at the time (after having being forcibly baptised himself in 1391, in Valencia)—wrote the following:

[...] Since they converted, even if initially by force, they later cast off the yoke of Heaven, and severed the bonds of the Torah from them, and of their own will follow the laws of idolaters and transgress all of the precepts of the Torah, and what is more persecute the unfortunate Jews among them, to accuse them falsely and eradicate them as a people, that the name Israel shall be remembered no more.176

The image of the converso evoked by Perfet is very similar to that of the wealthy men in Ben Ḥannah’s poem. Four common themes appear in both sources: casting off Jewish Law (“He denies the tenets of the Law. Casts aspersions on the God-made precepts”); willingly embracing Christianity (“His heart is staunch with the worshippers of Asherah. And their abominations are pure in his eyes”); persecuting Jews (“To destroy with his anger and rage. And deceit, the House of Israel”; “To crush under foot the poor. The abject and the humble. And the sojourners who sojourn in Israel”; “Like him, this one too opposes. And fights against Israel”); and making false accusations against Jews in order to eradicate the Jewish presence in Spain (“He kills the innocent with false accusations”; “Slanderers and condemns innocent blood”; “To destroy with his anger and rage. And deceit, the House of Israel”; To the Jews, to destroy them with hatred. He banishes them from his land, [which] he makes desolate).

Ben Ḥannah’s poem contains far richer imagery than Perfet’s halakhic responsa. It also includes further characteristics, such as: the persecution of rabbis (“His hands filled with snares and nets. To capture

176 Ribaš, Responsa, § 10, p. 5. The responsa answers a question posed to Perfet by R. Amram Efrati b. Marwam, regarding the validity of testimony given by conversos. On Perfet’s forced conversion, see J. Riera i Sans, “On the Fate of R. Isaac bar Sheshet (Ribash) During the Persecutions of 1391” (heb.), Sefunot [NS] 2 (17) (1983), 11-20. See also Ribaš, Responsa, § 43, p. 10: “And due to our sins, there are many apostates there, including denouncers and ‘night crowsers’ [i.e. informers; see bEruvin 53b and Raši, s.v. Megide be-alatah] who slander Jews.”
the sages”; “All who are learned are despised in his eyes”); opposition to the Jewish religion –possibly hinting at religious polemics– (“Sworn to do ill to the law of his Maker”); abuse of wealth (“In his pride [and] highness of heart. With his abundance of silver and gold. Fearing neither the Lord and His goodness”; “The glory of his riches and the multitude of his children. To crush under foot the poor”; “And the greater part of his wealth and possessions. Is dedicated to his wood and stone. To cast at Israel”); collaborating with criminals within the community (“His ways are set with liars and sinners of Israel”); juridical cruelty (“And decides their judgement. Dog, thief and informer. These are the names. Of the children of Israel”; “He believes every iniquitous thing. And strikes with a wicked fist”); intellectual ignorance (“All who are learned are despised in his eyes. His rebuke comes down on any who understand goodly words. Yet he does not know the difference between Ephah and Epher [sons of Midian]. And the children of Israel”); failure to pay communal taxes (“He casts off the yoke of the Kingdom from his neck. And loads and places [it] on [the neck] of his fellow”); moral depravity (“[His] mouth speaks obscenities. [Calling] the most upright of women whore and degraded one”); and informing (“He informs men. That Israel has sinned”).

In the same responsum, Perfet describes another group of conversos:

[...] And there are others, who would wholeheartedly and gladly abandon apostasy, but are unable to do so [...] And perhaps they might extricate themselves but fear that if they leave the members of their household among the idolaters they will intermingle with them and learn from their deeds and will never depart, and they choose to tarry there in order to bring the members of their household within the restraining bonds of the Torah and its precepts, until Heaven may have mercy on them [...] And in the meanwhile they are careful not to defile themselves with the pollution of transgressions, except in time and place of danger.¹⁷⁷

This example, from the responsa of Perfet, of the existence of different kinds of conversos –ranging from those who persecute Jews to those who risk their lives to observe the precepts and preserve their Jew-

¹⁷⁷ RIbaš, Responsa, § 10, pp. 5-6.

ish identity is neither unique nor unusual. Similar descriptions can be found in the responsa literature and other Jewish sources. In his study of conversos, Benzion Netanyahu analyses the responsa of the Aragonese rabbis who had emigrated to Northern Africa following the violent persecution of 1391. He focuses on those halakhic rulings that pertain to the conversos and which were formulated in response to issues raised by the Jews. He finds for instance that Isaac Perfet gave expression to a growing recognition of the non-Jewish character of the conversos. In addition, according to Netanyahu, members of the Duran family, who succeeded Isaac Perfet as the leading rabbinic authorities in Northern Africa in the fifteenth century, exhibited a similar attitude. According to this reading, each important rabbinical figure initially demonstrated an open, tolerant position towards the conversos in his halakhic rulings. This liberality then underwent a transformation, ultimately evolving into a severe denunciation of the conversos once the actual extent of their Christian identity had become apparent.

In contrast to Netanyahu’s interpretation of the responsa, which rests on his clustering all rabbinical opinions regarding the identity of the conversos into a single corpus, I propose that we read these documents in a different way. Instead of focusing on the formal position delineated by halakhic rulings, we should first attempt to reconstruct the nature of the social relations that actually prevailed between Jews and conversos, relations that were clearly reflected in the queries presented to the rabbis for consideration. This approach will be much more effective if we want to understand popular opinion within Jewish society in relation to...
the conversos. Only then can we properly interpret the efforts of Jewish communities and rabbinical authorities to sort these complications out.

The same responsa that seem to anchor Netanyahu’s thesis lead us to rather different conclusions, among them the impression that Jewish life in fifteenth-century Spain exhibited a wide range of opinions regarding the conversos –opinions that largely diverge from those described by Netanyahu. Rather than finding only a growing Jewish recognition of the conversos as Christians, we find a widespread sense of mutuality, familiarity, and ongoing dialogue between the two populations. The queries raised by the Jewish community with the rabbis about the first generation of converts clearly show that social intercourse between Jews and conversos had not ceased. The behavioural partition some conversos observed between a public Christianity and a private Judaism was accepted by Jews as entirely natural given the circumstances. Thus, for instance, it was said of two conversos who had served as witnesses in divorce proceedings that they “were considered valid by the people of God, and the opposite by the goyim [here, ‘Christians’].”179 That is to say, while the Christians considered them to be Christian, the Jews had no doubts about their Judaism. Even the growing number of halakhic rulings during this period pertaining to the permissibility of converso wine point, in my opinion, to the generally prevailing belief among the Jews who sent these questions to their rabbis regarding the conversos’ Jewish credentials.180

Contemporary documents from the archives of the Crown of Aragon also reveal a lack of clear boundaries between the Jewish and converso communities, as they appear in Ben Ḥannah’s complaint poem. In 1417, for example, the city councillors of Girona petitioned the king, inter alia, to create a physical separation between Jews and conversos who lived together in the same quarter, and to compel unconverted wives of conversos to leave their husbands and New Christians to baptise their minor children or relinquish them.181 In Saragossa as well, conversos lived in the Jewish quarter, and in that same year, they joined Christians in the city in demanding

179 RibaŠ, Responsa, § 11, p. 5.
180 I have addressed this topic at greater length, through specific examples, in Ben-Shalom, “The Social Context of Apostasy,” 176-184.
that the area of the Jewish quarter be reduced, so that the homes of the conversos might be excluded from the quarter. The coexistence reflected in the historical documents thus included the sharing of public and even private physical space—in families in which the husband had converted, while his wife and often his children had remained Jews. In one case, for example, despite the separation rules he had ordered, King Ferdinand I allowed the converso Joan de Sant Feliu (ol. Samuel Legem) of Murviedro, to continue to live with his wife and children, on condition that he strive to convert them. The lack of clear boundaries between the communities resulted in tensions that often required the intervention of the Crown, to protect the Jews and to punish their converso attackers. In Montalbán, in 1415 (one year before the community’s extinction), Ferdinand I allowed Jews to leave the city for any destination within the realm, in light of the violent attacks they had suffered at the hands of conversos and Old Christians.

In his complaint poem, Yom Tov Ben Ḥannah relates to the first group of conversos who persecuted the Jews and whom he identifies with the wealthy members of the community. The poem reflects the rupture within the community in the aftermath of 1391 and the conversion of the Jewish upper class. Clear boundaries had not yet been drawn, and the author is unable to determine whether these wealthy individuals are a part of the community or external to it. The text thus contains ambiguities and internal contradictions. The wealthy are sometimes portrayed as Jews and sometimes as non-Jews. They appear, on the one hand, to have completely abandoned the Jewish group of their own volition and to actively seek its destruction. On the other hand, they still consider themselves Jews (“uncircumcised [called] by the name Israel”), and are expected to act as Jews.

Ben Ḥannah viewed the second group of conversos—who considered themselves bound by Torah and halakhah—part of the Jewish community. There is no criticism of them whatsoever in the complaint poem or any of the other texts in the formulary. On the contrary, another of his letters—a recommendation on behalf of the teacher Ḥayyim Caro—demonstrates a positive attitude toward this group. The boundaries that would emerge over the course of the following years, even between this group of con-

183 See BEN-SHALOM, “The Innocent Converso.”
versos and the Jewish community, were as yet unknown, which is probably why the complaint poem refers specifically to the wealthy rather than to conversos in general.

Ben Ḥannah’s text shows that in the first years after 1391—a period in which Profayt Duran (a convert, himself) considered conversos and Jews a single, united people—relations between the two groups were plagued by bitter social tensions, that would accompany Spanish Jewish society throughout the fifteenth century. The importance of Ben Ḥannah’s testimony lies primarily in its proximity to the events of 1391, shedding light on the bitterness felt by Jews who had survived the persecution, toward the converso upper class. On the other hand, his sharp criticism also reflects the idea of a destiny common to both Jews and conversos, expressed by Profayt Duran at the time, and by Isaac Abravanel at the end of the fifteenth century, and which Baer described as a common ideological perception of Jewish destiny and future redemption. In Ben Ḥannah’s poem, we find that it was this very commonality that gave rise to the sense of bitter disappointment with the wealthy conversos.

This complaint poem is the harshest known attack on conversos from the turn of the fifteenth century. Even the criticism levelled at certain converso circles by later, post-expulsion authors such as Isaac Arama and Isaac Abravanel, is not nearly as strident. Ben Ḥannah was not alone in his view, however. The Inquisition persecuted other Jews, at the time, for insulting conversos. This can perhaps be explained by the proxim-
ity to the events of 1391. The rift between Jews and conversos was still fresh and often ambiguous. On the part of the Jews, there was still the expectation that the two groups would continue to follow the same path, as a single, coherent unit. From an economic perspective, the generation of 1391 may have felt that the wealthy among the New Christians should continue to bear their share of responsibility for the community’s expenses, taxes and subsidies. This expectation was not entirely without basis, as the Crown itself, at that time, addressed various fiscal demands to the Jewish and converso communities together. Conversos and Jews appeared on the same orders and, in some of the documents, the terms are used interchangeably.\textsuperscript{188} As great as the expectations of the wealthy conversos were, so was the disappointment when they refused to pay, thereby eliciting sharp criticism. Some of the expectations would also appear to have been unreasonable, in light of the laws of separation and supervision of converso society. Later generations, like those of Arama and Abravanel, were far more practical, and had learned to distinguish between the various types of wealthy conversos. Their expectations were also considerably lower than those of their predecessors.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{188} Assis, “Introduction,” \textit{The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales}, XXVIII-XIX, XXII. The treatment of Jews and conversos as a single group was particularly evident until the death of King John I, in 1395. In 1412, under Ferdinand I, this policy changed completely, and the Crown began reserve separate treatment for the Jewish and converso communities.

A) Ben Hannah’s Hebrew Letter

(Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, 269r-v)

APPENDIXES
שלומכם בעדו, תלונות והשקיט אשר נשפכו כך עשה, רraises במש باسمו, והנזר קדשו אחיכם, מה שמותו. לו, וחטא ב倌, אויבי פתחו ויקרא, והיוו אתו מבית ח-ט, וברכה של ח-ט, העמידים, כי הם פתחו בבלי, זה מיכה, דברים, את מהו". אישה פלו', חמישה, וספר, מלכים לשנוא הנגעו, ופי לרעהו מלכים לשנוא, משמתי המכה, ולעשות יוסף, ושניאמר," לא מماذاñosו, ממקים, והב chiến הימים. במסchyos 믿ים והכבים, מחיים פלויים.


סףראד, תול. 73:1, ינואר-יוני 2013, עמודים 97-131, ISSN: 0003-7-0894. doi: 10.3989/sefarad.013.004
B) Ben Ḥannah’s Hebrew Poem

(Oxford, Bodl., Mich. 155, 272r-274v)

Conflicts between Jews and Converts in Aragon

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וַדֵּבָּרָהּ בָּא וַאֲלֹהִים, עַל-פָּנֵיו בְּבֵית יִוֵּשׁ קָרֵי. חֲכָמִים.

לְעֵינֵי הָשָׁע, בְּנַשֵּׁבָּא בְּאִישׁ בָּא וַאֲלֹהִים. וַאֲלֹהִים נָקִי לְבָבוֹ.

לָוֹד לְבָבוֹ, לֹא נִפְּדָה הָמָד' נַחֲלָתוֹ לְזִכְרֵי. אֶשֶּׁר הָאָם לֹא צָרִיךְ לְחָמָה צָדוּכִי.

יִנְשָׁפְקָה לְזִכְרֵי לֹא נַעֲשָׂה נַעֲשָׂה, לְפַחַד טוּל אֵל אֶל הָמָד' נַחֲלָתוֹ לְזִכְרֵי.

לָוֹד לְבָבוֹ יִנְשָׁפְקָה לְזִכְרֵי לֹא נַעֲשָׂה נַעֲשָׂה, לְפַחַד טוּל אֵל אֶל הָמָד' נַחֲלָתוֹ לְזִכְרֵי.

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לָוֹד לְבָבוֹ יִנְשָׁפְקָה Lְזִכְרֵי Lֹא Nַעֲשָׂה Nַעֲשָׂה, Lְפַחַד Tֹל אֵל Aֶל Hָמָד' Nַחֲלָתוֹ Lְזִכְרֵי.

לָוֹד Lְבָבוֹ Yִנְשָׁפְקָה Lְזִכְרֵי Lֹא Nַעֲשָׂה Nַעֲשָׂה, Lְפַחַד Tֹל אֵל Aֶל Hָמָד' Nַחֲלָתוֹ Lְזִכְרֵי.
La sangre de todos en este conflicto.

Conflict between Jews and Converts in Aragon

עַלְוֹלָם שְׁבַּנָּו שֶׁבַּרָה שֶלֶּכֶה. דֹּבֵר פֶּה. יִגָּאֵל;
יִשְׂרָאֵלְו וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. יַעֲקֹבָּשׁ לֶכֶה.
דָּמַּהְמַה דֶּוַּי לַכְּנֶבֶל.
לֹא עָנָיו עֵינוֹ עָשָּׂה. יְי’ צִדְקַת.
יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל נֶגֶד; וּתְמוּרָתוֹ הוּא וְדָתו.
וּמֵמִיר עֹזֵב; וֶאֱמוּנָתוֹ הַיְּהוּדִים צוֹרֵר.
הָאָדָםְי לִבְנָו שְׁיַרְנָקִי וְדָמָד דִבָּה Моֹצִיאָב.
ְמָשׁ מַבָּרַחְו קוֹלוֹי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
ִישָּׁרָאֵל בְּיִשְׂ וְנִלְחָם לֵק. חוֹ כָּמוּה זוֹזֶה גַּם לֵק.
דוֹי שֵׁקַח עָם אַח עֲמָלֵק. גּוֹיִים מִית שֶׁיַּדָּו בּ גָּלִינוּ מֵאָז לִבֵּנוּ. מְשׂוֹשָׁבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל.
ַי. וּלְעֵין רֵוָע מֵאָדָם חַלְּצֵנִי יי’. לְפָנֶיךָ רִנָּתִי קְרַב תּיִשְׂרָאֵל.ֵי בְּנִקְמַת נְקוֹם;
לִבִּי יַעֲגֵל לִבִּי. לִבְּיוֹם שַׂמּ מִשְׂגַּבִּי. צוּרִי חַזְּקֵנ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
תם ב; לב, בראשית, מַלְאַּכֶּי בוֹ יִפְגְּעוּ וַחֲלָלָה.
ז; קָא, ויקרא, זונה וחללה טז; ט, ישעיהו, נבָּהָל
חסה ועינו קכח, כך; פר最もון, דֶּוַי לַכְּנֶבֶל.
עשה וצדקה כד; מַב, ישעיהו, וישראל ושלום
והיה י; ג, אסתר, צורר היהודים
כד; מב, ישעיהו, וישראל ושלום
לִבְנ; לב, בראשית,
סימן טוב למספר בין יִשְׂרָאֵל קְרָא Quânאלא
האמרシェר פְּרָלְמִס טוב סִימָן.
ואמרút לאומיו אֶל מְגַלֶּה יִירִי שֶזְאֶר
动生成יה כל ימי בתים חַ״א
כָּל בְּבָטְחוֹ לְעַמּוֹ.
לְאֻמּוֹ אֶל מְגַלֶּה יִירִי שֶזְאֶר
שָׁבָל שֶא הֲפֻעָלּוֹת שֶזְאֶר
וְדָמַל לְבּוֹ חֶבְלוֹ יְמֵי כָּל בְּבָטְחוֹ לְעַמּוֹ.
לְאֻמּוֹ אֶל מְגַלֶּה יִירִי שֶזְאֶר
שַׁבָּל שֶא הֲפֻעָלּוֹת שֶזְאֶר.
וְלֹא בְּמוּמוֹ הֵעִיד在他 בְּמוּמוֹ.
לְעַמּוֹ גִּיד הַמַּעֲשָׂיו חַ"א וְכֹרְו. 5

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