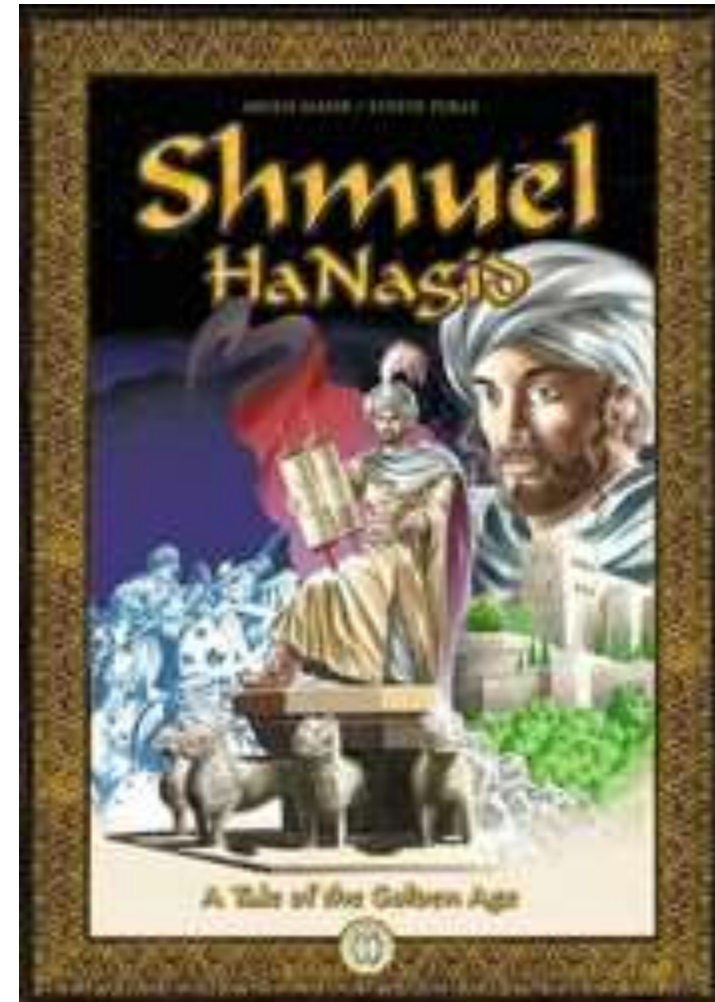


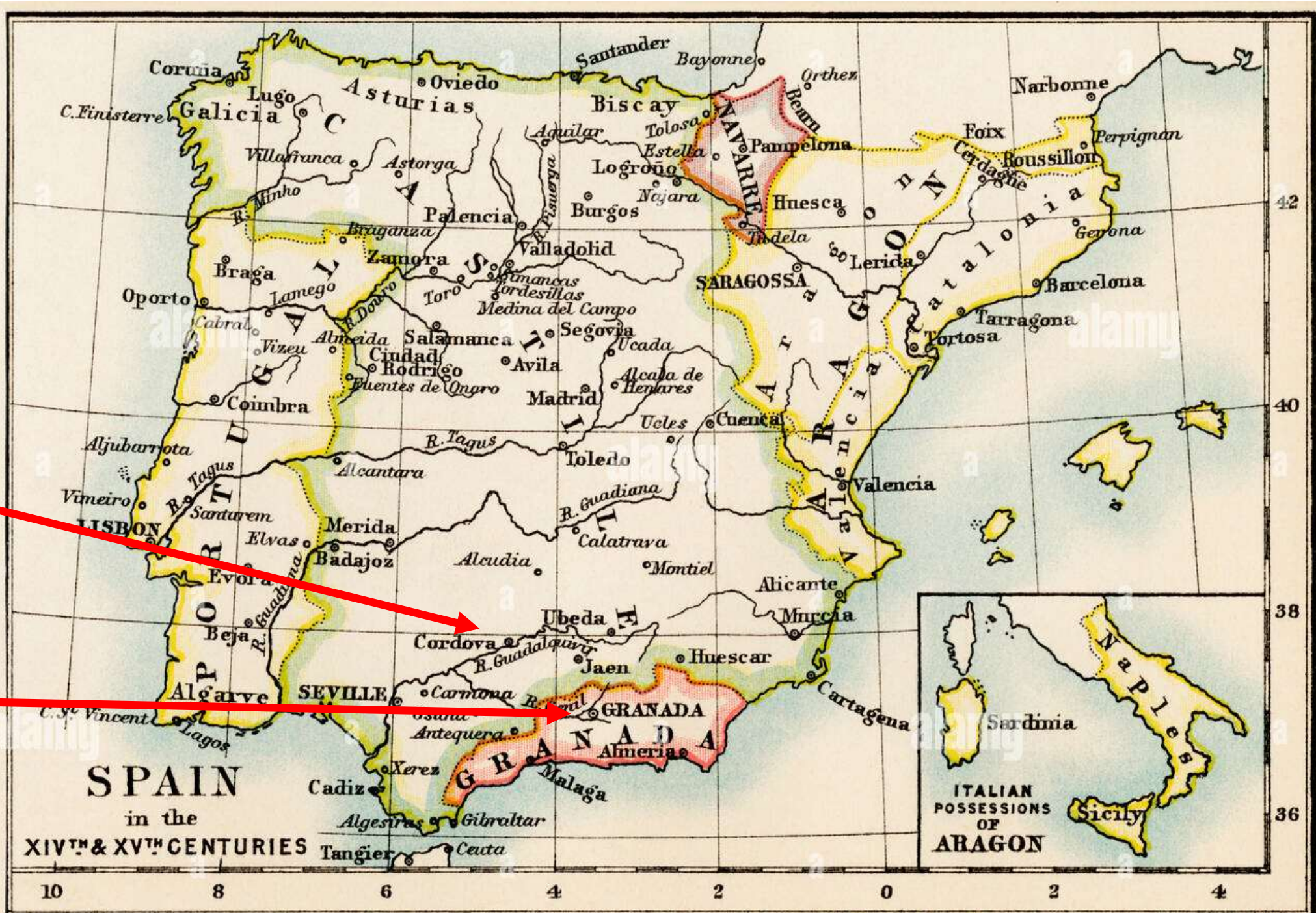
A Jewish knight in Shining Armour: when Rabbis were warriors.

When EHRS recruited its Rabbinic team we did not question their military skills. Not so for Rabbi Shmuel HaNagid of Granada in Muslim Spain who was a Rabbi, a Talmudist a war poet and a field marshal.



Cordoba-
Shmuel
born 993

Granada-
Shmuel
dies 1056





Alcazar of the Caliphs –
Mosque/Catherdral of Cordoba





Maimonides 1138-1204 – his father attended the Yeshiva that Shmuel HaNagid founded



Shmuel and his family left Cordoba at a time of war in 1013 and fled south to Malaga which was within the realm of Granada where he set up a spice shop. He was very proficient in Arabic and calligraphy and the legend tells it that he began to act as scribe to the vizier of Granada. He was an extraordinary poet in the Arabic style

מאדם במראהו

WINE

מאדם במראהו וצרב לשותהו
 ומזוג באספקיא – וזכרו אלי הדו.
 ושלש באנגיו, אכל בעלותו אל
 ראשים – אזי ירדה בראשים אשר ירדו.
 ושפול אשר דמיו מסוכים בדמעותיו –
 יגנזו בדם אשכול ינוסון ויידו.
 כאלו ידיים, עת יסבום אשישותיו
 מיד ליד, גורל עלי יתלם ידו.

Red to the eye, sweet to the drinker, it is poured out in Spain but its bouquet reaches India. When it is in the bowls, it is feeble; but once it goes to the head, it holds sway over swaying heads.¹ The wretch whose heart's blood is mixed with his tears banishes his sorrows with the grape's blood. As the goblets make the rounds, passing from hand to hand, it seems as if the friends are casting lots for a diamond.

ראה יסמין

THE JASMINE

ראה יסמין אשר בדיו ירקים
 כמו פטדה ועליו ואגפיו,
 וצציו בבולחים לבנים,
 וכאדם מאדמים סעפיו –
 כמו עלם לבן פנים ושופד
 דמי אישים גמזי כף בכפיו.

Look at the jasmine, whose branches, leaves, and stems are green as chrysolite, whose flowers are white as rock crystal, whose tendrils are red as carnelian – like a white-faced youth whose hands are shedding the blood of innocent men.



Puerta Malaga

אָהי פֿאַר לעפֿער

אָהי פֿאַר לעפֿער קום בֿליל
לקול פֿנוֹר ועוֹגֵבִים מְטִיבִים,
אָשֶׁר רָאָה בְּדִי כּוֹס וְאָמַר:
'שְׁתֵּה מִבֵּין שִׁפְתַי דֶּם עֲנָבִים!
וְיָרַח כְּמוֹ יוֹד נִקְחָה עַל
בְּסוֹת שַׁחַר בְּמִימֵי הַזֵּהָבִים.

אָהי פֿאַר צִבִי

אָהי פֿאַר צִבִי הַפֶּר בְּרִיתִי,
וְאַהֲבָתוֹ בְּתוֹךְ לִבִּי שְׁמוּרָה,
אָשֶׁר אָמַר לְסִהַר בְּעֵלוֹתוֹ:
'הֲתִרְאֶה אֶת מְאוֹר פְּנֵי, וְתִרְאֵה?
וּמִרְאֵה הַלְבָנָה בְּאַפְלָה
בְּבִרְקַת בְּבֶרֶךְ עֲלֵמָה שְׁחֹרָה.

INVITATION

I would lay down my life for the fawn who, rising at night to the sound of melodious harp and flute, saw a cup in my hand and said: 'Drink your grape's blood from between my lips.' And the moon was like a C¹ inscribed in golden ink upon the robes of night.

THE BEAUTIFUL BOY

I would lay down my life for that gazelle (even though he betrayed me, my heart still keeps his love) who said to the rising moon: 'You see my radiant face, and yet you dare to show yourself?' And in the dark the moon looked like an emerald in the palm of a black girl.

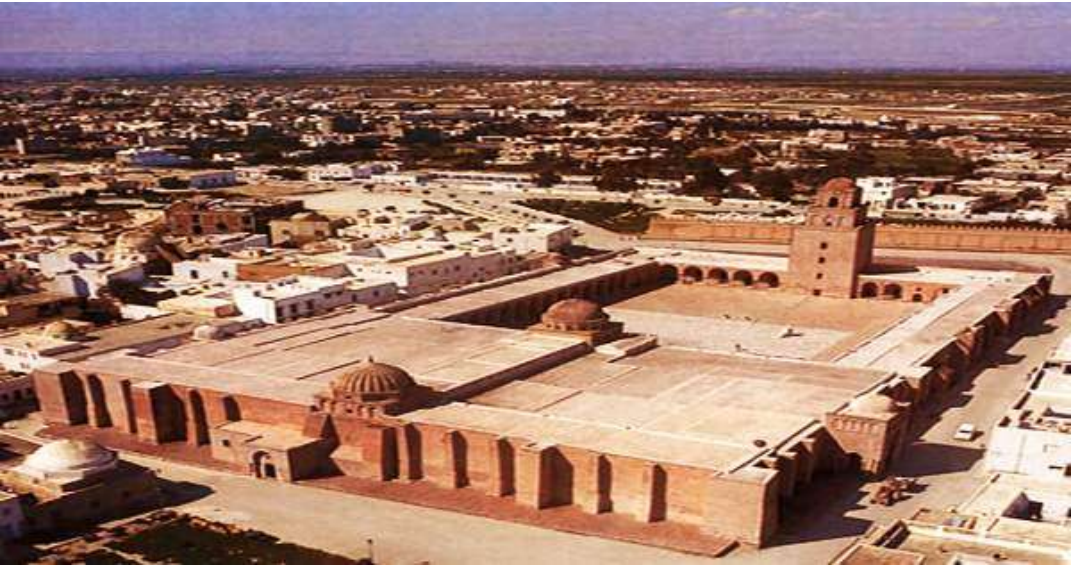


Shmuel moves to Granada where, now as a scribe and tax collector to the court he backs the son, Badis, of the now dead Berber King who succeeds him and is appointed a vizier himself in 1038. His title, HaNagid (the Prince) was legendarily given to him by Hai Gaon, one of the last Geonim (Jewish rulers) of Babylonia. He publishes his Mavo Ha Talmud, Introduction to the Talmud and purchases many manuscript Talmud copies in order to encourage scholarship.



Handwritten Talmud page c1350, Mishnah page c1050

Shmuel HaNagid became a patron to many Jewish scholars and poets. He arranged the marriage of his own son Joseph to the daughter of Rabbi Nissim Gaon of Kairouan, Tunisia



As vizier Shmuel HaNagid was General of the army of the King of Granada. Notably he defeated the armies of Almeida when they attempted to invade and take over Granada. He was an active General in war after war for nearly two decades.

הַלְעֵד אֲנִי שׁוֹכֵן

COMPLAINT

הַלְעֵד אֲנִי שׁוֹכֵן בְּאֵהָל, כְּמוֹ עֶרֶב,
וְתַחַת יְרִיעָה כָּל יְמוֹתַי מְדוֹרֵי?
כָּבֵד שְׂכֻחוֹנֵי הָעֶרְבָה וְהַזְמַן
חֲצָרֵי בְעִירֵי – אֵן יְדִידֵי חֲצָרֵי?

Shall I forever live in a tent, like a Bedouin? Must all my days be passed beneath tent-curtains? Time and the desert have already made me forget my court back in town. Oh, where are my courtier friends?

קָרָב

WAR

קָרָב דּוֹמָה בְּרֵאשׁוֹ אֶל יְפִיפָה,
אֲשֶׁר כָּל אִישׁ לְשׁוֹק בָּהּ יֵאָוֶה,
וְסוֹפוֹ בְּזַקְנָהּ הַמְּאוֹסָה
אֲשֶׁר כָּל שׁוֹחֲרָהּ יִבְכֶּה וְיִדְוֶה.

War is at first like a beautiful girl with whom all men long to play, but in the end like a repulsive hag whose suitors all weep and ache.



רְאֵה הַיּוֹם בְּצָרְתִּי

... והמלחמה [בין צבאות הנגיד ובין צבאות אסמעיל
אבן עבאד] התלקחה ביניהם בקרבת הנחל ג'ניל. אז
אמר את הבתים האלה ושמם במקום תפילת המנחה
ליום ההוא.

רְאֵה הַיּוֹם בְּצָרְתִּי, שְׁמַע וּשְׁעָה עֲתָרְתִּי,
זְכֹר־דְּבָר לְעַבְדְּךָ וְאַל אֲבוֹשׁ בְּשִׁבְרְתִּי.
הֲתִגְיַע לְרַע לִי יָד וְאֵף יָדִי וְסִתְרְתִּי?
יַעֲדֵתָנִי וְהִיטַבְתָּ בְּיַד צִירִים בְּשׁוֹרְתִּי.
אֲנִי עוֹבֵר בְּתוֹךְ מַיִם – דָּלְנִי מִמְּגוֹרְתִּי,
אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ בְּמוֹקֵד אֵשׁ – פָּצַנִי מִבְּעֵרְתִּי.
וְאִם יֵשׁ לִי מְרֻרוֹת, מָה אֲנִי אוֹ מַה מְרֻרְתִּי?
אֲנִי בָצָר וְלֹא אוֹכֵל לְהִרְבּוֹת אֶת אֲמִרְתִּי.
עֲשֵׂה לִי תַאֲוֹת לִבִּי וְחוֹשֶׁה נָא לְעֲזָרְתִּי,
וְאִם אֵינִי כְדָאֵי אֶצְלָךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִבְנֵי וְחוֹרְתֵי!

(1039)

SHORT PRAYER IN TIME OF BATTLE

... *The battle [between the forces of
the Nagid and the army of Seville
under Isma'il ibn Abbad] flared up near
the Sengil river. It was then that he
composed these verses, which he recited
instead of the afternoon service on that
day.*

See my distress today; listen to my
prayer, and answer it. Remember Your
promise¹ to Your servant; do not
disappoint my hope. Can any hand do
me violence, when You are my hand
and my shelter? You once made me a
pledge and sent me good tidings with
Your angels. Now I am passing through
deep waters – lift me out of my terrors.
I am walking through searing fire –
snatch me from the flames. If I have
sinned – what am I, what are my sins?
I am in danger, and cannot pray at
length. Give me my heart's desire; oh,
hasten to my aid. If I am not deserving
in Your eyes – do it for the sake of my
son and my sacred learning.



1. In his childhood the Nagid had a vision, in which the archangels Michael and Gabriel brought him God's promise of protection. »

אַמְרָה : שְׂמַח

אַמְרָה : 'שְׂמַח, בְּעֵבֹר הַגִּיעַךְ אֶל אֵלַי
שְׁנַיִם חֲמֵשִׁים בְּעוֹלָמְךָ!' – וְלֹא יָדְעָה
כִּי אֵין חִלְקָה בְּעֵינַי בֵּין יְמוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר
עָבְרוּ וּבֵינֹתַי יְמֵי נֹחַ אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁמְעָה.
אֵין לִי בְּעוֹלָם לְכַד שְׂעָה אֶנִּי כָּה, וְהִיא
תַּעֲמֵד בְּרִגְעָה – וְאַחֵר בֶּן בְּעָב גִּסְעָה.

הַלִּינוֹתַי גְּדוּד בְּבֵרָה

הַלִּינוֹתַי גְּדוּד בְּבֵרָה
הִרְסוּהָ יְמֵי קָרָם קַצִּינִים.
וְיִשְׁנוּ עָלַי נְכֵה וְצָרָה –
וּמַחְמִינֵנוּ בְּעֵלְיָהּ יִשְׁנִים.
וְדַבַּרְתִּי לְלִבִּי : אֵי קַהֲלִים
וְעַמִּים שָׁכְנוּ כְּזֹאת לְסָנִים ?
וְאֵי בֹנִים וּמַחְרִיבִים, וְשָׂרִים
וְדָלִים, וְעַבְדִּים וְאֹדוֹנִים,
וּמוֹלִידִים וְשִׁכּוּלִים, וְאֵבוֹת
וּבָנִים, וְאֵבָלִים וְחַתָּנִים ?
וְעַם רַב נוֹלְדוּ אַחַר אַחֲרִים,
בְּיָמִים אַחֲרֵי יָמִים וְשָׁנִים,
וְהִיוּ עַל פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ שְׂכָנִים –
וְהֵם הַיּוֹם בְּלֵב אֶרֶץ שְׂכֹנִים,
וְקָבֵר חֲלָפוֹ מֵאֶרְמֹנֹתָם,
וְצֶפֶר – מִחֲצָרִים גַּעֲמִים.

THE MOMENT

She said: 'Rejoice, for God has brought you to your fiftieth year in the world!' But she had no inkling that, for my part, there is no difference at all between my own days which have gone by and the distant days of Noah in the rumoured past. I have nothing in the world but the hour in which I am: it pauses for a moment, and then, like a cloud, moves on.

IN THE RUINED CITADEL

I billeted a strong force overnight in a citadel laid waste in former days by other generals. There we slept upon its back and flanks, while under us its landlords slept. And I said to my heart: Where are the many people who once lived here? Where are the builders and vandals, the rulers and paupers, the slaves and masters? Where are the begetters and the bereaved, the fathers and the sons, the mourners and the bridegrooms? And where are the many people born after the others had died, in days gone by, after other days and years? Once they lodged upon the earth; now they are lodged within it. They passed from their palaces to the grave, from pleasant courts to dust.



Shmuel HaNagid died in 1056 at the age of 63, an extraordinarily influential man throughout the Sephardi Jewish world. He intended for his son Joseph to take over his position from him and for a while that worked. Joseph is also thought to have made his father's poems widely available. Sadly Joseph did not have the respect that his father had commanded and he was assassinated at the age of 31 and crucified on the gate of Granada.

יוסף אבן חסדאי

Joseph ibn Hisdai

שירה יתומה

HOMAGE TO SAMUEL THE PRINCE

הלצכי חן גבורת און ועצמה
 להתעטף רדיד אפל בשלמה,
 ולרעות כוכבי נשף, ולתעות
 בצי מדבר, מעון פחד ואימה,
 ולצאת מתוררים אל חרדה,
 ומהקנית נבלים אל מהומה? –
 צדי נלמד בתכלי החלומות,
 ונצטיד בשחי התנומה.
 ואריתי – והוא נרדם – ברצון
 אשר יגע – והוא מקיץ – בחמה,
 והשקני, ביד שנה צרבה,
 עסים פיהו בכוסי אחלקה.
 ושכבתי – ובין שדי קנצות
 מריקות מר עלי רקה אדמה,
 והנימין מחבקת לבנה,
 והשקה מנשקת לחמה,
 והמשה מקשרת לבונה,
 והערש בקל בשם פטומה,
 ונצמתי בחיוני, צדי כי
 הקיצתי – והנה אין מאומה
 אכל ריח ישוכב הנקשות
 ומר עובר יתיה הנשמה –
 בשם נגיד יחיד רב שמואל,
 אשר מלא שגי כל האדמה! [...]

How did the lovely gazelle find such
 courage and strength to wrap himself
 in a veil of darkness as in a robe; to
 tend the flocks of the stars; to wander
 amid desert ruins, haunts of fear and
 terror; to abandon his home for
 horrors, the music of lutes for turmoil –
 till he was caught in the net of dreams,
 and trapped in the snares of slumber?
 And as he slept I plucked, with his
 consent, that which he angrily refuses
 me when awake. With the hand of
 sweet sleep, he gave me the nectar of
 his mouth to drink in ruby bowls. I lay
 down, and on my breast were locks
 flowing with myrrh over blushing
 cheeks. My right hand embraced the
 white moon, my lips kissed the warm
 sun. Our bed was perfumed with
 frankincense, our couch fragrant with
 many spices. Oh, I revelled in my
 vision until I awoke to find nothing but
 an aroma that delights the spirit and a
 trace of liquid myrrh that revives the
 soul – like the name of Rabbi Samuel,
 the one and only, the Prince, whose
 fragrance fills the whole earth!

