The Mysterious Passover Manuscript

A. Introduction.

In 1984, when I had just begun to collect haggadahs, I acquired a 1545 haggadah published in Venice. The haggadah contained the commentary Zevach Pesach (The Passover Sacrifice) which was written by Don Isaac Abravanel, one of the leading figures of the Spanish Exiles. Attached to the printed version of the haggadah was a handwritten manuscript written in a beautiful medieval hand which at the time was impossible for me to decipher. Don Isaac’s commentary was the first printed commentary printed on the haggadah. He completed Zevach Pesach in Monopli, Italy, in 1496, but the commentary was not published until 1505 in Constantinople. The 1545 Venice edition that I acquired was the tenth haggadah published. The publisher was Marco Antonio Guistiniani, a Christian publisher who first began printing Hebrew books with the help of Jewish scholars in Venice in 1545, the year he printed the haggadah in my collection. At that time, Jews were barred from owning printing presses. Five years after the publication of this haggadah, the house of Guistiniani faced formidable competition in Hebrew printing from the house of Bragadini, and a bitter rivalry broke out between the two presses. The two firms engaged in mutual recriminations before the Papal Court, which ultimately resulted in the confiscation and burning of the Talmud in Rome in 1553 and the cession of Jewish Hebrew printing in Venice for a period of ten years.

The survival of this book is itself a minor miracle because of the large number of Hebrew books burned at that time. But what about the handwritten manuscript that was attached? I could not decipher the handwriting of the manuscript at that time. From the few words I could make out, the manuscript appeared to deal with Passover and the haggadah, but the basic content of the work remained unknown. In 2010, as I prepared parts of my collection for exhibition at the University of Chicago’s Regenstein Library, I returned to the 1545 haggadah and set out to learn more about Don Isaac Abravanel, the author of the Zevach Pesach commentary printed in the 1545 haggadah, and the manuscript attached to the book. Through the good offices of Paul Mendes Flohr, I contacted Doron Goldshtein, who works with ancient manuscripts at the National Library in Israel. and together, we were able to transcribe the medieval handwriting into readable Hebrew letters.

It soon became apparent that the manuscript consisted of a handwritten copy of the most of the conclusion of Abravanel’s Zevach Pesach. The commentary, as printed in the 1545 book, began with a brief commentary on Don Isaac’s life and how he came to write the Zevach Pesach commentary. Following this introduction, the main portion of the commentary posits 100 questions about the haggadah and then presents a detailed commentary on the haggadah text. The printed book ends with a final section entitled “conclusion of the article” which presents Don Isaac’s view that the

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1 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, trans. Shlomo Fox, ed. Haggadah and History: A Panorama in Facsimile of Five Centuries of the Printed Haggadah from the Collections of Harvard University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), plate 8. I subsequently acquired the 1505 Constantinople edition, which is the third haggadah published.

haggadah symbolizes the stages of man’s life. The manuscript was a copy of most of the conclusion section with certain modifications described below. The questions posited in the main text have been translated into English, but the introduction and the conclusion have not yet been translated into English. I therefore undertook the translation of Abravanel’s introduction to Zevach Pesach and the conclusion of the commentary as presented in the manuscript.

B. Don Isaac Abravanel’s Background.

Don Isaac Abravanel was born in Lisbon in 1437 to a famous Iberian family. His father, Don Judah, was the financier of Prince Fernando, the son of Portugal’s Joao I, and probably to other members of the royal family. His grandfather, Don Samuel, had been a power in the court of three Castilian kings and was the highest financial officer to Castile’s Enrique III. The family’s home town was Seville in Andalusia, which the Christians conquered in 1248 as part of Ferdinand III’s general southward sweep. Don Samuel had apparently been forced to convert to Christianity in Spain and he fled to Portugal in the last years of the fourteenth century to practice Judaism openly. His grandfather arrived in Portugal shortly after Joao I won the critical battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, which confirmed Portugal’s independence from Castile. Joao I had come to power with the support of the nobility whom he showered with gifts of crown land. The loss of income from the crown land made Joao I more dependent on customs and commercial interests, and he was therefore more favorably disposed to Jewish immigration in order to promote commerce. Joao I’s immediate successors sought to curb the powers of Portugal’s nobles by seeking support from the city burghers and clergy. This political reversal adversely affected the Jewish situation in Portugal, and in 1449, when Don Isaac was 14 years old, a major riot broke out against the Jews in Lisbon. This policy was reversed by Alfonso V, Joao I’s grandson, who brutally put down this riot. Under his reign, the nobles regained power, and the most influential of the noble families was the House of Braganza, with whom the Abravanel family were closely affiliated.

Don Isaac Abravanel’s early education fit the son of a powerful Jewish courtier. He was brought up at a time when Renaissance culture was pouring into Portugal. He was knowledgeable in Portuguese, Castilian, Latin, and above all, Hebrew. He probably received his basic education in Hebrew in all subjects. He was educated in the Roman classics, and he used his knowledge of Latin to explore the writings of the medieval Christian scholastics and the Church Fathers. His curriculum included the natural sciences of the time – medicine, and astrology. Philosophy was of particular interest to him.

Don Isaac married in the late 1450s and had three sons, Judah, Joseph, and Samuel, and one or two daughters. The family business undertakings were vast, including tax farming, banking, and large-
scale imports from Flanders.\(^7\) He also maintained a position of leadership in the Jewish community. When Alfonso V conquered the North African fortress of Arzilla in 1471, Abravanel headed the efforts to free the 250 Jewish war captives who were enslaved as a result of the conquest. Abravanel became a courtier to Alfonso V who also enriched the great barons as his grandfather Joao I had done, and favored Jewish interests as a commercial resource to the country.

In 1481, Alfonso V died of the plague, and his son Joao II succeeded him. Joao II challenged the prerogatives of the nobility, especially the vastly wealthy house of Braganza, with whom Abravanel was closely associated. The nobles were outraged, and the Marquis of Montemor, the brother of the Duke of Braganza, advocated an armed insurrection against the king. The Duke of Braganza’s private correspondence with King Ferdinand of Aragon, Joao II’s enemy, was discovered, and he was arrested for treason in 1483. Abravanel was forced to flee for his life. He escaped to Segura de la Orden, a small Castilian town near the Portuguese border.\(^8\) Joao II confiscated Abravanel’s property. With his fortune gone, Don Isaac turned to spiritual matters. He gave a series of lectures on the Former Prophets, and during the four and one-half months from October 11, 1483 to March 8, 1484, he completed his commentaries on the biblical books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel.\(^9\)

In March 1484, Abravanel was granted an audience with Isabelle and Ferdinand of Spain. Spain was in its fourth year of war with the Moorish kingdom of Granada. The kingdoms of Castile and Granada were among the poorest countries in Europe. Funds for the war were critical to the monarchs. They needed Abravanel’s financial services, so he was put in control of collecting the agricultural tax in Spain. His personal fortune flourished, and he became the Queen’s personal financial representative, one of several important financial positions he held.\(^10\) However, in 1492, the Spanish sovereigns issued an Edict of Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and Abravanel was forced to leave Spain with only a small portion of his fortune.\(^11\) This was the second major financial reversal of his life.

In July 1492, Abravanel and his family landed in Naples, where they were well received by Ferrante I, King of Naples. Abravanel would serve as one of Ferrante I’s most trusted courtiers. Don Isaac underwent a second burst of creativity, and completed a commentary on the two books of Kings and his work *Eternal Justice*, in which he sought to demonstrate the ways in which God imparts Justice to the world. However, when Ferrante I died in 1494, France under Charles VIII invaded Italy, and Ferrante I’s son, Alfonso II, fled to Sicily, accompanied by Don Isaac. In 1495, Charles VIII entered Naples, and a pogrom began which nearly wiped out the Neapolitan Jewish community. Abravanel’s wealth and library were lost.\(^12\) For a third time, Don Isaac was almost penniless.

\(^7\) Ibid., 17.
\(^8\) Ibid., 33.
\(^10\) Ibid., 3.
\(^11\) Ibid., 4.
\(^12\) Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 68-70.
Abravanel sailed to Corfu, then under Venetian rule, with fewer restrictions on Jews than in Venice. In Corfu, Abravanel compiled his Principles of Faith, in which he defended Maimonides’ thirteen articles of faith. Ferrante II, Alfonso II’s son, successfully recaptured Naples later in 1495, and at the end of 1495 Abravanel sailed from Corfu to Monopoli, an Adriatic port on the far southern coast of Italy between Brindisi and Bari which was then under Venetian control. It was at Monopoli that Abravanel completed his commentary on Deuteronomy. He was then 58 years old. He felt old, weak and abandoned. His physical strength was waning, his eyesight deteriorating, and his heart confused, embittered, and depressed. After experiencing all the expulsions and expropriations, he was concerned about the future of the Jews. How long could they endure such hardship? With the redemption of the Jews foremost on his mind, he wrote Zevach Pesach, his commentary on the Exodus from Egypt, the first redemption of the Jews, which he completed on April 6, 1496, the 14th day of Nissan, Erev Pesach. Abravanel subsequently went to Venice in 1503 and served the Venetian government in a diplomatic capacity. He then returned to his literary work until his death in 1508.

Don Isaac Abravanel gives a brief history of his life in the introduction to Zevach Pesach. Since he had a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew Bible deeply embedded within him, his introduction and commentary contain Scriptural references in almost every sentence. The writing in biblical phrases and idioms seems second nature to him. He saw God’s hand in his life and the life of the Jewish people. Job is the most frequently cited source, probably because Job’s plight so clearly paralleled his own. His personal misfortunes and the misfortune of the Jewish people made him question the future, and he turned to the haggadah to provide a source of hope for the future redemption of himself and his people. Sometimes he would alter a biblical phrase to accommodate his thoughts, and occasionally he quoted a biblical phrase incorrectly, probably because he did not remember it exactly.

C. Translation of the Introduction to Don Isaac Abravanel’s Zevach Pesach.

My translation of Don Isaac’s introduction cites his biblical reference in parentheses and in footnotes. I have translated the passages somewhat literally to convey the tone of Don Isaac’s narrative.

“From my youth I grew up (cf. Job 31:18) with the wealth and honor of a wealthy household, the inheritance from my ancestors and from the High and Exalted Lord. I was close to royalty and the counselors of the land in their courtyards and palaces. My words were as drops of dew upon them (Job. 29:22). Among my people, I prospered in all that I had, Torah, greatness, male and female servants and inheritance from my ancestors and the members of my household consumed my bread, my wool and my linen (cf. Hosea 2). However, I lost all benefit and I don’t know how to tell it (Ps. 71:15).

13 Ibid., 75.
14 Ibid., 75-76.
My foe hounded me (Ps. 143:3). The tyrannical king, the greediest of the greedy, the king of Portugal,\textsuperscript{15} (drove me) from the land, from the place of the graves of my ancestors. And because of the deadly sword (Jeremiah 46 and 50), the wrath of the king’s messenger of death (Prov. 16:4), I abandoned my inheritance. I wandered from my place as a sparrow must fly and a swallow flit (Prov. 26:2).\textsuperscript{16} And I came to the great kingdom of Castile. There the thrones of judgment stood, thrones of the house of David (Ps. 122:5). The heroes of old, the men of renown (Gen. 6:4). Who can tell the mighty acts (Ps. 106:2).

God made me fertile in that land (Gen. 41:52). There the Lord commanded the blessing of plenty. I accumulated gold and silver and I acquired the honor of the rulers and the nobles of the land. I was the head of my people, the totally precious children of Zion, and their men, they were the wisest of the wise (Prov. 30:24), the illustrious of Babylonia. They waited for my words as for rain (Job. 29:23). After my words they had nothing to say (Job 29:22). So my heart rejoiced, my whole being exalted (Ps. 16:9). And all my troubles were forgotten. Also my wisdom and my Torah engagement remained with me (Eccl. 2:9). The words of Yahweh are pure words (Ps. 12:7).

Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts (Isa. 3:1 or Isa. 10:33). He thought to destroy the exiles of Jerusalem who were in Spain. For the Lord was like an enemy to destroy, to kill, and to eliminate all the Jews. He inflicted His burning anger against them (and sent them) wrath, indignation, and trouble. He sent His anger against them, sin and anger, trouble, a band of deadly messengers (Ps. 78:49). They destroyed and cast them down to another land and exiled them from the house of their pleasures. He sent them from the land of their dwellings. They cried after them as a mob (Jer. 12:6). The people placed their distress on their shoulders wrapped in their clothing (cf. Ex. 12:34).

I saw God face to face (Gen. 32:31) warring with his people, wiping out His inheritance (Deut. 32:9), saying, “I will sweep misfortunes on them” (Deut. 32:23). An expulsion without limitation (cf. Ps. 40:13). They went from nation to nation, from kingdom (Ps. 105:13) to the desert of the nations (Ezekiel 20:35). And I was in the midst of the exile (Ezek. 1:1). We made the crossing, Givah was to be our night quarter, Ramah was alarmed (Isa. 10:29). And above the thunder of the mighty waters, more majestic than the breakers of the sea (Ps. 93:4), we came to the kingdom of Naples. We were accepted in stillness and quiet (Isa. 30:15) and we said, Now the time of the Lord came upon us, and against our walking in darkness, seven lamps gave light. (Num. 8:2).

God favored me (Gen. 33:11) there, and my possessions spread throughout the land (Job. 1:10). I gained authority there like the holy ones who are in the land (Ps. 16:3). There I engaged in business peacefully, uprightly, in joy and gladness over the abundance of everything (Deut. 28:47). Righteous neighbors were before me. The children were my children and the flocks were my flocks (Gen. 31:43), my house was a house of meeting (Isa. 56:7) for the sages who went down with the people who labored in the kingdom of the Lord. There you shepherded the Torah and you rested in

\textsuperscript{15} The reference to “tyrannical” and “greediest of the greedy, king of Portugal” is censored in the text by black ink.

\textsuperscript{16} Abravanel reverses the verbs in the biblical verse which reads “a sparrow must flit and a swallow fly”
the afternoon (Song of Sg. 1:7). There the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel (Gen. 49:24) was a blessing for my people and the tribe (Job 37:13). My hand was not bound (cf. Judg. 15:14).

But Jerusalem stumbled and Judah fell (Is. 3:8) and also (similarly affected were) those to whom we traveled for help (Isaiah 20:6). We were given no rest (Lam. 5:6). For God bore on us a nation from afar, the sons of France, who hated the Lord, came to the land to ravage it (Judges 6:5) and on Israel fell the hand of fate for also the men of the land, men of Sodom, rose and stood to seize its (Israel’s) booty and to make it a thing trampled (Isa. 10:6) and said to Zion “Israel’s name will be mentioned no more” (Ps 83:5). They gave Jacob over to despoilment and Israel to plunderers (cf. Isa. 42:24). And there fell blows of the sword to the house of Judah slaying and destroying (Est. 9:5) wounds and bruises (Ex. 21:25).

For I detest divorce, said the Lord of Hosts (Mal. 2:16). They ground Israel, pursued them from Menuchah (Judges 20:43). And they stripped their shawls from them (cf. Song of Sg. 5:8) and also from their sons and their daughters and they (the Israelites) went into captivity (Deut 8:41). And their eyes saw that they had no power (Mic. 2:1). And many of the nations of the land transgressed laws and violated statutes (Isa. 24:5). And the arrogant ones came by water and crashed their bones (Jer. 15:17). “Away, Unclean.” the people shouted at them (Lam. 4:15). “Rise and go out from our people (cf. Ex. 12:31). The nations said, “Do not dwell in our lands.” And many evil and troubles befell us (cf. Deut. 31:17).

Misfortunes enveloped me (Ps. 40:13). Because of them and their abundance (Ezek. 7:11), robbers dwelt quietly in my tents (Job 12:6) and all that I amassed and enriched myself, and from which I found power (Hos. 12:9) and that endowed me with enduring wealth and success (Prov. 8:18) which a person should have and live by (Ezek. 20:11), they were lost (literally—“they went into captivity”) (Isa. 46:2), and all my books and my precious treasures (Joel 4:5) (were) wholly swept away by terror (Ps. 73:19). May a scorching wind be their lot (Ps. 11:6) and I was a wanderer on the earth (Gen. 4:12). I escaped by the skin of my teeth (Job 19:20) as a guest lodging for the night (fleeing) from swords (Isaiah 21:14) as headlong galloped their steeds (towards me) (Judg. 5:22).

And they said, “Where is the house of the great man (Job 21:28) where is the writer of books, where is the one who weighs (cf. Isa. 33:18) with honest scales and balances” (Prov. 16:11) for now He has sent me away empty (Gen. 31:42) and my glory was far removed from me and my relatives and those who knew me are gone (cf. Job 19:14). The members of my household - the maids, my wife, and my children - sent me away. Fleeing to another land, I remained all alone, a stranger in a foreign land (Exodus 2:22). Days of misery had taken hold of me (Job 30:16), and my soul failed within me (Ps. 143:4). Indeed, I walked and cried by the rivers (cf. Ps. 137:1).

17 “the arrogant ones came by sea” is censored in text with black ink.
For I was too old to be married (Ruth 1:12). My strength had left me and I was not as I was before (Gen. 31:2). My eyes too had lost their luster (Ps. 38:11), the ones (eyes) that looked through the window had grown dim (Eccl. 12:3). I saw mischief and vexation (Ps. 10:14). My mind reeled (Ps. 38:11) with evil and bitterness (Jer. 2:19). While previously at a former time (Isa. 23:7), I was like brave soldiers, like a vital man who performed great deeds (2 Sam. 23:20), now I am unworthy of all kindness (Gen. 32:11). And now what am I to do (Gen. 37:30) in a nation whose language I do not understand (Gen. 37:30), and (whose) speech is not in me (cf. Jer. 5:13) and now how can I (Esther 8:6) (with) a shamed face come and praise your mighty acts (Ps 71:16)?

I heard (people) saying, “Behold the festival of festivals is coming, a Passover to the Lord (Ex. 12:11) the taking out the captives from the house of slavery, and behold the time was a precious time. Now my life was running out (Job 30:16). I had come upon trouble and sorrow (Ps. 116:3) and my soul was desolate and silent, I remembered the days before. They were my festivals and the joy of my Passover when God’s company graced my tent (Job 29:4). The woman and her children surrounded my table like olive saplings (cf. Ps. 128:3). My lads surround me. But now my many sighs are placed one on the other (Ezek. 1:9).

For all of the elders of my people knew (Ruth 3:11) about my high station (Gen 45:13) and all the people saw if I ate my bread alone (Job 31:16) and I did not separate from my table wise and clever men. This was the table standing before the Lord (Ezek. 41:22), day to day making utterances and night to night speaking out (Ps. 19:2). I shared my bread on my table with the wretched poor (cf. Isa. 58:7) and the lost came (Isaiah 27:13) and all who sought the Lord (Ex. 33:7) came there. In contrast to that, my heart moans within me. (Jer. 4:19). (These memories) are like food when I am sick (useless) (Job 6:7), like burning coals of fire (Ezek. 1:13).

I lay prostrate in the dust (Ps. 44:26). I said I am lost (Lam. 35:4). I said to myself (Eccl. 1:16) Why are you like a man who is stunned (Jer. 14:9), dreaming a dream (cf. Gen. 37:5)? Why die before your time (Eccl. 7:17)? What can you profit and what can you gain (Ps 120:3) from this early memory? (cf. Isa. 65:17). Forget about those things lost. Why do you complain against Him (Job 33:13)? The Lord is in the right (Eccl. 1:18) because all His ways are just (Deut. 32:4). Pay honor to the Lord (Jos. 7:19) and meditate on his Torah, search in the scroll of the Lord (cf. Isa. 34:16), the precepts that make my heart rejoice (cf. Ps. 19:9), they are the fountain of living waters from cisterns (cf. Jer. 2:13). For He does not scorn, He does not spurn the plight of the lowly (Ps. 22:25). Nothing prevents the Lord from winning a victory (1 Sam. 14:6). He shall reconcile parents with children (Mal. 3:24) and he will make them dwell in security and you will eat the good things of the earth (Isa. 1:19) and in that

18 Note the word cistern is repeated twice here as it is in the Jeremiah reference but in Jeremiah, the second cistern reference is to “broken cistern” which is not relevant to this quote. Abravanel probably remembered it being used twice in the biblical verse but took the second use out of context.
place and in those days and this time (cf. Jer. 50:4), in the time of my prime (cf. Job 29:4), there was a family sacrifice for us in the town (1 Sam. 20:24) where they brought Me my sacrifices (Hosea 8:13). Now also You will want sacrifices offered in righteousness, burnt and whole offerings (Ps. 51:21). In the Torah of the Lord (it is said), “Offer a Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God” (Deut. 16:1) (which I am doing through) a commentary on the haggadahs with pleasing precious words and minor and major precepts on matters of the holiday.

Because from where the sun rises to where it sets (Mal. 1:11), the place where the king’s command and decree reach (Ester 4:3), this is the law of Passover and everywhere incense is offered to His name (cf. Mal. 1:11), are the book of the haggadah of Pesach, the holiday of matzah (in which) illumination, knowledge and extraordinary wisdom are to be found (cf. Dan. 5:14) in His books and in His haggadahs. Ignorant people will understand them even though the simple people did not know and do not understand them. And you the son of man will search for them with candles (cf. Zeph. 1:11) and find favor and knowledge (Prov. 3:4), good sense and knowledge (Ps. 119:66), and it will be enlightening.

A wise man benefits Him (the Lord) (Job 22:23). The wise man hearing them will gain more wisdom (Prov. 1:15). I said it is time to make for the Lord (Ps. 119:125) a commentary on the haggadah of Pesach. The poverty of my exile surrounds me and I will encircle it with wheels of redemption and miracles, including commentaries and requirements and purposes, new and respected which do not discredit the first ones which were sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb (Ps. 19:11) and I call its name Zevach Pesach.

For God deprived her of wisdom (Job 39:17), understanding, and also searching through the method of question and answer, there were questions and doubts in the hearts of the rabbis to find words that needed answers, the gate of righteousness to enter to their truth. For this I said, behold, I come in the matter of the wondrous questions of the haggadah as a matter of first impression, and in chapters in the language of teachers, to know how to speak timely words to the weary (Isa. 50:4), to open the eyes of the blind (Isa. 42:7).

And this is my beginning to do (this work) in the name of the Lord, the eternal God.”

D. The Manuscript.

The manuscript attached to the Abravanel haggadah is written in a medieval handwriting. Yael Okun, Director of the Manuscripts Department at the National Library in Israel, believes the handwriting is typical of 15th century Italian Jewish handwriting. The manuscript is signed by the censor Dominico Irosolimitano, who originally was Rabbi Samuel Vivas of Jerusalem. He became a censor in 1578 and continued in this capacity at least until 1619. Thus the manuscript dates at least back to 1578 to 1619. The manuscript is missing the first three lines of the conclusion in the

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19 Abravanel has changed the Aramaic wording.
20 Earlier commentators
printed version. The manuscript closely parallels the conclusion to Zevach Pesach as published in the 1505 and 1545 printed editions of the manuscript with three modifications: 1. The manuscript contains nine biblical citations in the commentary not included in the printed version. The printed version contains very few biblical citations. The writer of the manuscript apparently felt his readers might need assistance in understanding the biblical references. 2. The manuscript uses the ‘יה, an abbreviation for Ha Shem,” “the name”, to refer to God while the printed version uses ‘ה, which is the way the tetragram, the unpronounceable name of the Lord, is normally written. Both are appropriate references to God but the ‘יה in the manuscript may reflect a more pious approach than the printed version to avoid mentioning the name of the Lord in vain. 3. The manuscript often omits the final ב of a word and replaces it with a י. I have no explanation for this modification other than as an abbreviation adopted by that particular scribe. It is also interesting to note that the 1545 printed edition contains two sentences in the Introduction which have been censored in part by black ink, one referring to the King of Portugal (Joao II) as “tyrannical” and the “greediest of the greedy” and the other referring to the French under Charles VIII as “the arrogant ones.”

The question arises: Why would someone have bothered to laboriously and beautifully copy the printed text at a date prior to 1578-1619, the dates of the censor of the manuscript? Zevach Pesach was first published in Constantinople in 1505. The 1545 is the second publication of the commentary. Thereafter, the commentary was published in Cremona in 1557, Riva di Trento in 1561, Crakow in 1569, Prague in 1590, and Bistrowitz, Poland in 1592. The question remains, with so many printed editions, why was it necessary to copy the manuscript by hand?

One can only speculate. Perhaps the copy was done before the initial printing took place. There was a nine year gap between the date of completion of Zevach Pesach by Don Isaac and the first printing, which could have been the period during which the manuscript was created. We do know that the censor Domenico Irosolimitano was active in Venice, Ferrara, and Mantua. In Mantua in 1595, he and two other censors set up shop in the building of the Inquisition. Their office was soon crowded with Jews bringing their books for review and carrying them away when they were expurgated. This could have been when the manuscript was signed by the censor, and the printed book censored with black ink. (See the black ink censor notations cited in the manuscript translation discussion above.) We also know that Domenico Irosolimitado censored older manuscripts during

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22 Similar but more limited black ink censor marks are made to the Introduction in the 1557 Cremona and 1561 Riva di Trento editions.
his career--e.g., in 1578 he signed three works written in 1477 in Ferrara.\textsuperscript{25} Thus, his signature does not necessarily indicate the date the manuscript was created.\textsuperscript{26}

Further, it was a dangerous time for Hebrew books. The Talmud had been burned in Rome in 1553, initiated by a controversy between Christian publishers of Hebrew books. The press in Cremona which produced the third edition of Zevach Pesach in 1557 was destroyed several years thereafter.\textsuperscript{27} The Riva di Trento press ended in 1562, one year after the publication of the fourth edition of Zevach Pesach.\textsuperscript{28} Copying could have been done as a safety measure to preserve printed works that were in danger of being destroyed.

The manuscript could also have been written as a teaching tool. The biblical references in the manuscript which are not present in the printed book could have been added to the manuscript for pedagogical purposes. However, with no date on the manuscript or author’s signature, we can only state for certain that the manuscript was written before the period of 1578-1619, the censor dates for Dominico Irosolimitado.\textsuperscript{29}

E. Abravanel’s Conclusion to Zevach Pesach.

In his conclusion, Don Isaac Abravanel attempts to explain the haggadah as a metaphor for a man’s life. By probing deeper into the haggadah and God’s Torah, man will be aware of the shortness of his life and to value his time on earth more carefully to achieve perfection. Don Isaac does this by raising the following questions in his conclusion to Zevach Pesach.

1. Why did God take the Israelites out of Egypt in the spring and not in one of the other seasons?
2. Why did God prohibit chametz (unleavened bread) and made this restriction very strict?
3. Why did God choose the 14\textsuperscript{th} day of Nissan to search for chametz by the light of a lamp and why did he command all the laws of the search and the rinsing of vessels in boiling water?
4. Why is chametz forbidden on all seven days of the holiday and not just on a single day as the giving of the Torah which is limited to a one day celebration (Shavuot)?
5. Why on the first day and last day are people forbidden to work but are not forbidden to prepare food?

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{26} Note that there is no censor signature on the printed book itself. Perhaps the manuscript was already bound in the book and the censor only signed the last page of the combined manuscript and printed book.
\textsuperscript{27} Yerusalmi, \textit{Haggadah and History}, plate 21.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., plate 27.
\textsuperscript{29} It should be noted that manuscripts continued to be copied by hand after printing until 1550 and even later. Prof. David Stern of the University of Pennsylvania estimates 50% of the surviving Hebrew manuscripts date from 1450-1550. David Stern, e-mail to author, March 14, 2012.
6. Why are people prohibited to work on the first and last day of the holiday but not on the remaining five days in between?

7. Why did God issue his commandments about making the matzah and all the laws regarding the guarding and maintaining the purity of the dough and the laws on milling and measuring of the dough?

8. Why did God provide the commandments about the maror (bitter herbs) and the paschal lamb?

9. Why do we eat the paschal lamb only at the Temple?

10. Why is the paschal lamb roasted with its head, legs, and entrails?

11. Why do we eat the paschal lamb at night?

12. Why is the paschal lamb only eaten until midnight?

13. Why is the paschal lamb only eaten with designated parties?

14. Why is the paschal lamb only eaten until one is full?

15. Why is one not subject to the maximum penalties for violating any of the various Passover restrictions?

16. What additional things can we learn about the four cups of wine and the four sons beside what the Torah and sages have told us?

Don Isaac’s answers to these questions in his conclusion to Zevach Pesach affirm God’s plan to make man aware of the shortness of his life and to value each day.

1. God created the world in seven days to make man aware that his life is only 70 years long and he should spend it with well chosen deeds.

2. Israel in Egypt was like a baby in its mother’s womb. A child only is born through the pains of childbirth. The pain of the birthing process is reflected in the pain God gave to the Egyptians in connection with the Israelite exodus from Egypt.

3. Just as a newborn can’t eat normal food but eats honey and butter until he reaches the strength to eat normal food, so God fed Israel manna for forty years in the desert which was the period of its childhood.

4. Just as a child needs education, upbringing, and knowledge to lead a honest life, so God brought the Israelites through the desert for forty years during which time He gave them the education and knowledge of the Torah to know God and fulfill his service.
5. The spring was chosen for the going out of Egypt because the four seasons are analogous to the four periods of a man’s life. Spring is analogous to childhood, summer to adolescence, winter to older age with its diminishing strength, and autumn to extreme old age. (I do not know why Abravanel reversed the order of winter and autumn unless it reflects the fact that in the Mediterranean area the autumn is the driest season and winter brings rejuvenating rains.) God chose the spring as the time to leave Egypt since it was the analogous to childbirth and the beginning of a man’s life.

6. The chametz symbolizes the evil inclination of man and man’s material passions. It is for this reason that God ordained that leavened bread (chametz) could not be offered as sacrifices. This is also true of honey. Anyone who eats chametz during Passover has given in to his evil inclination and for that reason should be cut off from Israel.

7. The prohibition of eating chametz on the fourteenth day signifies that during the first fourteen years of a man’s life, he is not obligated to obey the commandments. After that time he is obligated to obey the commandments and cease to follow his evil inclination, just as he ceases to eat chametz during Passover on the fourteenth day of Nissan.

8. We search for chametz by the light of a candle since the search by candlelight symbolizes the obligation of man to search into his behavior after reaching the age of fourteen. As Proverbs 20:27 tells us, “The lifebreath of man is the lamp of the Lord.” It is important that this light not be too strong to cause man to abuse his body by ceasing food, drink, and physical things and not too weak that it prevents man from inspecting the innermost parts of himself. The light of a candle is not too strong or too weak.

9. The rinsing of vessels in boiling water is analogous to the cleansing of sin in man represented by the chametz. Man’s ability to be cleansed of sin depends on the nature of the sin he has committed. A violation of a positive commandment will be forgiven on repentance. This is analogous to rinsing a vessel in cold water. If one violates a negative commandment and repents, forgiveness will come on Yom Kippur. This is analogous to cleaning a vessel by scrubbing it and rinsing it in boiling water. If one commits a sin punishable by being cut off (kares) or public execution and repents, he will be forgiven only after afflictions have been given to him. This is analogous to cleaning a vessel by exposing it to actual flames. If one desecrates God’s name, repentance only comes with death. This is analogous to breaking a vessel that has been used with chametz since it can’t be repaired.

10. Chametz is prohibited for seven days to signify the seventy years of a man’s life and the many sevens of the commandments he must obey: - circling the bride seven days in the wedding ceremony to be aware he has seventy years of life, seven days of menstrual impurity (nidah) when a man must not have sexual relations with his wife so that man will be careful against uncleanness, seven days must pass before one circumcises his son on the eighth day to signify that man will circumcise his heart of the evil inclination, seven days for purification of leprosy to signify the purification of death, seven days of fullness of the priests before the Lord, seven times seven years until the Jubilee year.
Abravanel also gives many other examples of seven in the Bible. All this is to cause man to number his days carefully and go through his life in wisdom and knowledge and not in idleness.

11. Work is prohibited on the first and last day of the holiday to signify that man does no work when he comes into the world at birth and at the end of his life.

12. People are permitted to prepare food on the first and last day since preparation of food on the first day signifies that the newborns must learn Torah and Mishnah, which is food for their souls, and preparation of food on the last day signifies the old men must make provisions for going on their way and completing their soul at the end of their lives.

13. The commandment of eating matzah instructs man not to give in to the evil inclination which is symbolized by the leaven.

14. The guarding of the matzah from the time of the grinding symbolizes man’s obligation to guard against the evil inclination which begins with his grinding the matters of the world after his fourteenth birthday.

15. The measuring of the dough signifies that man should carefully monitor his behavior.

16. Matzah and morar should be eaten together to signify the conquering of the evil inclination and yielding to material things. Man can drive out such bitterness by conquering his evil inclination.

17. The sacrifice of the paschal lamb signifies the loss of the body on death and the separation of the soul from the body on death.

18. The eating of the paschal lamb at the Temple refers to the biblical passage that tells us there will be a paschal lamb sacrifice to the Lord at the altar of the Lord.

19. The consumption of the paschal lamb at night signifies the time of death.

20. The paschal lamb is only eaten until midnight, since man consists of two parts, his body and his soul. Since midnight is midway through the night, this represents the one of the two halves of man - the body. Since man’s body is physical and the soul is not physical, nothing physical can be eaten after midnight.

21. The paschal lamb is eaten whole since at the time of his death, man dies with all his organs.

22. The paschal lamb is eaten with designated persons to signify the friendship of a man’s relatives and friends during his life.

23. The paschal lamb is eaten roasted so that its smell will be scattered in the atmosphere, analogous to a man’s good name spreading at the time of his death. Abravanel quotes Song of Songs: “Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance (S. of S. 1:2).”

24. The four sons represent the four stages of a man’s life-youth, adolescence, maturity, and old age.
25. Four cups of wine are drunk to represent the four stages of a man’s life. From these four cups, man drinks his life.

25. All of the discussion in the conclusion of the commentary explains that the haggadah instructs man about his creation, valuing the number of his years, guarding the purity of his behavior, conquering his evil inclination and material passions and perfecting his soul. The Bible instructs us that “it is necessary for every man to see himself as if he went out from Egypt (Ex. 12:13)” to teach us that the Exodus and the holiday is the root of all commandments and the guide for our lives.

26. From the second day of Passover we are commanded to immediately count the seven weeks to Shavuot, the holiday for the giving of the Torah. This signifies the spiritual completeness man must receive in his seventy years (seven weeks) which spiritual completeness is represented by the revelation of Torah at Shavuot. Shavuot is followed by the seven days of Succot, the holiday of the Ingathering, which represents the gathering of man’s deeds in the world and directs him to pay attention to the limitations of his days.

F. Translation of the Conclusion of Zevach Pesach.

Below is my translation of the manuscript of Abravanel’s commentary and the printed version. The manuscript adds biblical references to the printed text in nine places in parentheses. These biblical references in the manuscript are identified by the biblical book and chapter, but not by the verse. I have underlined these manuscript references in my translation and added the verse designation. Where the biblical references are made in the printed text and not cited, I have added the citations to my translation in parentheses. I have also added explanatory notes to the text in parentheses or footnotes. The first three lines of the conclusion were not included in the manuscript.

("Conclusion of the Article.

The wise men of truth have already written that the Divine commandments, in addition to what is stated about their performance in illuminated remarks, laws and the reasons actually mentioned about them in the Torah, that there are in these matters additional hints and revealing remarks about these elevated matters as well as precious knowledge from nature as it actually exists)

(Here the manuscript begins) and for the improvement of humanity to attain its perfection, “This one no less than the other was God’s doing.” (Lam. 7:14) and. therefore it is proper for you, a thoughtful, sensitive reader that you should say in your heart why did God, may he blessed, choose to take out his people out from Egypt in the month of the spring and not on one of the remaining seasons of the year? And why did he prohibit the chometz and made this prohibition very strict, for it is said. “For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be shall be cut off” (from the community of Israel). (Ex. 12:19) And why did He command on the fourteenth day to search for chametz with the light of the lamp and all the laws of the search and the rinsing with boiling water of vessels that our sages of blessed memory mentioned? And why is chametz forbidden for the days of the festival, seven days, and not (just) one day, like the giving of the Torah? And why on the first day and last is it forbidden to work but not the preparation of food for everyone to eat? And (why) on the remainder of the days it is not prohibited (to work)? And why did He command the making of the matzah and all its guarding, purity, milling, and measuring of the dough? And why did he teach about the maror and the paschal lamb? Why do we not eat the paschal lamb in the gates (of the city) as the matzah but only in the House of the Lord? “And a living one should take it to heart ”(Lam. 7:2) And why is (roasted with)its head. legs and entails? (Ex. 12:9) And why is it eaten only at night? And why is it only eaten
And there are elevated wisdom and wondrous hints in (these) matters that are appropriate for me to delve into here in order to perfect the work and (God has provided) a hidden hand to seek in them the straight path and truthful sayings, so that in the end they will be remember by every man by the end of this article. And it is said that the root of all of these things are proper for a superior intellect and the days (of such persons) will end in goodness and their years in pleasantness and they will be meticulous about their time so that they will not waste (their time) in disgrace and shame but rather in completing their souls. For the days of the years of man and his life that is the path they must take to complete their souls. As it is said in the Mishnah [Pirkei Avot 4:22], "Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than the whole etc." in the world to come and better is one hour of bliss in the world to come than the whole life of this world). And Rabbi Meir said, "Engage less in business and occupy yourself in the study of Torah" [Pirkei Avot 4:12], which is to say do not let one's time go out in insignificant things, but rather (use your time) to draw yourself closer to God. As it is written, "And you shall meditate on them day and night" (Jos. 1:8). And in order that time does not slip away before his eyes, the Divine Wisdom sees fit to arouse man about His mitzvot with regard to the shortness of his days and the number of his years so that this (lesson) will be always in front of his eyes. According to the statement of Rabbi Tarfon (Pirkei Avot 2:20), "The day is short, the task is great, the laborers are idle."

And to open his eyes, God created His world in seven days and that within them He made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day, He rested and was refreshed in order that man know and understand that the days of his years are 70 years, and that they (should) not go out in emptiness and confusion but rather in well chosen deeds as did the deeds of their creator. And on the seventh day, He rested and ceased His deeds in the world in order to teach and guide humanity in the truth of his matters. For the Holy One, blessed be He, wishes to earn merit for Israel and to take them (Israel) as His treasured people (and for that reason) He performed the Exodus of Egypt and commanded them about the mitzvah which will awaken in everyone the matter of his creation, his days, his life, and the day of his death.

For behold, the nation (Israel) was in Egypt, a nation (Israel) that the Lord of Hosts, blessed their seed, their children, their offspring, and their ancestors. They were there "in dire straits" (Deut. 28:53), "in darkness and gloom" (Joel 2:2), "as those long dead" (Ps. 143:3). like the embryo that sits in his mother belly, to the nation's soul was hewn from under the Throne of Glory, and there (in the womb), it (the physical body) was lacking completeness and "wallowing in its blood" (Ezek. 16:6).

And just like in a completely similar matter, Rabbi Simili’s article, great is its wisdom and more precious its flowery language, states "to what may an embryo be compared in its mother's womb, to a ledger that is folded and laid down and its two hands rest on its two temples, and its two armpits rests on his two ankles, its two heels rest against its two buttocks and its head lies between its knees, its mouth is closed and its navel is open and a lamp is lit above its head, etc. (B. Nidah 30 b). And just as stated in Perek Hamephalet (B. Nidah Chapter 3 dealing with non-liquid discharges by a woman) and just as the newborn does not come out into the air of the world without you making him new in the place where he dwells, (and the birth process requires) strong pains and the pangs of childbirth (Hosea 13:13), so when the Holy One, blessed be He, took out Israel from Egypt, He struck Egypt with many blows.
And as the newborn in its coming out to the light of the world will not begin immediately to take gross food, but rather will eat butter and honey until he reaches the level of strength to eat until satisfied. And along with this, he will require education and upbringing and acquiring knowledge in order that he is honest in his deeds to his Father that is in heaven. So was it when Israel went out from Egypt. The Lord made them eat manna for forty years, and He brought them through the desert through education and the learning the Torah, so that afterwards they would know the Lord and be attached to his service. And so the wise scientists (naturalists) have already written that four seasons of the year can be compared to the four periods that measure the life of man. The first time is the spring, which can be compared to childhood, early years, and boyhood. And the summer, which can be compared to the time of adolescence when the moisture will become dried and the heat will increase. And the winter can be compared to the time of older age with the diminishing strength. And therefore, while the morning is cold, the midday is hot and still retains the heat of the summer and of adolescence. And the autumn can be compared to the extreme old age and the weakening of strength and its exhaustion and therefore is without cold, heat, or moisture. And therefore, from this aspect, the Lord chose that the Exodus from Egypt would be in the month of spring because this is analogous to the coming out into the light of the world (the birth of the child) and the days of his beginning to understand and to acquire knowledge and therefore this month is for us the first of the months to imply the first of our days and our years.

Indeed, the prohibition of the chametz teaches about the urge of material passions for the chametz and the dough are evil. They are the evil inclination that the sages, blessed be their memory, called the leavening of the dough, and therefore the Almighty commanded that in all sacrifices, they would not offer as sacrifices any leaven or any dough or honey because the leaven and the honey and the sweet things in life are the animal (urges), blessed be his people. And therefore it is said that anyone who eats chametz (during Pesach) will cut off his soul because the chametz is the evil inclination that destroys and cuts off the soul from its source (the place from which it was hewn).

And it (the chametz) will cease on the fourteenth day to signify that the first fourteen years of a man’s life do not contain the obligation to obey the mitzvoth (they are not punishable) not in the heavenly court or the earthly court. And from that point forward, he shall on himself the yoke of the mitzvoth and cease and nullify the evil inclination and the leaven and the dough.

And it is to this that the Amorim were directed when they said {B. Pesachem 2:1A} on the night of the fourteenth day, we search for the chametz by the light of a lamp, because this is the appropriate light to search for the chametz that is in the behavior of man and the thoughts of his heart that are under his control and to awaken within him the intelligence at the end of the (first) two seven year periods (in his life). And as it is said in {Proverbs 20 ( : 27)}"The lifebreath of man is the lamp of the Lord revealing all his innermost parts." And the master of language, the sharp-witted one from the pure mountain, Rabbi Yedayah the Sepharadi: "My heart, my heart, the Torah and man (when in union) form a divine light (are the lamp of God) on earth (the Torah is the flame that reflects from the celestial fire, emanating from the source of light). Man in his two parts forms the lamp (His back is the wicking of the wick), etc." And how much (more) is it required to be careful with this lamp when it comes to go with it to inspect with it the cracks and crevices that are hidden within the innermost parts (of man) that this light be moderate and appropriate, not so strong the it will burn the house and abuse the body by distancing (one from) food and drink and physical things in general and not so weak that it will not suffice to discover the hidden sins.

30 Quote is from Bechinat Olam by Yedaya ben Abraham Bedersi (Ha-Penini) who lived in Provence 1280’s-ca 1340.
And the rinsing in boiling water of vessels that are changed (made kosher) and the need of their purification also implies that like a man himself, he will make them kosher. And I have already seen it in Maseket Yoma (B. Yoma 86a). R. Matityahu ben Chorash asked R. Elazar ben Azarya in Rome, “Have you heard the four divisions of atonement R. Yishmael expounds?” (R. Elazar) said to him, they are three and repentance is required with each one. If one transgresses a positive commandment and repents, he does not move from there until he is forgiven (the sin is forgiven immediately) and on that it is stated “Turn back, oh rebellious children. I will heal your afflictions” (Jeremiah 3:22) (There are sins for which only repentance is required to gain atonement). If one transgresses a negative commandment, and does repentance, the repentance suspends (punishment) and Yom Kippur atones (for the sin). And on that it is said, “For on this day (Yom Kippur) He shall atone for you to purify you (Talmud states "for all your sins"). If he commits a sin that is punishable by kares or the four sins that are subject to judicial execution and does repentance, repentance and Yom Kippur suspend and suffering purges (the sin). And this it is said, "Then I will punish their iniquity with the rod and their iniquity with plagues” (Ps. 89:33) (indicating that there are some sins that are forgiven only after afflictions have been visited on their transgressor), but if there is within them desecration of the Name, repentance does not have the capacity to suspend (punishment) nor Yom Kippur to atone, nor suffering to purge. Rather all of them (together) suspend and death purges (the sin). “And it was revealed in my ears (said the prophet) by the Lord of Hosts, “This sin will not be atoned for you until you die” (Isa. 22:14). Here the repentance is analogous to the complete idea of purifying and boiling to eliminate the chametz and the leaven and the body.

And know that in all of vessels that have used chametz within them, there are four types of laws as there are (analogous to the four types of sin) within man: 1. One who has not sinned in doing one of all the sins of man that are negative commandments but did not remember to do the positive commandments that cleans the soul and he only sinned in sitting and not doing, and this is the lightest of the sins, and concerning this, it will be easiest to pardon with remorse and repentance and he says he will not move from here until they forgive him. “Turn back, you rebellious children. I will heal your afflictions (Jer. 3:22).” And analogous to these type of vessels are those that were used with cold water that are sufficiently rinsed. 2. And there are those who have transgressed a negative commandment, and even thought they are not important in any way, they already made dirty his filthy soul because he will not acquire repentance from it except, like the first type, only on Yom Kippur. And analogous to this are those vessels in which were used chametz and they require scrubbing and rinsing in boiling water. 3. And there are those who transgressed the (commandment for which one received the penalty of) cutting off and the four death penalties of the court, and increases his sins through the serious transgressions. And the person who is like this one, repentance and the Yom Kippur do not clean him, only with suffering (is he cleansed). (This is) analogous to vessels which were only exposed to the light itself, for it is not sufficient for them until it comes to the actual fire (until exposed to actual flames). 4. And there is a fourth degree more severe from all of them and it is the sin of desecration of the Name, that he will not acquire for himself (repentance) but with (his) death. An example of (this is) a clay vessel in which was used chametz (which) is forbidden in every case and they cannot receive any repair and they require shattering and hiding away. And concerning this the prophet said (Lam. 4:2), ”The precious children of Zion; once valued as gold-Alas, they are accounted as earthen pots, work of a potter’s hands,” which is to say there is nothing in them other than breaking. And it is said (Jer. 22:25, Is this man Coniah a wretched broken pot, a vessel no one wants?"

Behold, it is explained from this why the chametz and the leaven are prohibited and why they are searched and forbidden in the first place and the boiling of vessels that would be used on the

31 The manuscript erroneously cites this as “(Isaiah 5)”. Isaiah 5:9 contains the words, “In my ears by the Lord of Hosts”, but does not contain the remainder of the biblical phrase.
fourteenth to signify the years of man that after his fourteenth (year), he must guard against it.

And indeed he is commanded to prohibit it (chametz) for seven days, for it is the number of days that signify the days of the years of man which are seventy years and to signify by this that many sevens come in the commandments, among them the seven days of the wedding ceremony in order that within them man will remember (by) the amount (number of times) of circling the bride, the days that will pass for him in his life and that will be given to his to his heart he will be aware) that the days of his years shall be seventy, and after the wedding ceremony, it is necessary for man to observe the nedah (menstrual period) seven days in order to teach you that in all his days he will be careful against uncleanness and he will seek cleanliness. After this, when a male son will be born, He commanded that after seven days have passed for him, he will circumcise his foreskin to signify on this itself that he wishes to say that he will circumcise the foreskin of his heart and his (evil) inclination. And therefore, this number also came in the purification of leprosy and the purification of (exposure to) death. And seven days of fullness before the priests of the Lord, and His warnings about the fallow years and the jubilee seven Sabbaths in order that there always be before his eyes the number of his years. And so good is the saying in the Jubilee, "You shall count off seven weeks of years-seven times seven years etc. (Lev. 25:8)." And He wanted in your exact counting of yourself that the portion of years be guarded in addition to the days of youth that are not obligated to a heavenly court (not subject to punishment). And also in the rest of the matters in which the number (seven) is always mentioned. It is said "For in seven days time I will make it rain...(Gen. 7:4)" and finish and complete seven days: "When seven days had passed after the Lord struck the Nile (Ex. 7:25)." "Wait seven days and I will come to you (Sam. 1 10:8)." "By seven roads they shall flee from you (Deut. 28:7)." "Seven times the righteous man fall and gets up (Prov. 24:16)." "In seven no harm shall reach you (Job 5:19)." "You are to accept these seven ewes from me.(Gen. 21:29)." "Sevenfold for your sins (Lev. 26: 18, 24, and 28)." "And therefore there will be seven days of mourning (cf. Gen. 50:10)." And many other sevens come in the Holy Books. And all cause man to remember that the number of his days will cease in order that he will strive to walk on his journeys in wisdom, intelligence, and knowledge. And he will not spend his days in idleness. Behold, for this itself are the days of the prohibition of chametz seven to signify that the days of the years of our life are seventy and that (we should) cease in them all chametz and all leaven.

And is on the first and last day forbidden to work (which is analogous to) man in his birth, in his beginning to come into the world of his life, (when he) does no work and also in his extreme old age and the days of his maturity he almost does not exist in relation to the work of the world but those days but he will do "what every person is to eat" (Ex. 12:16), which would not be (equivalent) to the manner of labor and work of youth and newborns because their education in the Torah and the Mishnah, that will be the food for their souls. And so for the old man at the end of his years, it is not appropriate that he busy himself with other matters other than with the preparations of provisions for his way and the completion of his soul. And this is "what every person is to eat." (Ex. 12:16-dealing with not working on the first and last day of Pesach but allowing people only to prepare food "for what a person is to eat"). Indeed, the days in the middle, they are days of doing (working).

And behold, the commandment of the matzah signifies the guiding of man in his life that it will be innocent and pure without the evil inclination and the leavening in the dough and therefore the holy ones warned man about guarding the matter of the mitzvah from the hour of grindin. That is the time that man begins to turn to and to grind after matters of this world and therefore from this it is necessary (that one) guard.

And they also warned about the leavening of the dough that man should measure his dough and his behavior in the usage of his body and its severity with weights and measurements.

And the Torah commands that along with matzah, maror should be eaten to signify the conquering of
the (evil) inclination and the yielding to material things, because in this man will drive out bitterness and matters of grief because this same bitterness his body will feel in conquering of his (evil) inclination and the sweetening his soul.

And indeed the matter of the paschal lamb will signify the loss of the body and the separation of the soul from it. And thus it is eaten on the matzah and the maror because when death comes on good behavior and bitterness of conquering the (evil) inclination, there will be the paschal lamb sacrifice to the Lord and there will be the slaughter of it next to the altar of the Lord.

And its eating and destruction in the holy place and its consumption at night shall signify the time of death.

And until midnight because it is one-half of the make-up (composition of man). The other half is attributed to the soul and there is not found in it any physical thing.

And as the paschal sacrifice signifies the body of man and its loss, therefore its leg (lower thigh) and its innermost parts is analogous to a man at the time of his death with all of his organs. (Note paschal lamb is eaten whole before midnight.)

And it is eaten with his selected ones to signify the friendship of his relatives and friends in his life.

And it should be eaten only roasted with its smell scattered to signify he should have a good name on the day of his death. As it is said in (Song of Sgs. 1(2) "Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance". And also that there should be in this sacrifice a pleasant smell to the Lord which will go up with its smoke to the heavens. And the good smell will return to the God that gave it.

Accordingly, there was a paschal lamb that teaches about death and the loss of body. He commanded that it should be eaten at the last seven (the last of seven periods in a man's life) and they should not eat any of it afterwards for it is the end of every man and the final step in (his ) walk.

And accordingly, the life of man, as mentioned by the doctors, are to be included in the four sons - youth, adolescence, maturity, and old age. And as I mentioned before, therefore (the Rabbis) decreed the drinking of the four cups. And from these four cups, man drinks his life.

And everything is explained from this, all of it, that the counting (numbers) within the holiday signify the creation of man, his life, the number of his, and the purity of his behavior, the conquering of the (evil inclination) and the suffering of his body and the completion of his soul and his glorious end before HaShem.

And therefore it was a holiday (dedicated) to God throughout the generations (cf. Ex. 12:13). And the holy ones said, "It is necessary for man to see himself as if he went out of Egypt." Accordingly, there (the reference to seeing himself as if he went out from Egypt) teaches and signifies the exodus and the holiday, all of its laws and statutes, will include every man in every generation. Therefore, the going out of Egypt is the root of all the commandments and the remainder of the holidays for the rest of our lives (ceasing of our days).

And therefore, we are commanded to continue immediately to count the seven weeks, for they are exactly the divisions of man and the limits of his time. As (Moses) said, "You shall count for yourself from the day after the Sabbath....they shall be seven complete weeks." (cf. Lev. 23:15). Accordingly, that number teaches about the days of his life, that all of them should be to reach for spiritual completeness that we received with the giving ot the Torah and this (occurred) on one day to teach
about the unity of the Giver, blessed be He, and the gift (the Torah). And this signifies itself that the days of man and his years come also in Succot, which is call the Holiday of the Ingathering (Ex. 34:22), which is about the gathering of man from this world as he(Moses) said, " And you shall gather your deeds" (Ex. 23:16). And the periods of the seven days of the holiday and the seven circles on the seventh day. This all comes to remember the days of the world, the years of generation to generation, in order that man should pay attention (place them on his eyes) and his life will give to his heart to these physical matters to remember the fleeting days (of his life) and to be meticulous with his soul on the accounting of his time because its end is near and the scarcity of the fruit of the holiday teaches him this also.

Behold, I provided for each of in these commandments a hint of what is honorable and true in these matters, and it is a straight path for man to walk before the Lord in the land of the living. And here completes what I wished to explain in this. And praise be to God who straightened His path before me and shone His glory upon me. And I completed it in the city of Monopli, district of Hapoliah that is under the kingdom of Napolish on the 14th day Erev Pesach 1496 to the happiness of Jacob. Amen. Amen.