

IN SIGNUM BENEVOLI AFFECTUS II.
MENASSEH BEN ISRAEL'S ALBUM INSCRIPTION
FOR JOHANN HEINRICH HOTTINGER

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In our article '*In Signum Benevoli Affectus I*'¹ we presented seven inscriptions by Menasseh ben Israel in as many *alba amicorum*. Since then one further album containing such an inscription has come to light.² Dated 1640, this inscription is the earliest known so far. The album belonged to Johann Heinrich Hottinger the elder, who was born in Zurich on March 10, 1620. During his *peregrinatio academica* he was a student in Geneva, France, Groningen (with, among others, the famous Oriental scholar, Jacobus Alting), and, as of May 12, 1640, Leyden, from where he was apparently quick to start visiting Menasseh in Amsterdam on several occasions. After his studies, as of 1642, Hottinger obtained professorships of Church History and Hebrew in Zurich, Heidelberg and again Zurich, where he died on June 5, 1667. Together with the Buxtorfs (elder and younger) he is seen as the founding father of Oriental studies in Switzerland.³ Hottinger's album amicorum is kept in the Zentralbibliothek of Zurich [Ms. D 207ac].⁴ The inscription by Menasseh is on folio 56r.

¹ F. Postma and A. Verheij, '*In Signum Benevoli Affectus I*. Seven Album Inscriptions by Menasseh ben Israel,' *Zutot* 6.1 (2009) 35–47.

² We thank Dr Ruth Häusler of the Zentralbibliothek, Zurich, for her kind cooperation.

³ Of his many works we mention J.H. Hottinger, *Grammatica quatuor linguarum Hebraicae, Chaldaicae, Syriacae et Arabicae harmonica* (Heidelberg 1659).

⁴ E. Gagliardi, *Katalog der Handschriften der Zentralbibliothek Zürich, II: Neuere Handschriften seit 1500* (Zurich 1937) col. 440; E. Herold-Zollikofer, *Libri amicorum (Stammbücher) der Zentralbibliothek und des Schw[eizerischen] Landesmuseums in Zürich* (Neuchatel 1939) 17.

[Ital.] He who has time, and wastes it, never regains it.⁷

[Dedication] I wrote this in honour of the most intelligent and virtuous *Señor* Johann Heinrich Hottinger, a lover of the letters. Amsterdam, July 19th, 1640. Menasseh ben Israel.

Conforming to the general scheme, the inscription has two parts, one consisting of several proverbs, and another which is the personal dedication. Apparently, Menasseh had a stock of edifying quotations: the first three recur in the other inscriptions,⁸ only the fourth, Italian proverb is unique in the corpus known so far. Furthermore, the dedication is in Spanish, unlike the other inscriptions that all have Latin dedications.⁹

Note by Hottinger

What makes this *Albumblatt* particularly interesting is the fact that Hottinger has added a note in Latin on Menasseh. This note has no date and it is preceded by a biblical phrase in Arabic.¹⁰

لا تنتقم ولا تحفظ

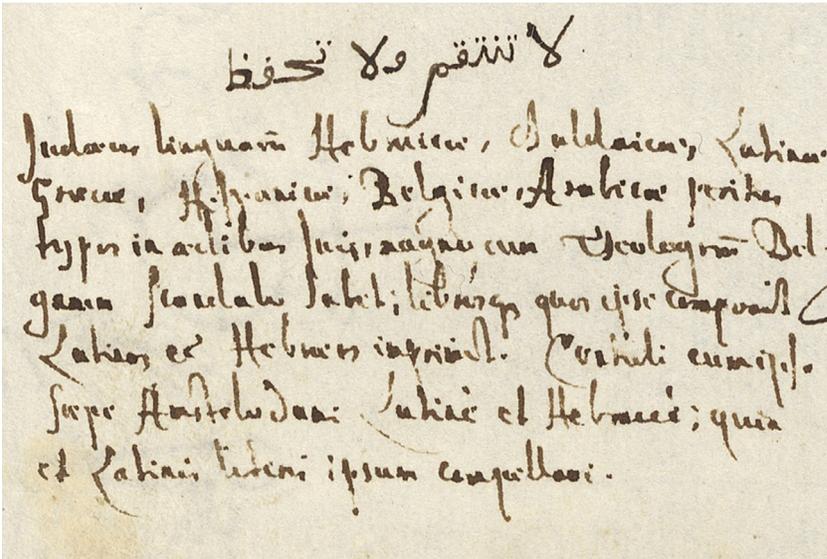
Judaeus linguarum Hebraicae, Chaldaicae, Latinae, Graecae, Hispanicae, Belgicae, Arabicae peritus typos in aedibus suis, magno cum Theologorum Belgarum scandalo habet, librosque quos ipse componit Latinos et Hebraeos imprimit. Contuli cum ipso saepe Amstelodami Latine et Hebraice, quia et Latinis literis ipsum compellavi.

⁷ H.P. Jones, *Dictionary of Foreign Phrases and Classical Quotations*. New and Revised Edition (Edinburgh 1929) 410, quoting the Italian as: chi tempo ha, e tempo aspetta, tempo perde.

⁸ Cf. Postma and Verheij, *In Signum Benevoli Affectus I*: for Pirçe Avot 4.21, Árkosi; for Shabbath 31a, Meisner, Pauli, and Árkosi; for spe, Gerhard and Zollikofer.

⁹ Note the Latinized forms 'ingeniosissimo virtuosissimo' and 'Joh. Henrico Hottingero.'

¹⁰ The album contains several such Latin notes, but no further Arabic. Still, in view of its handwriting (cf. Postma and Verheij, *In Signum Benevoli Affectus I*, Meisner), its position on the page, the fact that Menasseh in his other known inscriptions does not quote the Bible, and would have done so probably in Hebrew, we are convinced that the Arabic phrase was not written by Menasseh, but by Hottinger himself.



Close-up of Hottinger's own note.

[Arab.] *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear [any grudge].*¹¹

[Lat.] A Jew, well versed in Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, Greek, Spanish, Dutch and Arabic. In his premises he has his own typefaces, with which he prints Latin and Hebrew books that he composes himself—causing great scandal among the Dutch theologians. In Amsterdam I often spoke Latin and Hebrew with him, since I also wrote letters to him in Latin.

The phrase, *magno cum ... scandalo* may refer to the scandal that followed the publication in 1635 of Menasseh's work *De Creatione Problemata Triginta*. It is not unlikely that the episode was mentioned during the conversations between Menasseh and Hottinger.¹² The passage from

¹¹ The first words of Leviticus 19:18. The Arabic phrase coincides with that passage in Saadia Gaon's translation as published by Th. Erpenius, *Pentateuchus Mosis Arabice* (Leyden 1622), but lacks the object, عداوه (enmity, 'grudge'). Note that the verse is often mentioned in connection with Hillel's Golden Rule, quoted here by Menasseh (cf. J. Buxtorf Jr., *Florilegium hebraicum, continens Elegantes sententias, Proverbia, Apophthegmata, Similitudines [...]* [Basel 1648] 236, 358).

¹² The scandal was actually caused by the 'polished Latin epigram in praise of the work' (C. Roth, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel. Rabbi, Printer, and Diplomat* [Philadelphia 1934] 152) written by the Dutch scholar Barlaeus, to the outrage of orthodox Protestant theologians. Cf. also A. Offenbergh, *Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657): Een biografische schets* (Amsterdam 2000) 16.

Leviticus may then be understood as a reflexion on this, some sort of private call for moderation. That Menasseh should have been ‘well versed’ (*peritus*) in Latin, and that the conversations between the two men should partly have been conducted in Latin, is an interesting piece of evidence in the discussion on Menasseh’s mastering of that language.¹³

¹³ Menasseh’s Latin was ‘adequate, if not perfect’, according to Roth (*A Life*, 85); but rather poor, according to Offenberg (*Menasseh ben Israel*, 14, 16, 24).

