Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508)

Rabbi "Don" Isaac Abarbanel (or Abravanel) was born in Lisbon Portugal, in 1437. He was a famous statesman, a very wealthy merchant, a Jewish philanthropist and one of the most illustrious biblical commentators and philosophers.

Abarbanel spent 45 years in Portugal where he loyally served the King of Portugal Alfonso V in all financial matters of the Kingdom.

In 1481 upon the death of the King the new monarch Joao II falsely accused Abarbanel of conspiracy. Abarbanel was able to flee secretly to Spain and all his fortune was confiscated by the new Portuguese King.

In 1483 he established himself in Toledo, Spain. His vast experience in royal matters and state finance was well known in Spain and in a short time his services were requested by the Kings of Castilla. He was in charge of administrating the farm revenues of the Kingdom and to supply provisions for the campaign of the Kings Ferdinand and Isabella against Granada, Islam's last Iberian citadel. Rabbi Abarbanel became again very wealthy and during the war, he advanced considerable sums of his own money to the Kings to support his army .

In 1491 when he learned about the plan to expel the Jews from Spain, Abarbanel made a offer to the Queen: 30,000 ducats (more than 60,000 dollars "nominal value" in that time) to revoke the edict of expulsion. His offer was rejected, but he was given the choice to keep all his privileges as a statesman and his personal wealth if he converted to Christianity. He refused, and in 1492 he left Spain empty handed with his heartbroken and impoverished Jewish brothers.

In 1493 he resettled in Naples, Italy, where he served in the court of Alfonso ll. In 1495 Naples was taken by the French. And Rabbi Abarbanel, bereft of all possessions, followed the young king Alfonso to Messina. From there they resettled in Corfu (today, an island in Greece) and lastly in 1503 he settled in Venice, where his services were employed in negotiating the commercial treaties between Portugal and the Venetian republic in the spices market.

He died in Venice in 1508 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Padua.

Despite his intense, agitated life and multiple exiles Rabbi Abarbanel was a very prolific writer, as we are going to see, BH next week.

Today, 13 of Sivan,
the Jewish Syrian community celebrates *nes moossan*, the day in which a potential blood libel against the community of Aleppo was miraculously averted. As far as I was able to search there is virtually nothing online about it. I invite the readers of

HOTD to share any information about this event to have an online source and ideally, an entry in Wikipedia.
Please, send the information to: rabbibitton@yahoo.com