

## ISAAC CARO IN HIS TIME

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RESUMEN: La principal obra de Isaac Caro, *Toldot Yişhaq*, muestra un carácter decididamente hispano. Su contexto histórico más probable es la mentalidad de judíos y cristianos de la España del s. XV. El autor de este artículo apoya su tesis en peculiaridades lingüísticas y otros detalles menos obvios.

SUMMARY: *Toldot Ishaq*, the major work of Isaac Caro, is a spanish work. Its most probable historical context is the mentality of fifteenth century Spain, Jewish and Christian. The author bases his thesis on linguistic peculiarities and other less obvious characteristis of the work.

### I

As is well known the *Toldot Ishaq*, the major work of Joseph Caro's uncle Isaac Caro, was not printed in Spain but in the Ottoman Empire and Italy; the editio princeps in folio is of Constantinople 1518, later editions are of 1558 at Mantua and Riva di Trento. Similarly, the attention of historians has focused on the non-Spanish or post-Spanish aspects of his life<sup>1</sup>. In the present paper I will try to suggest the possibility of seeing Caro as a man who was formed by a specific cultural milieu in a specific country at a specific time, that is to say, in the war torn Castile of the 1470's and 1480's. As such, I will argue, the most probable historical context for much of the *Toldot Ishaq* is the mentality of fifteenth century Spain, Jewish and Christian. To this effect I shall focus on his own remarks about himself, on certain linguistic peculiarities, on his remarks about Spain. Having thus shown the Spanish character of the work I will then proceed to argue that in some ways the

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1. J. Avida, «The first members of the Caro family in Israel» (Hebrew), *Jerusalem* (ed. M. Ish-Shalom, M.Banayahu, Azriel Schochat (Jerusalem 1953) 129-132; S.A. Rosanes, *History of the Jews of Turkey* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1930) I 95-100 has a few lines on the author's *la'azim* but can only deduce that they show he knew Spanish; A. Ashtor, *History of the Jews of Egypt* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem 1951) ii 511-512; H.Z. Dimitrowsky, «A Dispute between Rabbi Joseph Caro and Rabbi M.Trani», *Sefunot* 6 (1962) 71-124, 73 refers to JTS MS 0348 which contains responsa of Isaac Caro; A. David, «Isaac Caro» (Hebrew) *Sinai* 34 (1970) 367-371; R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Caro* (Oxford 1962) pp.85ff. A.L. Frumkin, *Sefer Toldot Hakme Yerushalayim* (with Introduction and additions by A. Rivlin) (Jerusalem 1928-1930) p. 91, questions Caro's presence in the land of Israel. H.H. Ben Sasson, «Exile and Redemption in the eyes of the exiles from Spain» (Hebrew), *Sefer Baer* (Jerusalem 1961) 216ff; and id., «The generation of the exiles on themselves» (Hebrew), *Zion* 26 (1960) 23-64. E.Gutwirth, «La España de Isaac Caro», *Actas Encuentro Tres Culturas* (Toledo 1988) 51-56.

Spanish milieu may form the background not only to these more obvious and incontrovertible features but also to other, possibly less obvious, characteristics of his work.

As is well known biography, and certainly autobiography is not a genre at which Spanish Jews excelled. There is nothing in Hebrew to compare to Guzman's *Generaciones y Semblanzas* or Pulgar's *Claros Varones* let alone autobiographies in the Renaissance spirit. That is why the short autobiographical fragments or paragraphs that we do find and, perhaps, find more frequently than before, in the generation of the exiles from Spain deserve special attention. In other words the events related by the narrator in a biographical or autobiographical Hebrew text should be seen as particularly important to the narrator as they pierce the decorum of reticence about mere personal events. Thus when the Prologue to Caro's *Toldot Ishaq* pays particular attention to the Iberian phase we should be willing to see this as an expression of the hierarchy of events in the author's consciousness:

Thus says Isaac son of the modest and felicitous Rabbi Joseph Caro *the Spaniard from the town of Toledo*. All my life I grew amongst great scholars... *there in the famous and great Castile I taught the Torah...* and it happened that ...the leaders of the communities of the kingdom of Portugal asked me to teach the Torah amongst them. And I lived amongst them (in Portugal) and there we heard about the king of Spain ... how he had expelled all the Jews from his kingdom ... and in all the places where the king's decree was heard there was great mourning amongst the Jews and many converted (to Christianity)... and also the King of Portugal after six years... decreed the conversion of the Jews to Christianity...

The use of Biblical allusion does not by any means detract from the author's expressiveness. Even if much is left to the imagination of the reader and we would certainly have been grateful for more explicit autobiographical information on him, this paragraph certainly shows the place of the Iberian phase in his assessment of his life: Spain was the place where he matured and where he began his teaching career and his professional involvement with expounding the Torah, the object of his book. The tone moreover, leaves no doubt as to his pride in this Iberian phase.

## II

The use of *le'azim* by writers of this generation seems to me to be more noteworthy than has been allowed by writers on the period. This applies not only to Caro but also to Abrabanel and the *Shevet Judah*. The use of words in Spanish *aljamia* to explain concepts for which Hebrew could not provide a satisfactory term, rather than mere translations, are clues to the expected public of the book and, perhaps also, clues to the hispanicity of the author's universe of thought<sup>2</sup>. Here I will use only two examples.

When Caro explains Genesis 45,17: «*And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan*», the exegetical problem is that of the word *ta'anu* of the root *ta'an* which has two meanings: «to pierce through» and «to load». Rashi explained in his laconic way «with grain, produce (*tehu'ah*)» and this explanation of the word according to the meaning «to load» was accepted as late as Gesenius' *Lexicon*. Ibn Ezra on the other hand, thought that there were no two meanings and that the locus classicus for the meaning «to pierce through», the *pu'al* passive used in Is 14,19, was not an independent meaning but derived from the meaning «to load».

Caro follows in the tradition of paying attention to the root *ta'an* but explains:

Hit them with a rod which ends in a fine iron to hit mules which in *la'az* is called *aguijon* (ed. Riva f49)

The *aguijon* used for lashing oxen or mules was part of the daily reality of Caro's Castile. As late as the eighteenth century the Royal Academy's Dictionary gave a definition which sounds like a translation of Caro's words: «Se llama una punta de hierro o acero puesta en el cabo de una vara con que los boyeros y trabajadores pican a los bueyes o mulas para animarlos y que anden aprisa...». So much so that it was turned into a verb: *aguijonear* meaning «to needle or to sting», a verb which we find in such classical works as the *Guzman de Alfarache* f.341: «*que tanto me aguijoneaba la venganza que con espuelas parecia picarme los hijares...*»<sup>3</sup>. It does not seem too fanciful to see in this one of many examples in which the context of Caro's use of *la'az*

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2. On the importance of the use of *le'azim* in Hebrew texts as clues to mentality, see Eleazar Gutwirth, «The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Jewish Historiography», *Festschrift Abramsky* (London 1988) 141-161.

3. *Diccionario de Autoridades* s.v.

is the Spanish reality surrounding him. In any case what emerges quite clearly is that the book is directed towards a Hispanophone audience.

Similarly another expression of his Spanish context is the reference to concrete geographical locations in his native Castile. Thus for example he comments on the verse in Genesis 25,20: «And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebeka to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian». Caro, like other exegetes, has to contend with the question of why there has to be so much detail about Rebekah. In essence Caro does not entirely disagree with Rashi's comment namely that, although Rebekah was the daughter of an evil man and the sister of an evil man and from a place of evil men, she did not learn from their deeds. But Caro uses his knowledge of medicine and explains the excessive detail «according to the three causes of illness namely, inheritance, climate and contagion». When speaking of the second cause, *climate*, Caro writes:

«The climate or the place, that is to say the water or the air of the place are bad. And such is the case in Vera de Plasencia or in the town of Buitrago where the waters and the air cause a hard swelling in the throat (Riva 30b).

The idea that climate may be a cause of illness may, of course, be ultimately traced to Hippocrates but in the Middle Ages Johannitius' *Isagoge* had systematized amongst other Galenic ideas the concept of the six «non naturals», that is factors which can predispose the body to health or disease. One of these was climate.

Caro shows here his interest in an acute awareness of the region which surrounds him, something which is not all that frequent in the authors of homilies or *děrašot* on the Pentateuch of the period. One would be hard pressed to find similar precise geographical references in the *Nahar Pišon* or the *'Olat Šabat* or the *Děrašot* of Shem Tov Ibn Joseph or his father. His mention of Buitrago is of some interest since the first homily in the *Hasde David* (his work still in MS), has a superscription which reads: «And this is the sermon which I, Isaac Caro, pronounced in Magnesia in the year 1508 when they killed Don Solomon ben Ishaq Ha-Cohen of Buitrago». I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of this reference to someone in Caro's circle originating in Buitrago since we have documented evidence of Jews with

the name of Caro in a number of Castilian towns such as Toledo, Salamanca, Segovia, etc<sup>4</sup>.

### III

Another aspect of Caro's particular historic background is that of the Castile of the 1470's and 1480's with its internal and external wars. As is well known the seventies were an epoch of interurban factionalism amounting to civil war. Whether the conversos were the only motive for these dissensions or not is not relevant here. More spectacular must have been the fights between the rival groups over whether Isabella or Joanna were the legitimate heirs to the throne of Henry IV. The situation was an international conflict where Louis XI of France sought, through Alfonso V of Portugal and his Castilian and Italian allies, an unchallengeable position of authority in Italy and the Peninsula. Ferdinand and Isabella could count on the principal strong points and towns of Old Castile and Leon, but Extremadura and the greater part of New Castile followed Juana. Apart from these inner and external wars there was of course the war with Granada.

It is this background which may explain the various points in Caro's commentary where he shows a notable interest in military matters and ethos and much more detailed knowledge of war than one would expect from a member of the non-warring classes. Some examples could bear out this argument.

Caro pays attention to the verse in the blessings to the tribes by Jacob in Deuteronomy 33,20: «And of Gad he said: Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head». Rashi had explained that Gad's victims were known because when cut to pieces by

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4. On Johannitius see Arnaldi de Villanova *Opera Medica Omnia* iii, *De Amore Heroico* (ed. M.R. McVaugh) (Barcelona 1985) p. 32. A. David, *op.cit.*, 371 note 34. F. Cantera Burgos and C. Carrete Parrondo, «La judería de Buitrago» *Sefarad* 32 (1972) 3-87. On Segovia cf. J.A. Ruiz Hernando, *El Barrio de la Aljama Hebrea de la Juderia de Segovia* (Segovia 1980) p. 31, doc. of 22.6.1464: the chaplains of the Cathedral rent a house in the Espolar to Abraham Caro son of Jacob Caro and dona Ucer. An Isaac Caro lives in Coruña del Conde and is married to Urosol who testifies to the tribunal of the Inquisition of the bishopric of Soria on 8.3.1491. See C. Carrete Parrondo, *Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae*, ii (Salamanca 1985) 165, doc. 397; see also P. Leon Tello, *Judíos de Toledo* (Madrid 1979) ii p. 555, doc. 1560: a petition by Cidi Caro Jew of Toledo who on 10.12.1491 claims from an individual of Talavera the items which were taken by the current of a river (?) while passing near Trujillo; The sons of «fiiio Caro» are mentioned in Salamanca on 24.5.1275. See C. Carrete Parrondo, *Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae* i (Salamanca 1981) 97, doc. 199 and p. 96, doc. 198.

the sword they would manage to cut the head and the arm in one blow. Other exegetes do not seem to have paid attention to this phrase. Caro, on the other hand explains that «He that enlargeth Gad» refers not to his territory on the other side of the Jordan, as argued by previous exegetes, but

«enlargeth his sword and he will be able to cut in one blow the arm and the head even if he begins with the arm. And this (in other words this move in swordsmanship) is called a *revés*. And *a fortiore* if he begins with the head».

If my contention is correct Caro's interest and detailed knowledge of swordsmanship and the Castilian terminology of swordsmanship reflects the historical situation in which he matured, that is the context of the last years of the reign of Enrique IV and the first decade/s of Ferdinand and Isabella's reign.

The political situation seems to have left its mark on Caro's thought as well. Thus he shows himself conversant with the political manoeuvring attendant upon the Granadine war or at least the popular gossip surrounding it. Thus Caro expands on the verse in Exodus 1,9-10: «Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land». Caro chooses to comment on this verse at length:

«We must know that the rulers of the town of Málaga committed great treason against the town of Málaga. For they came to an agreement with the King of Spain when he besieged the city in order to attack it and vanquish it. The accord they reached was that the King would let them (i.e. the rulers of the town) leave Málaga in peace with all their goods and they would give him the town. And so they did. It was then that the king turned to the city and made all its inhabitants his serfs and the rulers left...».

The history of Spain is present in Caro as an exemplum of the type of common wisdom which can help one to understand the wisdom of the Bible.

Mediaeval Jews though not belonging to the class of warriors, *militēs*, were less alien to war than their usual image would suggest. I do not refer to the evidence for Jewish soldiers or archers in mediaeval Spain and other European countries, nor to that concerning Jews who defended themselves

from attacks on the *juderías* by the use of weapons<sup>5</sup>. I have in mind rather the observations of the war phenomenon and meditations on or interpretations of armed dissension. On one occasion Caro affirms:

Christians are victorious for one of four reasons; either because they are numerous; or because they have a heroic chief; or because they are pious and in such cases they win by miracle; or else because they know their tactics (*tahbuliim u-ba'ale 'esah*) (Riva f. 133).

Caro is then in the line of *realpolitik* thinking which we may find in ibn Caspi or Pulgar<sup>6</sup> and which seems to point to the observations on war and armies in the *Šebet Judah*. (Although it should be pointed that Caro refers exclusively to Christians). On the Genesis verse «Simeon and Levi were brothers», Caro comments:

«Brothers in arms, as the gentiles say: "*hermanos de armas*"... these are stolen, for Israel has no sword but the name of God» (f.51b).

Elsewhere he writes: «it is a great humiliation to escape in war and a great honour to die in it» (f.52b). There may be even more explicit references to the military reality of Castile. Thus Caro writes:

«All those who go to war with a foreign nation, send before them individuals to see what are the roads and the entrances to the towns... and when these individuals return... they advise the chiefs of the army how to fight... but these spies do not answer anybody's questions, only those of their king or chief who is called in the vernacular *capitán*». (f. 73b).

Such a description accords well with established Castilian institutions such as the *enaciado* or the *adalides*. The *adalid* was usually a Moor, sometimes converted, whose function was to serve as guide to the army. The *Siete Partidas* (ii, xxii, i) describe him as someone who knows the land, knows how to avoid dangerous roads and where the convenient places for encampment (with water, wood, etc) are to be found<sup>7</sup>. The term *enaciado*

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5. B. Dinur «Jewish Traditions of Defense» (Hebrew), *Historical Writings* 2 (Jerusalem 1975) 36-78.

6. S. Pines, «Some views put forward by the fourteenth century Jewish philosopher Isaac Pulgar and some parallel views expressed by Spinoza» (Hebrew), *Studies ...Tishby* (Jerusalem 1986) 395-458, especially p. 437 and the bibliography in the notes.

7. F. Maillo Salgado, «El estatuto jurídico de los adalides en el Derecho de Cuenca-Teruel» *Actas II Congreso... Tres Culturas* (Toledo 1985) 201-08.

(from arabic *nazi*, «to change», «pass») changed its meaning throughout the Middle Ages. From being used in the *Siete Partidas* as a term for Moorish spies it is transformed, in the *Crónica de Alfonso Onceno* of the mid fourteenth century, into a term for both Moorish and Christian spies. These are only a few out of many possible examples of the intensive use of these terms in medieval romance. Caro was not explaining the text by some abstract idea but by an analogy taken from what was a common topic in his surroundings<sup>8</sup>.

#### IV

So far the examples I have given of Caro's hispanicity seem to be quite obvious and leave little room for debate. I should like to submit that there may be a hispanic context for other characteristics namely those connected with style.

As any reader of the *Toldot Ishaq* will soon realize Caro has a particular fondness for commenting on the pericope in hand by means of a series of questions. This is a feature which he shares with other writers of this generation such as Arama and Abarbanel or Shem Tov ben Joseph. It seems reasonable to assume that in Caro as in the others there is some connection between this method and the use of the scholastic *quaestio*. Though by Caro's time the use of the *quaestio* amongst the Christians was quite an ancient form, its use in Christian biblical exegesis seems to begin in the fourteenth century. In Spain it is intensified in the second half of the fifteenth century in the exegetical work of Alfonso Madrigal el Tostado<sup>9</sup>.

Another stylistic feature is the use of exempla or little stories of a realistic or naturalistic type which are related to the writer's everyday surroundings. Out of many examples I could cite one on *Be-har Sinai* where Caro discusses the question of why the punishment for not keeping the commandments of sabbatical rest; *sēmitta* is exile; Caro writes:

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8. F. Maillou Salgado, «Contenido, uso e historia del termino "enaciado"», *Cahiers de linguistique hispanique Medievale* 8 (1983) 157-164.

9. On the history of the *quaestio* and its use in exegesis, see G. Ruiz «Las Introducciones y cuestiones de don Isaac Abravanel» in N. Fernandez Marcos, J. Trebelle, J. Fernandez Vallina (eds), *Simposio Bíblico Español* (Madrid 1983) pp. 707-722 and J. Guttman, *Die religionsphilosophischen Lehren des Abravanel* (Breslau 1916); see also G. Ruiz, *El Comentario a Amós de don Ishaq Abravanel* (Madrid 1984).



It is like the case of Reuven who goes to the judge and says: Simon owes me 10000 *levanim* (i.e. *blancas*, a Castilian coin), so they imprisoned Simeon. After Simeon had been imprisoned, Levi comes to the judge and asks of him not to release Simon until he pays him the thousand *levanim/blancas* which he owes him. Now Levi would not have asked the judge to incarcerate Simon for his debt but now that he sees him in prison he does. And this is called *embargo* in *la'az*<sup>10</sup>.

Another example might be his comment on the verse in Genesis xxxix,3: «And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand». Caro comments on the reason for the verse's emphasis on «his hand»:

It is like a merchant *whom I have seen* whose prosperity and success were so great that by merely extending his hand over textiles and clothes, he was successful. That is why he used to move materials from place to place in his house so that his merchandise should be successful...(ed. Riva di Trento f. 46b; ed. Mantua 1559, 28b).

His second explanation on the verse shows his attentiveness to and perception of the commercial life surrounding him: Merchants tend to keep their merchandise without selling it for two or three months and thus they achieve a profit, but Joseph would achieve profit by selling it «from hand to hand» that is immediately (*ibid.*).

There are many stories and asides such as these in the *Toldot Ishaq* and I think one should consider the possibility of a Spanish context for the use of exempla taken from surrounding everyday life. This would be the context of the increased use of exempla in the sermons of the urban mendicant orders whose popularity in the fourteenth and in the fifteenth century is well attested by the cases of Eiximenes, Vicente Ferrer and Iñigo de Mendoza. Moreover, what is quite clear in late mediaeval Spain is that the technique of exempla which is used in the sermon is influential and transferred to a variety of other genres. In the fifteenth century Juan Manuel's works show this influence as has been noted by Maria Rosa Lida de Malkiel<sup>11</sup>. Closer in time to our author is the *Corbacho* of the Arcipreste de Talavera whose use

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10. *Autoridades* s.v.

11. M.R. Lida de Malkiel, «Tres notas sobre don Juan Manuel», *Romance Philology* iv (1950-1) (repr. in ) *Estudios de Literatura española y comparada* (Buenos Aires 1966) 92-133.

of exempla has been particularly studied by von Richthofen<sup>12</sup>. It would similarly be worth examining the use of proverbs in the *Toldot Ishaq* and see whether they may be related to the particularly Spanish vogue for proverbs and the use of proverbs in a number of differing genres.

Thus, for example Caro uses a proverb (Riva, 49a) «as is commonly said: thieves are hanged not because they stole but because they did not know how to steal». Another one is «Those who console the bereaved say to them: "that which time does, reason does"». The meaning is simply that with the passing of time the ways of appraising events change<sup>13</sup>.

## V

Caro like many of his predecessors in exegesis has the task of explaining the connexion between the Pentateuchal chapters which treat the case of the adulterous woman and those on the nazirite who abstains from wine. Caro explains that the man who sees the adulterous woman being punished will lose his carnal appetites. But Caro does not limit himself to this traditional explanation. He dilates the theme and writes:

As the medical scholars have said, in order to cure the malady of the young man who desires a young woman, one must find an old woman. She must be ugly and shameless. She must revile the beloved. She is to wear rags and must carry a rag soaked in menstrual blood under her breast. She should approach the lover and revile the beloved, saying that she urinates in bed, that she is epileptic (?), that she falls, that she foams at the mouth, that her body is covered in wounds and calluses and other imperfections and that she has bad breath. And if after all this his desire for her is not broken, the old woman must take out from under her breast the rag soaked in menstrual blood and place it before his eyes and say: «thus is your beloved» (Caro, *Toldot Ishaq*, ed. Riva di Trento, 101b).

Caro here is using certain ideas which were current in mediaeval medical thought. He understands the traditional connection between the adulterous

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12. E. von Richthofen, «Alfonso de Toledo und sein Archipreste de Talavera, ein kastilisches Prosawerk des 15 Jahrhunderts», *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, lxi (1941) 417-537.

13. On the use of proverbs amongst mediaeval Spanish Jewry and its background see Eleazar Gutwirth, «An unknown medieval aljamiado manuscript of gnomic verse», in *Colloquium Hierosolymitanum Litterae Judaearum in Terra Hispanica*, Jerusalem (in press). «What time does, reason does» is a proverb for which the source usually given is the *Hut Ha-Shani* of R. Bacharach, 112,2. Caro antedates this.

woman and the nazirite as being related to ideas on the imagination. Indeed mediaeval physicians had tied mental activity to such illnesses as melancholy. Caro's example, that of the «malady of the young man who desires a woman» was a classical example of the powers of the imagination. A long tradition of medical writing had been devoted to what Chaucer termed «the lover's malady/of Hereos<sup>14</sup>».

But to the concern of Galen or Constantine the African, Avicenna's *Canon* had added his recommendation of finding a horrible old woman (*vetule*) to tell the patient disgusting stories about his beloved as dramatically and as forcefully as possible.

This technique for therapy was widely repeated in the Middle Ages. Hence the use of an old woman and the use of her facundity to cure the «lover's malady». These elements are part of a tradition well established in the Peninsula. They were present in Avicenna as has been seen; Arnald of Villanova had written a *Tractatus de amore heroico* (1280's) in the fourth chapter of which he recommended emphasizing the ugliness of the desired object<sup>15</sup>; in the *Lilio de la Medicina* the Spanish translation of Bernard of Gordon's work (begun 1303, completed 1305) the Montpellier master recommends (though only as a last resort) the practice of using a dirty repulsive old woman to convince the patient that «*talis est amica tua, talis*» a phrase which is present in the *Toldot Ishaq*<sup>16</sup> and by Caro's time they were included in Francisco López de Villalobos' *Sumario de la Medicina* (1498). Most relevant is Márquez Villanueva's emphasis on the relation between such beliefs and the work which appeared a few years after the Expulsion, the *Celestina*. For Márquez it is through such beliefs that «Spain first became aware of a situation in which all love, licit and illicit, necessitated the professional services of a third party». It is in Spain that the go between has seen its literary culmination through its crucial role in such masterpieces as the *Book of Good Love* (1330-1343 or in *La Celestina* where the go

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14. J.L. Lowes, «The lover's Maladye of Hereos», *Modern Philology* 11 (1913-1914) 491-546; Hjalmar Crohns, «Zur Geschichte der Liebe als "Krankheit"», *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 3 (1905) 66-86; Massimo Ciavolella, *La «Malattia d'Amore» dall'Antichità al Medioevo* (Roma 1976).

15. Arnaldi de Villanova *Opera Medica Omnia* iii, *De Amore Heroico* (ed. M.R. McVaugh) (Barcelona 1985).

16. Mc Vaugh p.33.

between achieves a «surprising transcendence to a sphere akin to that of myth»<sup>17</sup>. Both Caro and the author of the *Celestina* share chronological simultaneity, connections with the Toledan region, and an interest in the theme of the old woman as intermediary between the lovers.

To summarize: the evidence of linguistic usage, geographic references, interest in and observation of war and politics all attest to the strong perhaps primarily hispanic mentality exhibited in the *Toldot Ishaq*. It might therefore follow that a historic appraisal of the background of the *Toldot Ishaq* should also consider the Spanish background when analyzing stylistic features for which other antecedents might be offered.

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17. F. Márquez Villanueva, «*La Celestina* as Hispano-Semitic Anthropology», *Révue de Littérature Comparée* 4 (1987) 425-453, p. 429.