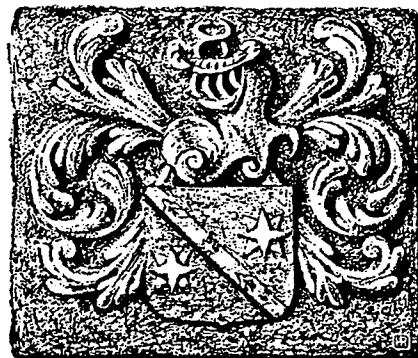


THE ABRAVANEL FAMILY NEWSLETTER

"Basta mi nombre que es Abravanel"



Issue No. 3
May 1988

AND QUIET FLOWS THE "DON"*

David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of Israel, called the novel "one of the most despicable books about Jews ever to be written by anyone of Jewish origin." Ben-Gurion's statement was likely engendered by the "anti-Zionism" found in many parts of this masterpiece, Doctor Zhivago, written by the great Russian author Boris Pasternak. Pasternak, although born a Jew, gravitated toward the Russian Orthodox Church in the later years of his life.

Pasternak's father, Leonid Pasternak, was a famous artist of Moscow, whose paintings hang in many collections, including the Tel Aviv Art Museum. A retrospective of his work is only now concluding at the Jewish Museum in New York City.

Although not strictly observant, Leonid Pasternak was proud of his Jewish origins, emphasizing that among the Pasternak ancestors was Don Isaac Abravanel. Both Leonid and Boris referred to a family geneology which reported that the Pasternaks of Odessa, Russia were descended from Sephardic Jews that settled in Southern Russia in the eighteenth century, rather than from Ashkenazy Jews of central or eastern Europe.

References to their Abravanel lineage peppered their correspondence. In a letter to Boris written in 1924, for example, Leonid commiserated with his son over the abuse Boris endured from his cousin, Olga Freidenberg, the daughter of Leonid's sister. As if to excuse the attitudes of his niece, Leonid attributed her behavior to her heritage, explaining that it was typical of "the proud priestly scions of Abarbanel."

*While the novel with this title was written by Mikhail Sholokhov, and not Boris Pasternak, the editor could not resist the pun.

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ON THE STREETS WHERE WE LIVE

Readers who have travelled to Israel will know that streets in many cities are named after Don Isaac Abravanel. If you go to the old section of Tel Aviv (that part that was populated in the first few decades after the founding of the city), you will find Rehov Abravanel (referred to as "Rehov Abarbanel" on most street maps), a dirty, dusty street with light industrial shops, such as the "Abravanel Metalworking Shop," from which a street sign was purchased.

Tel Aviv has other Abravanel namesakes. The school children of Tel Aviv will ask their playmates who are acting in a silly or crazy manner, "Are you going to the Abravanel," meaning, of course, the Abravanel Hospital for the Insane, located to the south of Tel Aviv.

A more idyllic setting for the Abravanel name can be found in Jerusalem, where Rehov Abravanel (again known as "Rehov Abarbanel" on most maps) runs through the beautiful residential neighborhood of Rehavia. The street sign for the Jerusalem location is set forth to the right of this paragraph. This sign was "liberated" from Rehov Abravanel in 1983 and now resides in Portland, Oregon. The "liberator" recently eased "the gnawing of the worm of conscience" (as one observer jokingly described) by making a contribution to The Jerusalem Foundation, which funds projects for the betterment of the City. Contributions may be sent to 500 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1625, New York, NY 10110, or in Israel to P.O.B. 1312, Jerusalem 91012.



Another Jerusalem landmark that bears the Abravanel name is the library of the International B'nai B'rith office. The library was founded in 1891 with a donation from a wealthy Sephardic Jew, who wished to honor the name of Abravanel.

During a recent visit to Israel, the editor of this newsletter was pleased to meet Saul Abarbanel, a professor of mathematics at Tel Aviv University, who confirms that there are many Abarbanels, Abravanel and the like living in Israel.

STUDY OF THE ABRAVANELS

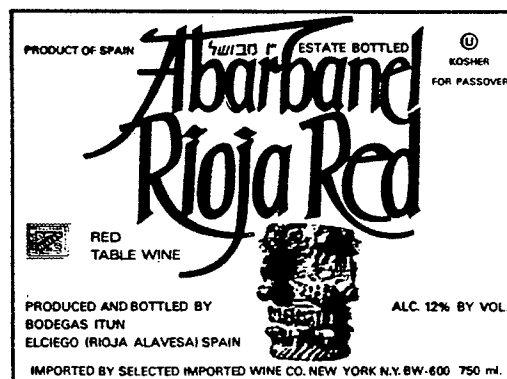
JANE AMLER LEWIS (see Issue No. 2) has informed the Newsletter that she has been commissioned by the American Jewish Archives to write a chapter about the Abravanel family members to complete questionnaires to provide information for that project.

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THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

Many readers may have noticed that for a period of time, wine stores had available "Abarbanel" wine (both red and white varieties). This wine was estate bottled in Spain by "Bodegas Itun." After some searching, the Newsletter has discovered that the wine was produced by Bodegas Domecq, S.A. of Elciego, Alava, Spain, a large producer of Spanish wines for domestic and foreign consumption. Xabier Elizalde, a spokesperson for Domecq, explained to the Newsletter that Domecq had discontinued production of the wine for "commercial reasons." Readers wanting to salt away a bottle for the cellar (after you taste a cup or two, you will know that it is not good for much else) should buy it whenever you see it, since additional vintages will not be available.



NEWS FROM ABROAD

The Newsletter is pleased to announce that mail is being received from members of the family in Greece, Turkey, Switzerland, France, and Latin America, including the following samples:

TURKEY: Jacques J. Abravanel, the Portuguese Counsel in Istanbul, has written several letters, each with fascinating stories. He notes, for example, that a dentist from Poland named "Solnik" claimed in 1946 the crown of Israel for his son, whom he named "Emanuel the First, king of Israel." He pretended to be a descendant of Don Isaac Abravanel, who had emigrated from Salonica, Greece to Poland. To support his claim, this dentist asked a Professor Rosen of the Hebrew University to construct a geneological tree for him. Professor Rosen sent him away, according to Jacques, stating "We don't need a supposed Abravanel, when we have the originals."

SWITZERLAND: Pierre N. Abarbanell of Chene-Bougeries (Geneva), Switzerland sent a lengthy letter, in which he recounted his work with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, first in Paris and then in Geneva. He explained that he was born in Berlin, but left for Spain in 1934 as a youth, leaving his family behind. After the war he was able to locate only a few surviving members of his family, including

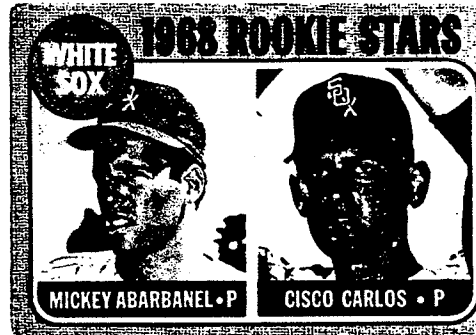
his sister, who had been deported in 1941 from her home in Holland to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt. He remembers that his father told him of the Abravanel family, adding that he was a cousin of Lina Abarbanell (see Issue No. 2), the famous operetta singer.

GREECE: Freddy Abravanel, of Athens, Greece, recently sponsored an exhibition of Judaic antique manuscripts at the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens. Among the items displayed was a copy of the Pirosh HaTorah of Don Isaac Abravanel.

OUR BOY OF SUMMER

"Abarbanell - Apple of White Sox' Eye" -- a strange headline for the sports page of a 1967 edition of an Indiana newspaper, containing a glowing description of a new pitcher, Mickey Abarbanell, then playing for the Indianapolis (Pacific Coast) farm team in the Chicago White Sox organization. Coached by Manager Eddie Stanky, Abarbanell, a left handed pitcher who excelled at strikeouts, seemed to the reporter to be ready for the major leagues.

The White Sox thought he was ready as well, for they called him up at the start of the 1968 season. He even had a Topps baseball card (1968 series, card no. 287, "White Sox 1968 Rookie Stars") that he shared with Cisco Carlos, another White Sox rookie pitcher.



At that point, however, the trail runs cold. Even the White Sox front office did not know what happened to Mickey, and it appears to he may have dropped off the team before accumulating any major league statistics -- the only records the White Sox have are of his minor league performance. The Newsletter would like to know what became of one of the few members of the family to be known for his physical prowess.

EXPIRATION OF OFFER OF BOOK

The offer made in Issue No. 2 of the Newsletter to sell copies of the Netanyahu biography of Don Isaac Abravanel at a discount was too popular: all available copies have been sold and the offer is now withdrawn. Readers seeking copies are encouraged to write directly to the Jewish Publication Society of America in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for copies on sale at the list price of \$6.95.

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