

The Interpretation of a Horoscope Cast by Abraham the Jew in Béziers for a Child Born on 29 November 1135: An Essay in Understanding a Medieval Astrologer

Helena Avelar, with an introduction by Charles Burnett

Abstract: This article analyses the horoscope written by a certain ‘Abraham Judeus’ at Béziers for a child born in 1135. It shows that, given the positions of the heavenly bodies and the astrologer’s interpretation, one can work out how the astrologer arrived at his judgments, using the standard astrological doctrine of the time.

Introduction

A twelfth-century manuscript in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16208, contains on its flyleaves a collection of notes, including several horoscopic charts.¹ The body of the manuscript contains texts on astrology, astronomy, the astrolabe, and arithmetic, several of which were authored by Raymond of Marseilles, an astronomer based in Marseilles in the mid-twelfth century (fl. 1141).² The manuscript eventually came into the hands of (if it was not copied for) Roger of Fournival, doctor and astrologer to the French kings Philippe-Auguste and Louis VIII, who added most of the notes, including the horoscope of Philippe-Auguste and a horoscope of his

¹ For a full description of the manuscript see David Juste, *Catalogus codicum astrologorum latinorum II, Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale de France à Paris*, (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2015), pp. 236–240.

² These include his *Liber iudiciorum*, and fragments of his *Liber cursuum planetarum* and treatise on the astrolabe: see Raymond de Marseille, *Opera omnia I: Traité de l’astrolabe, Liber cursuum planetarum*, ed. Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, Charles Burnett, and Emmanuel Poulle (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2009), pp. 40–42.

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own birth (6 May 1179).³ It then became part of the famous library of Roger's son, Richard of Fournival, and was bequeathed by him to Gérard d'Abbéville, and thence to the library of the Sorbonne.⁴ The only horoscope with an interpretation occurs on the recto of the initial flyleaf. This is a horoscope cast by Abraham the Jew in Béziers for a child born on 29th November 1135.

This horoscope has been edited and examined before.⁵ But up to now no one has tried to work out how the astrologer came to the conclusions that he reaches in his text. It is especially interesting to do this because the 'Abraham Judeus' who cast the horoscope is likely to be Abraham Ibn Ezra, whom we know to have been in Béziers from other evidence.⁶ Ibn Ezra wrote two (or even three) sets of texts on astrology, one in Béziers in 1148, and some parts of the interpretation can be compared with the instructions given in the versions of the *Book of Nativities* (*Sefer ha-Moladot*) that formed part of these sets.⁷ Helena Avelar shows how the prognostics in this horoscope follow naturally from the astrological rules of Ibn Ezra, which were typical of his time. For as Abraham Ibn Ezra himself draws upon the astrological doctrines of Ptolemy, Dorotheus, Māshā'allāh, Abū Ma'shar, Sahl ibn Bishr and al-Qabīṣī, his doctrines can be taken as representative of these doctrines. After the title of the horoscope (within

³ See Emmanuel Poulle, 'La date de naissance de Louis VIII', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 143 (1987): pp. 427–430.

⁴ Richard of Fournival, *Biblionomia*, in Leopold Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque impériale* (Paris: Bibliothèque impériale, 1826–1910, Vol. 2).

⁵ Joshua Lipton, 'The Rational Evaluation of Astrology in the Period of Arabo-Latin Translations, ca. 1126–1187 AD', (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1978), pp. 221–222. Lipton corrected the date '1136' to '1135'. See also John D. North, *Horoscopes and History* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), pp. 108–9, who compares the planetary positions in the manuscript with those worked out by modern techniques, and suggests that the latitude indicates that the place of birth could have been Tarragona.

⁶ Shlomo Sela and Gad Freudenthal, 'Abraham Ibn Ezra's Scholarly Writings: A Chronological Listing', *Aleph* 6 (2006): pp. 13–55.

⁷ *Abraham Ibn Ezra on Nativities and Continuous Horoscopy: a Parallel Hebrew-English Critical Edition of the Book of Nativities and the Book of Revolution*, edited, translated, and annotated by Shlomo Sela (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2014), henceforth referred to as *Nativities*.

the horoscopic figure) the interpretation is analysed sentence by sentence, with Abraham the Jew's words printed in bold.⁸

The Text

1. *Nativitas cuiusdam pueri anno domini .m.c.xxxvi., .xxix. die Octobris, die Martis, hora .ii.a.*

The nativity of a boy born in the year 1135, on the second hour of the 19th day of October, a Tuesday).

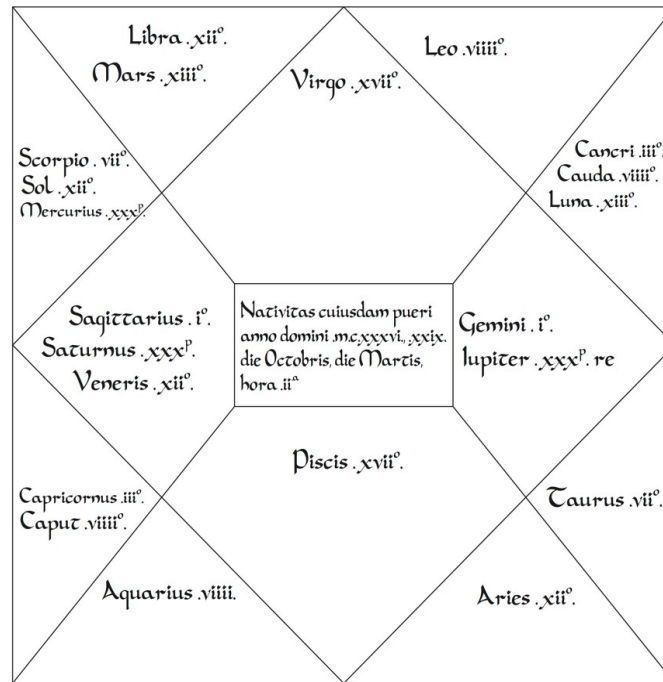


Fig. 1. Reconstruction of the horoscope (by Luís Ribeiro).

Chart calculated for 29th October 1135, at 8:33 (by the very end of the hour of Venus, the second planetary hour), in Tarragona, Spain (41°N07' 001°E15'). The reconstruction used the computer program *Solar Fire Pro*.⁹

⁸ This is a corrected version of the transcription in Lipton, 'The Rational Evaluation of Astrology in the Period of Arabo-Latin Translations', pp. 221–222. Lipton corrected the date '1136' to '1135'.

⁹ Note that the hypotheses presented are based on the writings of Abraham ibn Ezra in *Sefer ha-Moladot* (*Book on Nativities*) and *Sefer ah-Tequfah* (*Book of*

Birth time calculated in LAT (Local Apparent Time: -0:20:27).

The comparison between the horoscope calculated by Abraham and the one calculated by computer reveals minor variants in the houses' cusps and in the position of the planets. These are due mainly to Abraham's notation, which uses only the degrees and omits the minutes, and not to significant errors of calculation. The greatest difference is in the position of Mercury: 30° of Scorpio when it should be 23° of Scorpio.¹⁰ The position of Saturn, correctly placed at 30° Sagittarius but above Venus, which is at 12° Sagittarius, is an error of drawing, not of calculation.

	Horoscope calculated by Abraham	Horoscope calculated by computer
House I	Sagittarius 01° Saturn – Sagittarius 30° Venus – Sagittarius 12°	Sagittarius 01°45' Venus – Sagittarius 11°45' Saturn – Capricorn 00°58'
House II	Capricorn 03° North Node – Capricorn 09°	Capricorn 05°31' North Node – Capricorn 08°50'
House III	Aquarius 09°	Aquarius 09°56'
House IV	Pisces 17°	Pisces 17°49'
House V	Aries 12°	Aries 13°30'
House VI	Taurus 7°	Taurus 08°25'
House VII	Gemini 01° Jupiter – Gemini 30° Retrograde	Gemini 01°45' Jupiter – Gemini 29°11' Retrograde
House VIII	Cancer 03° South Node – Cancer 09° Moon 13°	Cancer 05°31' South Node – Cancer 08°50' Moon 13°12'
House IX	Leo 09°	Leo 09°56'
House X	Virgo 17°	Virgo 17°49'
House XI	Libra 12° Mars – Libra 13°	Libra 13°30' Mars – Libra 14°03'
House XII	Scorpio 07° Sun – Scorpio 12° Mercury – Scorpio 30°	Scorpio 07° Sun – Scorpio 12°01' Mercury – Scorpio 23°41'

Fig. 2. Table I – Comparing calculations.

The first house, signifying the native himself, is the one that receives most

Reasons). These are sometimes compared with the doctrines in *Al-Qabīṣī* (*Alcabiti*): *The introduction to Astrology: editions of the Arabic and Latin texts and an English translation*, ed. C. Burnett, K. Yamamoto, and M. Yano (London: The Warburg Institute, 2004), p. 55.

¹⁰ The 30th degree of a sign corresponds to the 1st degree of the next sign. In this case, 30° of Scorpio can also be represented as 0° Sagittarius.

attention in the interpretation. It describes the native's temperament, complexion, intelligence, manners and ethics – in short, it comprises what is presently called the native's 'psychological traits'.¹¹ It also includes the calculation of the native's life span.

The other eleven houses describe the native's circumstances: resources, family, children, friends, and all the other matters of his life.

House	Meanings (abridged version)
First House	The native (also the soul, knowledge, intelligence and belief, the body and life) ¹²
Second House	Wealth, helpers
Third House	Brothers, relatives, familiar wisdom ¹³
Fourth House	The father, buried treasures, the end of everything; landed property
Fifth House	Sons, food, drink and clothing
Sixth House	Hidden wars, like illnesses and deformities
Seventh House	The female (the wife), the partners, wars
Eighth House	Death
Ninth House	Journeys, wisdom, belief
Tenth House	The mother; dominion, greatness; the art on account of which the native is known
Eleventh House	Lovers, beauty and honour
Twelfth House	Quarrels, dishonour, shame, prison; animals that men ride on (large-size animals)

Fig. 3. Table II – The astrological houses according to Ezra.¹⁴

Some topics pertaining to the other houses are somehow connected to the ones from the first and appear together in the interpretation. Such is the case of religion, a topic from the ninth house, which is sometimes integrated into the interpretation of the native's mentality, and therefore

¹¹ The concept of complexion comprises both physical appearance (aspect, vitality, proneness to certain illnesses and so on) and psychological traits (temperament, character, intelligence and proneness to mental problems).

¹² S. Selam ed., *Abraham ibn Ezra, The Book of Reasons* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 99 and pp. 211–213 [hereafter *Book of Reasons*].

¹³ Familiar wisdom: 'the body of knowledge that is close to one's law or religion'; in this case, the wisdom of the Torah; *Book of Reasons*, p. 153.

¹⁴ *Book of Reasons*, pp. 67–69 and pp. 215–217 (for the colours of the houses). See also *Nativities*, pp. 99–183.

presented as part of the first-house interpretation.¹⁵

It is worth noticing the complex use of the planets in interpretation, combining their general significance and their specific meaning in a given horoscope (whether by house position or by house rulership), according to the context of the topic being scrutinized.

For instance, Venus is a general significator of women and love in any horoscope, and it is frequently taken as part of the description of the native's wives; but in this horoscope it is placed in the first house, so it also has some part on the native's personality and manners; moreover, it is also the ruler of the sixth and eleventh houses, and can therefore contribute to the interpretation of this native's health and servants (sixth house matters) and friends (eleventh house matters).¹⁶ Similarly, Jupiter is a general significator of benefice and honour, so it is always part of the interpretation for the native's wealth and social recognition; but in this case Jupiter is placed in the seventh house, which makes it an active part of the interpretation for marriage; it is also the ruler of the Ascendant and the fourth house, which makes it a significator for the native himself (Ascendant) and his family and origins (fourth house).¹⁷

2. *Aspexi hanc nativitatem et inveni quod pre omnibus parentibus suis erit sapientior et erit amator scientie et correctionis et diligit sapientes; et erit mente benevolus et libenter suae rogabit.*

I have inspected this nativity and found that the child will be wiser than all his relatives and will be a lover of science and of correcting and he will love (the company of) wisemen; he will be intellectually (*mente*) generous and will freely give of his own.

This is a typical part of the interpretation for the first house, signifying the native, his temperament and complexion, his mind and humours, and all his natural inclinations.

In this chart there is an extended trine between Mercury and the Moon, an indication of a positive mind:

¹⁵ Ibn Ezra starts his description of the first house stating that it signifies 'the soul, knowledge, intelligence and belief': *Nativities*, p. 99. Also relevant is Sela's comment on page p. 233–234: 'It is odd to find "belief" in this list of the indications of the first place, because it fits the indications of the third place or the ninth place, but certainly not the first place. (...) Its insertion may be accounted for by the assumption that in Ibn Ezra's mind belief is closely associated to "intelligence" and may be an offshoot of the later'.

¹⁶ *Book of Reasons*, p. 79; see also *Alcabitus: The introduction to Astrology*, p. 75.

¹⁷ *Book of Reasons*, p. 75; see also *Alcabitus: The introduction to Astrology*, p. 65.

If the Moon is associated with Mercury in some aspect or in conjunction, and both [the Moon and Mercury] aspect the Ascendant degree, the man's soul will be perfect, his mind will overcome his desire, he will do everything honestly and lawfully.¹⁸

In this case, the condition is only partially fulfilled: Mercury aspects the Moon by a close trine and the Ascendant by an extended conjunction, but the Moon does not aspect the Ascendant.¹⁹ However, as the Moon is strongly placed in its own rulership, Cancer, Abraham might have decided to rule this whole configuration as positive.

From another perspective, the 'love of knowledge and the company of wise men' could also be connected to the position of Jupiter, ruler of the Ascendant in Gemini (the domicile of Mercury) in the 7th house, and also from Venus, the planet of harmony, in the 1st house in Sagittarius.

In this case, Mercury is conjunct to the Ascendant.²⁰ Mercury is in joy in the Ascendant, being therefore considered to be very strong and prominent.²¹

3. *Et erit amator mulierum, sed caute et absconse.*

He will love women, but cautiously and in a hidden way.

As this comment is interpolated between the judgment of the native's mentality and the calculation of his life span, it can be taken as part of the interpretation for the first house. Loving women is part of the native's personality. The topic of wives and marriage is addressed in point 8. The love of women can be related to the prominent placement of Venus, the planet of women, in the Ascendant, and to the position of Mercury, ruler of the VII House of marriage, in the XII House of hidden things.

4. *Et vivet .lxxviii. annis et erit omnibus diebus vite sue sanus corpore, sed tamen habebit aliquantulum infirmitatis in stomacho ex calore.*

He will live for 69 years and will enjoy good health all the days of his life

¹⁸ *Nativities*, p. 107.

¹⁹ For an explanation of the aspects, see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trans. F. E. Robbins (London: The Loeb Classical Library, 1940), pp. 73–75.

²⁰ Mercury is indicated as being in the eleventh house in 30° Scorpio. But since 30° of one sign = 0° of the next, Mercury is really in the Ascendant.

²¹ Joy: when a planet is in a house that is particularly favourable to its nature, it is said to be in joy. The joys are: the first house to Mercury, the ninth to the Sun, the third to the Moon, the eleventh to Jupiter, the fifth to Venus, the twelfth to Saturn and sixth to Mars. See *Book of Reasons*, p. 217.

except that he will suffer a little illness in his stomach because of heat. The illness in the stomach can be attributed to the square between the Moon and Mars. The Moon is a general significator of the body and its humours, and it rules over the stomach; Mars is a malefic planet, its maleficence deriving from the excess of heat. This topic will be resumed on point 12.

Longevity Calculation (abridged version)

This calculation relies on the determination of two important factors in the horoscope: the *hyleg* (or *haylaj*), the planet which signifies life, and the *alcocoden* (*al-kadhkhudah*), the planet which determines the length of life.

The *hyleg* is usually one of the luminaries – the Sun for diurnal horoscopes (that is, horoscopes with the Sun above the horizon); the Moon for nocturnal horoscopes (Sun below the horizon). In order to be considered the *hyleg* of the horoscope, the luminary has to be in favourable conditions (such as being placed in an appropriate sign and house, and not afflicted by other planets). If none of the luminaries is fit to be the *hyleg*, the lunation preceding birth, the Ascendant or the Part of Fortune will assume that role (the order differs in diurnal and nocturnal horoscopes). It is up to the astrologer to ponder all conditions and determine the appropriate *hyleg* for each horoscope.

Once the *hyleg* is defined, the astrologer can determine the *alcocoden*, the planet which regulates the number of years that the native will live. In order to be considered a suitable *alcocoden*, the planet has to fulfill two basic conditions: it has to be the ruler of one of dignities of the *hyleg* and it has to aspect it. The dignities are: rulership or domicile, exaltation, triplicity, term and face.²²

To each planet is associated a certain number of years: greater, median or lesser.²³

Years of the planets							
Years	Saturn	Jupiter	Mars	Sun	Venus	Mercury	Moon
Greater	57	79	66	120	82	76	108
Median	43.5	45.5	40.5	69.5	45	48	66.5
Lesser	30	12	15	19	8	20	25

The condition of the *alcocoden* in the nativity determines the number of years given to the native: a good condition signifies the planet's greater years, a median condition, the median years, and a bad condition the lesser years. (Other planets also contribute to this calculation, by adding or subtracting years or months; these conclusions are seen as possibilities, and require confirmation by other prediction methods.)

Fig. 4. Table III – Longevity Calculation (abridged version).²⁴

²² For a complete explanation about the dignities, see *Book of Reasons*, pp. 43–49; also Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, pp. 78–113.

²³ There is also a fourth category, called 'maxima', which is not used to calculate human life span. The maximum years of the planets are: Saturn: 256; Jupiter: 426; Mars: 284; Sun: 1461; Venus: 1151; Mercury: 461; Moon: 520 years. They are usually used in mundane astrology. See *Book of Reasons*, pp. 71–83, 217–235, and also a reference on p. 133.

The calculation of longevity is also part of the interpretation of the first house. Its calculation is complex, as is extensively debated on *Sefer ha-Moladot*.²⁵ On this matter, Ibn Ezra quotes several authors, such as Ptolemy, Dorotheus and Masha'allah, who offer alternative versions of this calculation, and presents his own opinion on the matter. In spite of the variations, the basic concept of the method remains essentially the same.

Reconstructing Abraham's method

This reconstruction presents some of the possible calculations for this horoscope, according to Abraham's method.

Hypothesis 1

Being a diurnal chart,²⁶ the Sun would be the natural choice for the *hyleg*, but in this horoscope the Sun is in Scorpio in the twelfth house, with no strength other than face (which is weak, almost irrelevant) and placed in an unfortunate house.²⁷ If, in spite of its weakness, the Sun was taken as the *hyleg*, the *alcocoden* would be a planet that rules any of the dignities of the sign in which the Sun is placed AND also aspects the Sun to be 'active'.

As the Sun is in Scorpio, its rulers are (by order of importance):²⁸

Throne/domicile – Mars

Exaltation – none

Triplicity – Venus, Moon and Mars

Term – Mercury (from 11° to 19°)

Face – Sun (from 10° to 20°)

²⁴ An explanation on the calculation of life span can be found in *Ibn Ezra on Nativities*, pp. 45–57, 109–121 and 257–260. For determining the *hyleg*, see *Book of Reasons*, pp. 237–239.

²⁵ For a more complete explanation, see the Table III in Figure 4 and the respective footnote.

²⁶ A horoscope is diurnal if it has the Sun above the horizon (that is, in the twelfth, eleventh, tenth, ninth, eighth or seventh houses); it is nocturnal if the Sun is below the horizon (in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth houses). For the practical application of this concept to the calculation of longevity, see *Nativities*, pp. 109–111.

²⁷ For the meaning of 'face' (under the designation of 'decan') see *Alcabitus: The introduction to Astrology*, pp. 31, and *Nativities*, pp. 224 and p. 245.

²⁸ An explanation about rulership is provided in *Book of Reasons*, pp. 43–51 and in *Alcabitus: The introduction to Astrology*, pp. 29–31.

Of all these possible rulers only the Moon aspects the Sun by a major aspect, in this case a trine.²⁹ Therefore, the astrologer may have taken the Moon as *alcocoden*. Although the Moon is in its domicile in Cancer, which makes it very strong, it is also afflicted by the South Node and the square of Mars, and placed in an unfortunate house, the eighth; therefore, it is not in a condition to give its greater years, 108, but also not so bad that it would only give its lesser years, 25 – it would therefore give its median years, 66.

Hypothesis 2

If Abraham had rejected the Sun as the *hyleg* due to its debilities (in a feminine sign and in an unfortunate house, the twelfth), his second choice would have been the other luminary, the Moon (in spite of being in an unfortunate house, the eighth).

As the Moon is in Cancer, its dispositors are:

Throne/domicile – Moon

Exaltation – Jupiter

Triplicity – Venus, Moon and Mars

Term – Mercury (from 13°-19°)

Face – Mercury (from 10° to 20°)

In this case, the only suitable *alcocoden* would be Mercury, which rules the Moon's term and face (none of the other rulers aspects the Moon by a major aspect, therefore no other can be *alcocoden*).

If Mercury is the *alcocoden*, we must consider its conditions to determine how many years it can give. Mercury is at 23° Scorpio, where it is peregrine (that is, it has no dignity and no rulership there) and in the unfortunate twelfth house. Due to these conditions, it cannot give its greater years, 79, only its median years, 48.

Hypothesis 3

As neither the Sun nor the Moon seems to fulfil the conditions to be the *hyleg*, Abraham's third choice would have been the lunation preceding birth. In this case, the preceding lunation was the Full Moon, which occurred six days before, on the 23rd October, at 9:26 pm. At the moment of the lunation the Moon was above the horizon in the eleventh house, and in 6° of Taurus, strongly dignified by exaltation and triplicity. Its rulers are:

²⁹ This calculation includes the conjunction (0°) and the aspects of sextile (60°), the square (90°), the trine (120°) and the opposition (180°).

Throne/domicile – Venus
 Exaltation – the Moon
 Triplicity – Venus, Mars and Moon
 Term – Venus (from 0° to 8°)
 Face – Mercury (from 0° to 10°)

The main ruler for this degree of Taurus is obviously Venus, which is dignified by rulership, exaltation, triplicity and term, but Venus does not aspect the lunation degree by any major aspect, so it cannot be *alcocoden*.

The Moon, of the triplicity rulers for the lunation degree, aspects it by an extended sextile, so it is a possible *alcocoden*. As seen before, the Moon can only give its median years, 66, due to its conditions in this horoscope.

Another possibility is Mars, which is also lord of the triplicity and aspects the lunation degree by a weak opposition.³⁰ As Mars is debilitated by exile in the sign of Libra, but placed in a fortunate house, the eleventh, it can therefore be assumed that it gives its median years, 40 and a half.³¹

Hypothesis 4

If none of the above possibilities was considered a satisfactory *hyleg*, Abraham could have also chosen the Ascendant of the Part of Fortune, but this is a very unlikely choice in this horoscope (the Ascendant is only aspected by Mercury, by a weak conjunction, and the Part of Fortune has no major aspects).

It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that he selected the Moon as *alcocoden*, whether he has decided to follow the first or the third hypothesis.³²

In any case, Abraham states that these calculations are ‘only an approximation to the truth’, and that the life span determined by the *alcocoden* has always to be confirmed by other calculations, namely a direction³³ suggesting death (for instance, the direction of the significator of life or the ruler of the Ascendant to a malefic planet – Mars or Saturn).³⁴

³⁰ A ‘weak aspect’ is one that is almost outside the range of the planet’s orbs, being therefore relatively irrelevant in the context of a particular horoscope.

³¹ For further detail about the criteria of attribution of years, see *Nativities*, pp. 51–52 (‘The years of the *Kadhkhudah*’).

³² These calculations may present minor variations, according to the criteria followed by each astrologer.

³³ For an explanation about directions see *Book of Reasons*, pp. 331–332.

³⁴ *Nativities*, pp. 115: ‘know that everything I mentioned to you is only an approximation of the truth, for when we know the lifespan <according to the years

If the life span does not coincide with the directions, some adjustments are required:

if at such a time [i.e., the lifespan according to the years of the ruler] <the direction> reaches a place of death, the native will die in that year, but if it reaches <a place of death> only after a number of years, the native will die only when the place of life reaches the place of death, although <the native> will live, the years that are added to the years of the ruler will be affected with many diseases.³⁵

There are two primary directions suggesting death around the native's sixty-ninth year:

1. Sun to the opposition of the Moon (zodiacal direction; date: October 1205). The Moon is placed in the eighth in this horoscope (being therefore related to death), and the Sun is possibly the *hyleg*, and thus signifier of life. (The corresponding converse direction occurred in December 1204.)
2. Sun to the square of Mars (zodiacal direction; date: August 1206); the Sun, possibly the *hyleg*, forms a square (a difficult aspect) with a malefic planet, Mars. This configuration is typically considered to be a sign of death. (Corresponding converse: April 1200, which is too soon to be taken in account, for the native would have been 64 years old).

5. *Et cum expleverit .xxv. annum et paulo amplius, accipiet uxorem convenientem de nobili prosapia et tunc incipiet fortuna sua meliorari in omnibus que facere voluerit; sed propter Iovem diligit mulierem.*

When he has reached his twentieth-fifth year or a little later, he will marry a suitable wife from a noble family and then his good fortune will start to improve in everything that he wants to do; [but] because of the position of Jupiter he will be affectionate towards his wife.

Though it mentions marriage, his judgment seems to be related mainly to the second house of property and resources, and only secondarily to the

of the ruler>, we need to direct the appropriate place of life to be directed', and also pp. 55–56 ('Coordinating the Years of the *Kadhkhudah* with the Direction of the *Haylaj*'). On another note, it is worth noticing that some astrologers used to perfect their calculations by taking into account the aspects of other planets to the *alcocoden*. According to their nature and their condition in the horoscope, the aspecting planets would add or subtract a few years or months to the basic lifespan.

³⁵ *Nativities*, p. 115.

seventh house of marriage. Abraham enumerates the conditions that suggest wealth:

If Jupiter is in one of the cardines, or in the eleventh place, and is neither under the Sun's rays nor retrograde, it too indicates great good fortune, wealth, and money.³⁶

This condition is only partially met in this horoscope, as Jupiter is in the seventh house (one of the cardines, that is, one of the angular houses), and free from the Sun's rays (that is, more than eight degrees away from the Sun, thus avoiding being obscured by the Sun's power).³⁷

From another perspective, the placement of Jupiter in the seventh house also suggests benefice coming from marriage, as well as affection, dignity and correct behaviour between spouses.

Abraham states that this benefice will come to the native around his twenty-fifth year.

This precise timing is possibly related to one or more primary directions happening around that time. The main primary directions that can be related to this event are:

1. Ascendant to the terms term of Mercury (zodiacal direction; data: April 1155). The significator of the native enters the terms term of Mercury, the ruler of the seventh house: the native becomes inclined to marriage.
2. Part of Fortune to the square of Mercury (zodiacal direction; date: November 1154). Mercury is the ruler of the seventh house of marriage and the Part of Fortune promises wealth: benefits from marriage.
3. Venus to the conjunction of Saturn (mundane direction; date: June 1156). Saturn is the ruler of the second house in this horoscope, therefore signifying wealth, and Venus is a natural significator of women. Furthermore, these planets are also the 'parents' of the Part of Marriage (corresponding converse direction: July 1156).
4. Venus to the opposition of Jupiter (zodiacal direction; date: July 1156). Venus, the general significator of women, reaches Jupiter, a planet positioned in the seventh house in this horoscope (corresponding converse direction: April 1156).
5. Venus to the terms of Mercury (zodiacal direction; date: November 1156). Venus, the significator of women, enters the terms of Mercury, the ruler of the seventh house of marriage: another indication of proneness to

³⁶ *Nativities*, p. 123.

³⁷ The cardines or angular houses are the first, the fourth, the seventh and the tenth.

marriage.

6. Sun to the term of Jupiter (zodiacal direction; date: April 1157). The Sun enters the term of Jupiter, the significator of wealth.
7. Moon to the term of Venus (zodiacal direction; date: June 1157). A general indication of events and activities related to women, as both Venus and the Moon have that signification.
8. Venus to the conjunction of Saturn (zodiacal direction; date: November 1157). Similar to direction number 3, but including latitude in the calculation (corresponding converse direction: August 1157).
9. Mercury to the conjunction of Venus (zodiacal direction; date: January 1158; mundane direction; date: February 1158). The ruler of the seventh house, Mercury, conjoins the significator of women, Venus (corresponding converse: same dates).

The inter-planetary directions (that is, the ones that involve planets or luminaries) are taken as clear indications of events, while the directions by term (which involve one planet and an abstract point of the horoscope) support and reinforce their significations.

From these directions it can be inferred that the period between 1155 and early 1158 is particularly favourable for both marriage and the acquisition of wealth (possibly through marriage). As the native was born in October 1135, he would be between 19 and 22 years old in this period.³⁸

Another possibility is the use of triplicities (in this particular case the rulers of the triplicity of the ascendant sign) to predict broader periods of life.

In this horoscope the Ascendant is Sagittarius, a fiery sign. The triplicity rulers for the Fire element are the Sun, Jupiter and Saturn – each one ruling over a third of the native's life. As he is supposed to live for 69 years, each third will be approximately 23 years. This means that the first third of his life (from birth to 23 years of age) is ruled by the Sun, the second (from 23 to 46 years of age) by Jupiter and the third (from 46 to death at 69 years of age) by Saturn. In this horoscope Jupiter is placed in the seventh house of marriage, so it is to be expected that marriage will be possible within that period; Jupiter is also a natural significator of wealth and abundance – hence the connection to marriage and riches.

³⁸ The author mentions the native's 25th year 'or a little later', but the main directions seem to point out to the period between his 19th and 22nd year. This discrepancy may be due to slight differences in the positions of the planets, since those presented in this text were calculated by computer. In primary directions, even the smallest difference may represent a discrepancy of several months or even years.

THE TRIPLICITIES

According to this technique, the astrologer divides the native's life into three thirds (which is only possible because he has previously calculated the native's life span) and attributes to each third one of the three rulers assigned to the Ascendant sign, according to its Element.

The sequence of rulers is as follows.

	Rulers for diurnal horoscopes ³⁹			Rulers for nocturnal horoscopes ⁴⁰		
Fire signs Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Sun	Jupiter	Saturn	Jupiter	Sun	Saturn
Earth signs Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Venus	Moon	Mars	Moon	Venus	Mars
Air signs Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Saturn	Mercury	Jupiter	Mercury	Saturn	Jupiter
Water signs Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Venus	Mars	Moon	Mars	Venus	Moon

The nature of the ruler for each period, as well as its condition in that particular horoscope, determines the general quality of the period (more precise predictions depend upon other techniques).⁴¹

Fig. 5. Table IV – The Triplicities.

It is also worth noticing that all these indications of wealth are reinforced by other positive conditions already patent in the horoscope, which will be discussed in point 9.

The remark about being affectionate towards his wife derives evidently from the position of the greater benefic, signifying not only wealth but also honour and joy, in the seventh house of marriage.

6. *Et aliquantulum fama blasphemabitur sed ei non nocebit.*

He will suffer a little from a malicious slander, but it will not harm him.

³⁹ As explained before, diurnal horoscopes are the ones with the Sun above the horizon.

⁴⁰ Horoscopes with the Sun below the horizon.

⁴¹ Note that the rulers of the triplicities may also determine specific matters within each astrological house. For a more detailed explanation refer to *Nativities*, Appendix 8, pp. 465–474.

The ‘malicious slander’ can be related to Mercury in Scorpio in the twelfth house. This configuration suggests sharp and aggressive speech (Mercury disposed by Mars) that happens in secret, hidden from the native (twelfth house of secret enemies and treasons). The ruler of the twelfth, Mars, is in Libra and placed in the eleventh house of friends and allies. This suggests a ‘false friend’, who is in fact a secret enemy. As Libra is in a human sign of the element Air, the harm may come from people (as opposed to harm caused by animals or by Nature) and mostly from words (which are spread through the air) – hence slander.

Also, Mars squares the Moon, which reinforces the notion of aggressiveness (even more in this horoscope, due to the rulership of Mars over the twelfth house). But Mars is weak in Libra (one of the signs of his exile), and that is probably the reason why Abraham states that this slander ‘will not harm him’.

Following the order of the houses, this comment should be related to the third house of brothers. These are also related to Mars, as Ibn Ezra states that ‘you should always observe Mars, because it signifies brothers in every nativity’.⁴²

7. Et habebit filios et filias, sed amplius de filiis.

He will have sons and daughters, but more sons.

Clearly a judgment related to the fifth house of children. Ibn Ezra considers Jupiter as the main signifier for children:

All the Ancients, including Ptolemy, agree that Jupiter signifies children, and that the children’s fate will be according to its [Jupiter’s] position: If it is in a barren sign he [the native] will have few children, but the opposite applies if it is in one of the watery signs.⁴³

As to the gender of the children, Ibn Ezra states:

If it [Jupiter] is in a masculine quadrant, oriental to the Sun, and in a masculine sign, most of his children will be sons, but the opposite applies in the opposite case’.⁴⁴

In this case Jupiter is placed in Gemini, a masculine sign and it is oriental to the Sun (that is, it is visible before the Sun in the west at sunrise). It is,

⁴² *Nativities*, p. 131.

⁴³ *Nativities*, p. 143–145.

⁴⁴ *Nativities*, p. 145.

however, in a feminine quadrant (which includes not only the seventh house, where Jupiter is placed, but also the eighth and the ninth).

So, in this case, the planet fulfils only two out of the three necessary conditions: masculine sign and oriental to the Sun, but not masculine quadrant. Abraham judges accordingly, stating that the native's children will be both boys and girls, but mainly boys, due to the predominance of masculine factors.

8. *Et duas uxores habebit de quibus mortem videbit et bona illarum possidebit.*

He will have two wives, and will outlive them both and inherit their property. This prediction relates to the seventh house of marriage and the eighth house of inheritances. The notion of two wives may be attributed to the position of Venus (a significator of women) in a double-bodied sign.⁴⁵

Quoting Enoch (i.e. Hermes), Abraham takes Venus as the main significator of wives, and lists the other significators for marriage:

Always observe Venus, the Moon, the lot of women, the seventh place and its lord, and the lord of the seventh hour <after the nativity>, and determine the ruler over the aforementioned positions.⁴⁶

The possibility of inheritance may be related to the position of Venus in Sagittarius, a sign ruled by Jupiter. As Jupiter is the ruler of the Ascendant in this horoscope – thus the significator of the native – it can be inferred that the native (Jupiter) will rule over his wives and will dispose of their belongings (Venus). This possibility is also patent in the primary directions discussed in point 5.

9. *Et quamdiu vixerit satis dives erit, quia in omnibus lucrabitur, et haec fortuna videtur ei contingere ex quo habebit .xx. annos.*

He will be sufficiently rich all his life, because he will make a profit out of everything; his good fortune will start from the age of twenty.

This sentence is the continuation of point 8. It is related not only to the second house, but again with the eighth house of inheritances and resources acquired from partnerships.

⁴⁵ The double-bodied (also called mutable), signs are Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius and Pisces. There is also a double-bodied sign in the cusp of the seventh house, Gemini, which reinforces the idea of several wives.

⁴⁶ *Nativities*, p. 157.

There are two main indications of wealth in this horoscope which, because they are part of the natal chart, will be 'active' throughout his life (that is, they do not depend upon directions to be 'activated').⁴⁷ They are the North Node in the second house (which suggests a general condition of abundance and growth) and Saturn, the ruler of the second house in this horoscope, conjunct to the cusp of the second, and in Capricorn, one of the signs it rules. The ruler of the house placed in the house (and strong) signifies that the matters of the house are relatively independent from the rest of the native's contingencies. In the case of resources, it also means that the native's wealth is easily improved, for it can generate itself – therefore, 'he will make a profit out of everything'.

These favourable conditions are supported by the angular position of Jupiter, which in itself promises wealth:

If Jupiter is on one of the cardines, or in the eleventh place, and neither under the Sun's ray nor retrograde, it too indicates great good fortune, wealth and money.⁴⁸

Jupiter's position in the horoscope can point out the age when this wealth will manifest:⁴⁹

If it [Jupiter] is in the first or tenth place, good fortune will come before the middle of his life; if it is in any of the other cardines, it will come after the middle of his life.⁵⁰

In this case Jupiter is in the seventh house, a 'cardine' (that is, an angular house), but not in the first or the tenth; it is in the fourth, which suggests 'good fortune before the middle of his life'.⁵¹ As Abraham has already

⁴⁷ See footnote 34 (*Nativities*, pp. 55–56).

⁴⁸ *Nativities*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ In this judgment the general condition of Jupiter in the horoscope has to be taken in account: 'His [the native's] wealth will be according to its [Jupiter's] power, depending on whether it [Jupiter] is the ruler of the nativity or the lord of the hour of the nativity or the lord of the Sun's house by day or of the Moon's house by night.', *Nativities*, p. 123.

⁵⁰ *Nativities*, p. 123.

⁵¹ A planet located in one of the angular houses (the 'cardines') is considered to be strong, and therefore capable of manifesting its effects in full, as stated in *Book of Reasons*, p. 65. In another perspective, the seventh house pertains to the second quadrant (between the Mid-Heaven and the Descendant), which is related to youth; the third quadrant (between the Descendant and the lower Mid-Heaven)

determined that this native will live for sixty-nine years, we can now deduce that the middle of his life will be around his thirty-fifth year.

In sum, there will be two main favourable periods for the acquisition of wealth: around his twentieth year (possibly by marriage) and after his thirty-fifth year (by his own means, heritage or possibly a second marriage).

Note that Abraham's mention of 'the age of twenty' as the time when the native is likely to attain both riches and marriage may also be related to the directions listed in point 5. (For this topic, the most relevant directions are the ones related to Jupiter and Saturn, for the reasons already explained.)

10. *Et perget longa itinera pro sua lege inquirenda et quocumquei erit ab omnibus honerabitur et lucrabitur in omni mercatura, prout ipse voluerit.*

He will go on long journeys to find out more about his religion (pilgrimage), and wherever he goes he will be honoured by everybody and will make a profit in every business affair, just as he wants.

Long journeys and religion are two of the three topics pertaining to the ninth house (the third is wisdom, which was already addressed as part of the native's mentality, in the first-house interpretation).

The ruler of the ninth house in this horoscope is the Sun, which is placed in Scorpio, a fixed sign, suggesting a firm and constant attitude towards faith. The ninth is the house of joy of the Sun, and although in this horoscope the Sun is not in the ninth, it rules it, for the cusp is in Leo, further reinforcing the strength of the matters of this house.

Quoting Enoch (Hermes), Ibn Ezra states that the Sun ruling the ninth signifies 'prophetic dreams', thus connecting this house with the search for wisdom and truth (by several means).⁵²

Furthermore, the Part of Fortune, meaning wealth and prosperity, is conjunct to the cusp of the IX House of journeys and religion, suggesting profits originating from the matters pertaining to this house: religion, knowledge and long journeys.⁵³

indicates the period 'when one approaches fifty years', as it is stated in *Nativities*, pp. 366–367. The planet's location in the seventh – that is, in the end of the second quadrant – points out to the end of the youthful period, just before mid-life.

⁵² For the connection of dreams to the ninth house, see *Nativities*, p. 171.

⁵³ *Nativities*, p. 129: 'You should also observe the Lot of Fortune, because its power is like the power of the second place, and any planet in aspect with it signifies money, according to it s[the planet's] nature'. In this case, the Part of

11. *Et sicut etas augmentabitur ita et ipsa pecunia et ditior erit omnibus parentibus suis.*

As his age advances so will his wealth, and he will be more wealthy than all his ancestors.

This was already addressed in points 5, 8 and 9.

12. *Et morietur in terra sua ex forti valitudine stomachi cum par <vo> tussi.*

He will die in his own land from a strong stomach infection accompanied by a little cough.

In spite of his pilgrimages, the native will manage to return home to die – which in the Medieval period was considered the best possible choice. Dying at home allowed the native to be safe and, more importantly, it ensured the appropriate religious ceremonies would be performed.

The Moon, ruler of the VIII House of death, is placed in the VIII, so death will occur in its own ‘land’. In this matter Ibn Ezra again quotes Enoch (Hermes):

If the lord of the eighth place is in an auspicious position and is not aspected by a malefic, he will die in his bed from a disease that corresponds to the division of the signs, according to the method that assigns the head to Aries.⁵⁴

As the Moon is strong in Cancer (the signs of her rulership), death should be relatively easy, but unfortunately the Moon is also aspecting Mars by square. This suggests that there will be some suffering involved – in this case an infection in the stomach, as was explained in point 4.

13. *Anni fortunati sunt ei 19, 21, 25, 28, 31, 37, 45, 49, 52, 61; anni infortunati sunt 23, 26, 35, 38, 47, 50, 59, 62; menses fortunati November, Februarius, Iulius; infortunati September, December; dies boni, dies Veneris, mali, dies Martis; nox bona, quam sequitur dies Martis; mala, quam sequitur sabbati.*

His lucky years are 19, 21, 25, 28, 31, 37, 45, 49, 52, 61; his unlucky years are 23, 26, 35, 38, 47, 50, 59, 62; his lucky months are November, February and July; his unlucky months are September and December; his good days are

Fortune is at 02°56’ Leo, conjunct to the cusp of the ninth house (09°56’ Leo). Oddly enough, the Part is not represented in this horoscope (which also does not include any other parts or fixed stars).

⁵⁴ *Nativities*, p. 167. He repeats the concept a few lines further: ‘If the lord of the eighth place aspects its place [the eighth place], the native will die in his own country’, *Nativities*, p. 167.

Fridays, his bad days, Tuesdays; his good night is the one that follows Tuesday, his bad night, the one that follows the Sabbath. It is unclear how Abraham arrived at these calculations.

14. *Et ille sit super omnia benedictus qui de hac re veritatem non ignorat.*

Let that man be blessed above all who is not unaware of the truth of this!

15. *Hanc nativitatem iudicavit Abraham Judeus Biterris.*

Abraham the Jew judged this nativity in Béziers.

Final comments

Though very concise, Abraham's interpretation encompasses the main points of the horoscope, the ones that would matter the most for a Medieval client: longevity, health, wealth, marriage, children (especially male children) and religion. Notably, there is no reference to the native's profession, but there are several mentions of wealth and profit, which suggests that the native is the son of a nobleman or of a rich merchant, and so he does not need to work for a living. The reference to slander emphasizes the importance of reputation in Medieval society. It is also interesting to notice that death is discussed in a quiet, almost casual manner. The foreknowledge of the time of death allowed the natives to organize their affairs and make all the necessary preparations to leave this world in peace – preferably in their own homes, surrounded by family and devoting their last moments to prayer.

The astrological interpretation reveals not only the client but also the astrologer. In this case, it is no surprise that the first topic addressed by Abraham is wisdom. He places the native's wisdom even before longevity – a choice that is perfectly consistent with his philosophical background. Judging from his profuse comments about resources and wealth, these concerns were very high in his priorities, and were often connected with other matters, such as marriage or religion. This can also be a hint to the patrons (possibly the parents of the native), to encourage their generosity towards the astrologer.

The lack of explanations to support the predictions, together with the absence of Parts and fixed stars in the horoscope, suggest some hastiness in the making of this text. The client was obviously not a king or a great prelate, to whom Abraham would have offered a more complete description.

Abraham's technique seems to be compatible to the astrological doctrine presented in Ibn Ezra's books. For instance, when interpreting the planets he combines three different perspectives:

- the planet's general meaning (i.e., mind for Mercury, abundance for Jupiter, obstacles for Saturn and so on);
- its specific position by house in a given horoscope (i.e., planets in the second house are related to wealth, in the fourth to children, in the tenth to honours, and so on);
- its specific rulership over the zodiac sign (or signs) in a certain house in a given horoscope (i.e, a planet ruling the cusp of the fourth house is related to origins, in the twelfth to enemies, and so on).

Following the astrological rules (as explained above) he is able to assemble these significations, according to the context of each topic, to produce a complex and detailed judgment. This combination of different layers of significance can also be found in Ibn Ezra's writings. The only significant difference is that this judgment is notably succinct, while Ibn Ezra offers copious explanations – and this can be attributed to the difference between writing a book and writing a judgment. Regardless, both texts present the marks of a seasoned astrologer and both follow compatible techniques, so it is reasonable to assume that they could have been written by the same author – Abraham Ibn Ezra.