

FOUNDATIONS

JEWISH REFUGEES IN AMSTERDAM

**QUESTIONS BY A CHRISTIAN
CLERIC FROM ROUEN, FRANCE,
AND ANSWERS BY THE
EXCELLENT, EMINENT, AND
WISE SAUL LEVI MORTERA**

Translated with commentary by
GREGORY B. KAPLAN

ARC HUMANITIES PRESS



FOUNDATIONS

Further Information and Publications

www.arc-humanities.org/series/book-series/

JEWISH REFUGEES IN AMSTERDAM

***QUESTIONS BY A CHRISTIAN CLERIC
FROM ROUEN, FRANCE, AND ANSWERS
BY THE EXCELLENT, EMINENT,
AND WISE SAUL LEVI MORTERA***

Translated with commentary by
GREGORY B. KAPLAN

ARCHUMANITIES PRESS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

© 2026, Arc Humanities Press, Leeds



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Licence.

The author(s) assert(s) their moral right to be identified as the author(s) of their part of this work.

Permission to use brief excerpts from this work in scholarly and educational works is hereby granted provided that the source is acknowledged. Any use of material in this work that is an exception or limitation covered by Article 5 of the European Union's Copyright Directive (2001/29/EC) or would be determined to be "fair use" under Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act September 2010 Page 2 or that satisfies the conditions specified in Section 108 of the U.S. Copyright Act (17 USC §108, as revised by P.L. 94-553) does not require the Publisher's permission.

ISBN (Hardback): 9781802704662

ISBN (Paperback): 9781802704891

e-ISBN (PDF): 9781802704877

e-ISBN (EPUB): 9781802704884

DOI: 10.17302/prft5458

www.arc-humanities.org

Printed and bound in the UK (by CPIGroup [UK] Ltd), USA (by Bookmasters), and elsewhere using print-on-demand technology.

Publisher (manufacturer) details: Arc Humanities Press, 14 Clifton Moor Business Village, James Nicolson Link, York YO30 4XG, United Kingdom.

EU Authorised Representative details (for GPSR purposes): Amsterdam University Press, Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89, 1018 VR Amsterdam, The Netherlands. www.aup.nl

For my son,
Andrew Cruz Kaplan

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Abbreviations.....	x
Introduction	1
Saul Levi Mortera: Chief Rabbi and Polemicist.....	1
The Contents of <i>Questions by a Christian Cleric from Rouen, France, and Answers by the Excellent, Eminent, and Wise Saul Levi Mortera</i>	5
The Sources for Mortera's Ideas in <i>Questions</i>	10
<i>Questions</i> as a <i>converso</i> Text	16
Mortera's Philosophical Approach and Its Impact on Spinoza	25
Observations on MS EH 48 D 38 and on the Spanish-to-English Translation of <i>Questions</i>	34
Annotated English Translation of <i>Questions</i>	39
Annotated Spanish Edition of <i>Preguntas</i>	71
Bibliography	95
General Index.....	99
Index of Biblical Quotations.....	101

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Ets Haim—Livraria Montezinos, MS EH 48 D 38, fol. 87r.....	67-68
Figure 2. Ets Haim—Livraria Montezinos, MS EH 48 D 38, fols. 88v-89r.	69-70

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I WOULD LIKE to express my appreciation to several people whose assistance was invaluable while I was working on this book, including Heide Warncke, Curator of the Ets Haim—Livraria Montezinos at the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, Tania M. Colwell, Production Manager at Arc Humanities Press, Emily Harless, Editor for Arc Humanities Press, and Anna Henderson, Acquisitions Director at Arc Humanities Press. I would also like to thank my institution, the University of Tennessee, for providing funding for research time in Amsterdam and for funding from the Open Monograph Support Fund to publish this book in an Open Access format.

ABBREVIATIONS

BCE	before the Common Era
CE	Common Era
Dan.	Daniel
Deut.	Deuteronomy
EHLM	Ets Haim—Livraria Montezinos
Ezek.	Ezekiel
ff.	and the following
fol.	folio
fols.	folios
Gen.	Genesis
Hos.	Hosea
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Lam.	Lamentations
Lev.	Leviticus
Mal.	Malachi
Num.	Numbers
Ps.	Psalms
r.	reigned
Zech.	Zechariah
Zeph.	Zephaniah

Texts are cited by page number or, in the cases of manuscripts with folios, by folio number preceded by “fol.” or “fols.”

All English biblical quotations come from the *Jewish Study Bible*. The biblical quotations in Spanish in my edition of the Spanish text of *Questions* come from the 1995 edition of the *Biblia Reina-Valera*.