

RABBI MOSE ARRAGEL AND THE ART OF THE PROLOGUE IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY CASTILE

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The intense engagement in translations of the Jews in medieval Iberia [Tenth-Fifteenth centuries] is a well known phenomenon. It has been frequently studied since even before Steinschneider's magnum opus¹. Entire fields such as the history of medieval science or philosophy are unthinkable without attention to this phenomenon. And yet, the translators' personalities appear to be rather opaque. They certainly did not lead to the kind of folkloric tales about their lives and loves that we find in the cases of Yehuda Ha-Levi, Abraham ibn Ezra or Maimonides. Interest in the medieval translators would seem to be an acquired taste, a matter of little consequence to the public at large. The exception that proves the rule is a picture, the best known and most frequently reprinted representation of a medieval Jewish translator- the illumination which appears near the Prologue, at the beginning of Arragel's Bi-

1. M. Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen uebersetzungen des mittelalters und die Juden als dolmetscher. Ein beitrag zur literaturgeschichte des mittelalters, meist nach handschriftlichen quellen*, Berlin, Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographischen bureaux, 1893. The translation of Arragel has given rise to a large corpus of studies in diverse disciplines; history of art, exegesis, textual history, biblical studies, history of the romance language. Not all of them are related to our theme. See for example Lorenzo Amigo Espada, "El influjo del latín en el vocabulario de la Biblia de Alba: algunas voces" *Helmantica: Revista de filología clásica y hebrea* 46 / 139-141, (1995), pp. 183-200; Luis Manuel Girón-Negrón, "La Biblia de Arragel y la edición de traducciones bíblicas del siglo XV." *Helmántica* 190 (2012) pp. 291-309.