

‘FROM WHERE THE SUN RISES TO WHERE IT SETS’:
THE RESPONSA BY *RASHBA* TO THE SAGES OF ACRE

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The sages of Acre maintained strong ties with R. Solomon ben Abraham Adret (*Rashba*), who lived in Barcelona – on the Mediterranean shore, but thousands of kilometers from Acre. This close relationship has been known for centuries, from the printed collections of Adret’s responsa. The full – and impressive – extent of these ties, encompassing more than eighty responsa in diverse fields, however, can be seen only from the collections of his responsa that remain in manuscript form.

Two of the queriers from Acre are known to us by name: R. Elijah and R. Joseph di Saintes, but nothing else is known about them. We do not even know the names of the other sages from Acre who directed queries to Adret. All we can say is that they sent their questions to him before 1291, when Acre was destroyed and its Jewish community ceased to exist.

The responsa between the sages of Acre and *Rashba* provide a wealth of information regarding both the Acre Jewish community in the second half of the thirteenth Century and the personality of *Rashba*, who devoted great efforts to answer the questions posed by the members of the most important Jewish community in the Land of Israel at the time. Of even greater importance is the intriguing cultural phenomenon that emerges from the responsa discussed in the current article, that of two Torah scholars, distinctly not of equal standing, who reside thousands of kilometers apart, but who nevertheless study *Yevamot* together, one of the most difficult tractates in the Babylonian Talmud. This phenomenon teaches about the needs of the querier, who dwelled in the Land of Israel and was separated from the important European Torah centers, and of the thoughts and feelings of *Rashba*, who lived at the end of the West, but whose heart was in the East.