

AHABA BETA'NUGIM

This song composed by Mosseh de Yehudah Pizza of Amsterdam (1737-1808) was written in honor of the yearly anniversary of a society (*Hebra*) devoted to the study of Hebrew literature. Seven capitalized letters at the beginning of the stanzas add up to 5410 (1650), the date of the society's founding. The members would hold special *seudot* (gatherings) on the occasion of *Pesach*, *Shabuot*, *Sukkot*, *Hanukah* and *Purim*. They would then be served a favorite delicacy particular to these holidays. The hymn includes a stanza for each special dish and even some recipes.

There are various additional literary refinements which make this song a linguistic delicacy. To cite one example, the fifth stanza brings us to the heart of the Dutch winter, the dreary December days to which Hanukah brings light:

Iron and iron, brothers together;
Between them they bake,
On the days of Matthias
WAFELE; at night have no fear
(or: And a wonder during nights; no fear)
Street vendors are yelling: "Hot! Get 'em hot!"
In squares! In squares you bake it!
Just let them taste it! Just let them taste it!

The pun is on the Hebrew word *fele*, meaning wonder, and the Dutch specialty *par excellence*, is "WAFELEN" (waffles), a batter of flour, milk and eggs baked between waffle-irons.

Of the five culinary specialties included here, one is described only in Hebrew, one has an exclusively Dutch name, and the other three are Dutch favorites parading under pseudo-Portuguese names (*tarta*, *pastel*, *bolo*, for the Dutch *taart*, *pastei*, *bolus*).

