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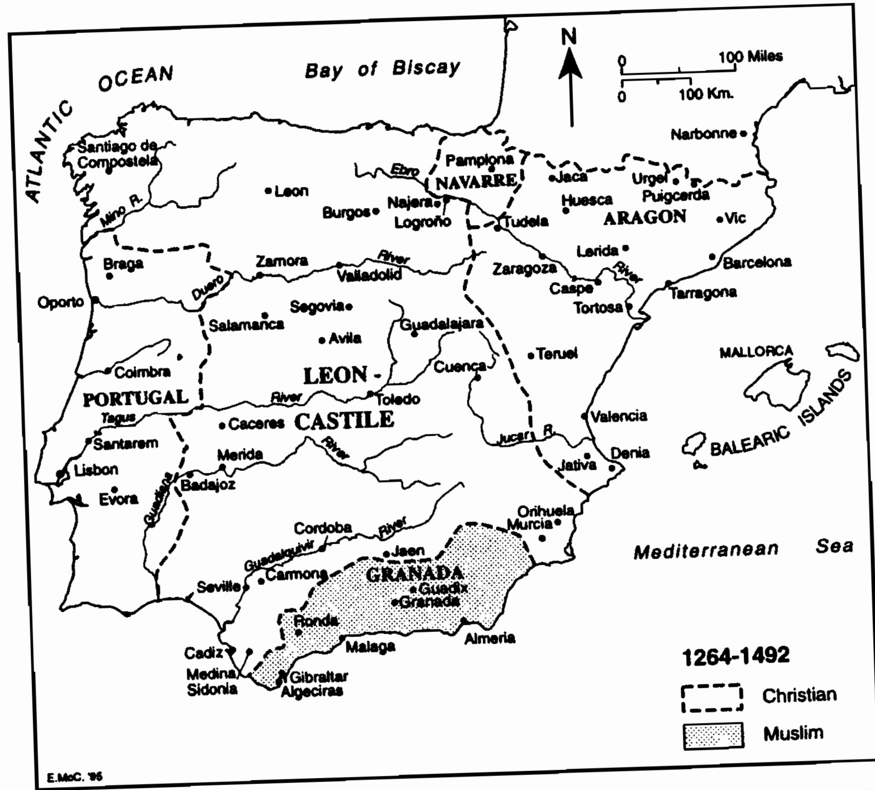

Map of the Iberian Peninsula, 1264–1492.
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TWO

A LETTER TO A WAYWARD TEACHER

The Transformations of Sephardic Culture in Christian Iberia

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In 1391 in Andalusia and other regions of Castile, and later on within the Crown of Aragon in Valencia, Aragon, and Catalonia, riots broke out against many of the Jewish communities. Jews were killed, their institutions were destroyed, and many Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. When the riots subsided, peninsular Jews and Christians became aware as well of the voluntary conversion to Christianity by many Castilian and Aragonese Jews. One of those converts was Solomon ha-Levi, who had served as rabbi in Burgos and now assumed the name Pablo de Santa María. Joshua ha-Lorki, a young man from the Aragonese town of Alcañiz, wrote an open letter to his former teacher, attempting to discern why ha-Levi, a scholar and leader of the Jewish community, had abandoned his faith for Christianity.[1] Joshua opened his missive as follows:

> After you received an epiphany so wondrous that the ears of all who heard of your discovery tingled with dread, my mind was restless and my heart neither slumbered nor slept. How could I bear to observe who led you to this experience and what motivated you to alter the order of Creation and to rage against us. I reflected to myself that your experience can only be understood within the following analytical categories.

Determined to explore the reasons for ha-Levi's conversion, ha-Lorki proposed four possible motivations. Contemporary chroniclers of Sephardic culture who also wish to analyze why Jews of ha-Levi's generation decided "to alter the order of Creation" would do well to follow ha-Lorki's lead. But the letter can also help us to trace the contours of Sephardic civilization under Christian rule

from its very beginnings, when Iberian Jews transformed the culture that they had inherited from their predecessors in Muslim al-Andalus. And, coming at the turning point of 1391, ha-Lorki's letter points ahead to the next century, which ended in the great wave of expulsions from Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and Navarre.

By puzzling over the roots of the behavior of Castilian and Aragonese Jews at this critical juncture, some writers have inadvertently suggested that the history of these Jews under Christian rule led inexorably toward the mass conversion of the late fourteenth century.[2] Indeed, emphasis on the conversions and later expulsions can prevent us from fully appreciating the contours of their lives under peninsular Christianity. Nevertheless, I propose not to avoid concentrating on the events of 1391 but purposefully to use that year as a vantage point from which to look forward to the denouement of the Iberian Jewish communities and backward at the growth of these communities within the medieval Christian kingdoms. It would be willful pretension to imagine that we can reflect upon Sephardic Jewry in Christian Iberia and not let the knowledge of what transpired in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries impinge upon our consciousness and influence our reading and interpretation of their culture. So long as we remember that conversion was not their fate from their early years under Christianity or even in the months immediately prior to 1391, probing the response of the Jews in that fateful year affords an effective and convenient means to survey the rich texture of their culture.

The Jews of Iberia first confronted the Christian faith and its adherents when some of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire became Christianized in late antiquity. When the Christian Visigoths who had conquered the Roman provinces of Iberia were themselves defeated by the Muslims in 711, most Jews remained within the broad expanses of the peninsula that fell under Islamic control. Few if any joined the defeated Christians who retreated to the fastnesses of the mountain chains to the north. During the eleventh century, when the Christians began to make significant inroads against Muslim hegemony, an increasing number of Jews came to live in regions dominated by the new rulers. By the middle of the thirteenth century, when the Christians could boast of almost complete military success, the overwhelming majority of Iberian Jews lived within the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and Navarre.

During the heyday of the *reconquista*—as the victors christened their military triumphs—peninsular Jews identified themselves as Sephardim after the verse in the biblical book of Obadiah that spoke of "the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad."[3] Already in the tenth century, under Islamic sovereignty, Iberian Jews had viewed themselves as "exiles of Jerusalem"—that is, as the nobility of the

Jewish people who, when their ancient kingdom had been destroyed, left their capital city and created a new homeland in the far western corner of the Mediterranean. These Sephardim, now living in a territory that was the southwesternmost appendage of Christian European civilization, not only drew upon the culture they had created under Islamic rule but were also receptive to both Jewish and Christian ideas arriving from the north. As a result, a new Sephardic civilization emerged on peninsular soil and was expressed in works of mysticism and pietism, in commentaries on the Talmud and the Bible, in polemics against Christianity, in poetry, and in philosophical reflections.

HEDONISTIC TEMPTATIONS

Ha-Lorki began his four-pronged investigation with the following suggestion:

> Perhaps your appetitive soul longed to climb the rungs of wealth and honor which everyone desires and to satisfy the craving soul with all manner of food and to gaze at the resplendent beauty of the countenance of gentile women.

Ha-Lorki challenged ha-Levi, asking whether his decision to convert had been motivated by materialistic or opportunistic considerations. If he imagined that the answer would be affirmative, he would have had no reason to probe further. But for students of Sephardic culture, this is an argument that cannot easily be dismissed. Were Sephardic Jews so content with the material success they had enjoyed during the years of Christian rule that their fear of losing this comfortable existence, to the exclusion of all other considerations, led them to the baptismal font? Simply put, did they convert to enjoy the good life?

To answer this question, we first need to see if opportunistic considerations were an integral aspect of Sephardic culture from its early days within the emerging Christian kingdoms. Although the Jews living in the areas of Christian control during the early years of the reconquista did enjoy a measure of material well-being, they wondered whether the civilization they had fashioned in Muslim-dominated al-Andalus could thrive in the Christian-dominated areas of the peninsula. They had lived under the protection of the Umayyad caliphs, and their symbiotic relationship with Islam had allowed for the efflorescence of a brilliant Andalusian Jewish culture starting in the tenth century. But the situation in the Muslim south had changed. Almoravids, Berber tribes from North Africa who had been invited by local Muslims to help combat the growing Christian strength on the peninsula at the end of the eleventh century, displayed

much harsher attitudes toward the *dhimmī* population (the protected minorities, mainly Jews and Christians) than those of their Umayyad predecessors, who were devoted to building a multiethnic and multireligious society. With the assumption of power by Almoravids, some Jews, under pressure by the new government, converted to Islam. Caught between resurgent Christian kingdoms to the north and the increasingly hostile Muslims in the south, Sephardic Jews struggled to develop a new cultural synthesis. The lives of a few Jewish intellectuals—two of whom were introduced in the previous chapter—will shed light on this larger struggle.

One of the avatars of the Muslim-Jewish symbiosis, whose writings incorporated sophisticated notions about the educational curriculum essential for the development of a well-rounded Sephardic intellectual, was Moses ibn Ezra. Born into an aristocratic family in the mid-eleventh century, Ibn Ezra enjoyed a first-rate Andalusi Jewish education. After the entry of Almoravids into his hometown of Granada (a major locus of Sephardic culture in the Muslim south), he left the city and, like many other Jews at that time, wandered about the peninsula and sojourned in lands controlled by the Christians. His poetry, written while he lived in Christian Iberia, was filled with longing for Granada and for his beloved Andalusi Jewish culture. He likened his existence in the Christian north to living among the tongue-tied, surrounded by those who did not share or even appreciate the cultural values that were the inheritance of the wealthy Jewish intellectuals under peninsular Islam.[4]

Judah Halevi, one of the most well known of medieval Jewish poets, was a protégé of Ibn Ezra, and, though born in the north in Muslim Tudela around 1075, studied in the important southern centers of Jewish learning. He too left Granada, probably in 1090, and traveled. But, unlike Ibn Ezra, Halevi took great advantage of the emerging Christian states to the north and worked for them as a diplomat and courtier. He was socially and intellectually flexible enough to realize the potential for the survival of Sephardic culture under Christian political domination. Yet, in his middle age, he traveled south to the homeland of Sephardic culture and set sail for Alexandria on his way to fulfill a personal religious pilgrimage to the Land of Israel. Halevi's decision was not a rejection of the potential of an economically successful and politically secure Jewish life in the Christian north; instead, it was a reflection of a more far-reaching negation of the symbiosis with Islamic culture that had been the hallmark of Sephardic Judaism.[5]

This was decidedly not the perspective of Abraham ibn Daud. Born in the early twelfth century in Córdoba (where Andalusian Jewish culture had first emerged), he settled in the city of Toledo, which was the royal city of the ancient Visigoths and was also regarded as the capital of the rapidly expanding kingdom

of Castile. Unlike Judah Halevi, Ibn Daud expressed himself in the idiom of Sephardic culture and defended its intellectual orientation, arguing for the continued primacy of its religious values within the Jewish world. He maintained that Jews could thrive in the new atmosphere, contending that their political status was secure under the protective eye of God and his agents, the Christian political leaders. What further comforted Ibn Daud was that the representatives of the Jewish community, the courtier class, were now safely ensconced in the corridors of power under Christendom just as they had been well established in the Islamic south.[6]

Like Ibn Daud, most Iberian Jews made their way north even as Christian domination of the peninsula extended southward. Indeed, by the mid-thirteenth century, the Crowns of Portugal, Castile, Navarre, and Aragon controlled most of the peninsula, and the Muslims had been restricted to their capital city of Granada and the surrounding area. For many Jews, the move to the north was the choice of the good life. While Maimon the judge was preparing to abandon Muslim Córdoba and travel across the Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco with his family and his soon-to-be-famous young son Moses, wealth and honor were the lot of the growing Jewish courtier class in the new Christian kingdoms. And what grand opportunities were available. Jews had become a prized commodity, needed by the Christian monarchs to help them stabilize and populate the newly conquered cities and to provide a ready-made merchant and artisan class within a mainly agricultural society. The Jews, trained in financial administration under Islam, were able to offer these very skills. At the beginning of the reign of Alfonso X the Learned of Castile, Jewish courtiers rose to important positions within the royal government. Moreover, during the thirteenth century in the Crown of Aragon—which grew to include the kingdoms of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia as well as parts of southern France and the Italian littoral—Jews occupied significant positions within the royal treasury and the chancellery. They were well respected in the diplomatic arena because of their ability to communicate, both orally and in writing, with the Muslims in Arabic.[7]

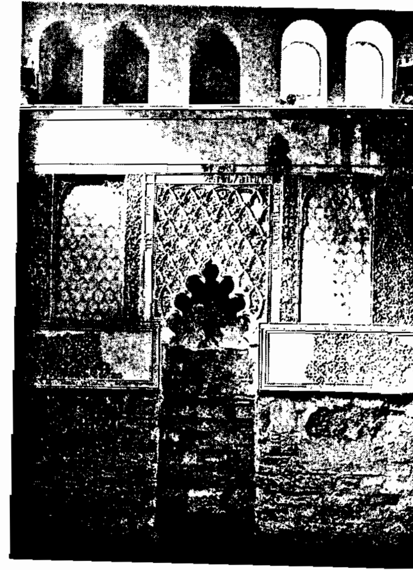
Indeed, one of the striking aspects of Sephardic civilization in the Christian period is the degree to which Jews continued to be positively disposed toward Islamic culture. Social and economic relations existed between Jews and Muslims in Christian Iberia, and Arabic food, songs, and decorative designs were part of Jewish households.[8] Our own correspondent Joshua ha-Lorki wrote fluently in Arabic. Even as late as 1482, Jews served as Arabic interpreters to Ferdinand and Isabella upon the fall of Málaga to the Christian forces.

Jews played a crucial role in the court life of the two large Christian kingdoms and were integral to the formation of culture in these emerging societies. Their

presence both within the court and on the land was an essential part of the character of these kingdoms, and their lives at times reflected the local mores. Over a century later, in asking the erstwhile Solomon whether his life was governed by hedonistic principles, ha-Lorki first singled out wealth and honor, the commodities enjoyed by many courtiers in Christian territory.

There were built-in stresses in the relationship between the courtier class and other Sephardic Jews, most evident in the dealings that the royal advisers had with leaders of the Jewish community. These tensions, already observable in al-Andalus, can be documented in Christian Iberia up through the last decade of the fifteenth century. From the days of the centralizing Umayyad caliph Abd al-Raḥmān III (early tenth century), who encouraged individuals of all ethnic and religious backgrounds to participate in the creation and functioning of the Andalusian state, the highest-ranking Jew within the administration became the de facto head of the Jewish community and its representative at court. It was the courtier's accomplishments—social, intellectual, diplomatic—that had recommended him to the ruler, attributes that allowed him to rise within the administration. It was not necessarily his attachment to the Jewish community or his adherence to forms of rabbinic Judaism that had brought this individual into the highest councils of state. The Jews and their own chosen leaders had no choice but to rely upon "their man" at court. Although they were relieved to have a Jew at court attending to their concerns, his public lifestyle, which may have been at odds with the behavioral norms prescribed by communal leaders, underscored their worries about how sensitive this individual would be to them, their priorities, and their agenda. And though the courtier was honored by his position, he was loath to be subject not only to the religious principles of the Jewish community but especially to its financial burdens. The courtier often used his status in governmental circles to avoid such responsibilities, even while he was seen as protector of the rights of those communities themselves.[9]

The tensions that prevailed between the leaders of local Jewish communities (not to mention the moralists and rabbinic spokesmen) and the courtier class (usually allied with royal or seigneurial authorities) often erupted into outright hostility. In the writings of the pietist and preacher Jonah Gerondi (d. 1263) and his kinsman the great talmudist, kabbalist, and biblical exegete Moses ben Naḥman of Gerona (known as Naḥmanides, d. 1270), unconcealed anger is expressed at those aristocrats who did not follow the dictates of Jewish law and were overbearing in their use of power. Driven by their ideals and linked with a growing merchant class, influential individuals such as Naḥmanides and Gerondi hoped to engineer a revolt among Barcelonan Jewry in the 1230s, disrupting the rule of courtiers whose authority had been inherited from earlier times.[10]



The ark wall of the synagogue in Córdoba, Spain, 1314–15. (Photo: Nicholas Sapieha; courtesy The Jewish Museum, New York)

A page from the "Sarajevo" Haggadah, a fourteenth-century Sephardic manuscript, which is in the National Museum of Sarajevo in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that only the Jewish "aristocracy" benefited from the economic opportunities that developed in the wake of the Christian victories in the thirteenth century. Indeed, the posture of the Jews in the communities of the peninsula reflected the stance of their Christian (and Muslim) neighbors in a number of important respects. In the few items of material culture that have survived from the Sephardic Middle Ages—in the architecture of the synagogues and in the style of rare ceramic objects—the integration of the Jews into Iberian society seems complete, even as these ritual items and spaces reflect Jewish cultural concerns. For example, the Jewish illuminator of a Passover haggadah in fourteenth-century Catalonia included illustrations of noble coats of arms and the armorial bearings of the Crown of Aragon in his depiction of a fortress that dominates an early and significant page of this work. The meaning of the term *convivencia*—the living together of the three faith communities on the Iberian Peninsula—is precisely that the Jews were engaged daily with Christians and Muslims of many different classes and understandably shared some of their values.[11]

There were at least two voices that spoke to medieval Sephardic Jews in their

daily lives. One voice warned its listeners about the damage to their Jewish principles if they followed the norms of their non-Jewish neighbors, even as the other voice counseled them—if they needed such advice—that it would be advantageous, if not easier, to comport themselves according to the values of their environment. As early as the tenth century, the poet Dunash ibn Labrat had written of the tension that resulted from the conflict between a life extolling the senses and celebrating the pleasures of the material world and a life following the laws of Judaism, whose sources, both geographical and cultural, lay far from the soil of al-Andalus.[12]

Whether rabbis or laymen, all Sephardic Jews lived within the confines of an elaborate communal system. True, the courtiers, and the wealthy class generally, sought to avoid its rules and its financial demands. But the Jewish community was the organ that controlled behavior and provided services for its members, and it was the channel through which the Jews as a group related to all levels of Christian government—royal, noble, ecclesiastical, and municipal. Communal organization existed in almost all locales of Jewish population; it was known in Hebrew as the *kahal* and in the various Iberian vernaculars as the *aljama, alhama,* or *call.* The court of Jewish law was the central institution within these communities and was empowered to adjudicate most disputes among its members.

Their involvement in the daily lives of their non-Jewish neighbors, however, required a balance between fealty to the community and the demands and benefits of Christian Iberian society. As was true for the communities in Ashkenaz and elsewhere in Christendom, many Sephardim turned to the Christian judicial system if they felt that their case would be heard either more favorably or in a more timely fashion. Any Jew with sufficient economic resources could attend to the royal, municipal, or noble courts for satisfaction of his claims. The rabbis fulminated against the usurpation by the Christian courts of the place of Jewish law within the kahal but realized that they could not prevent any Jew from attending to civil legal needs elsewhere.

The Jewish community distinguished between what it maintained was its authority in ritual and family law and what it conceded fell within the purview of the Christian society—such as the enforcement of law and order and the protection of the financial prerogatives of the various governmental bodies. Although Christian society did not necessarily need the Jews to support its jurisdictional claims, Sephardic Jews applied the talmudic dictum "the law of the kingdom is law" to acknowledge to their own community their willingness to follow the requirements of the Christian legal system. The Jews always tempered their demands for greater legal autonomy by critically appraising the extent of their power and influence among the Christians.[13]

Although clearly identified as members of their own community in Christian Iberia, Sephardim worked both within and without the Jewish legal system. These relatively fluid relations with the surrounding society were also reflected in their sexual activities. Indeed, the sexual proclivities of the Jewish courtier do appear to mirror those of others who inhabited the court. To gaze into the countenance of gentile women, in ha-Lorki's felicitous phrase, was a part of the lives of some of those who pursued wealth and honor, at the very least in the fantasies of some observers.

When Moses of Coucy visited the peninsula from France in 1236, he denounced the sexual practices of the Sephardic Jews as akin to idol worship: "You have thus learned that he who has sexual intercourse with a gentile woman is considered as if he were married to idolatry."[14] Moses later imagined his influence to be equivalent to that of the biblical Ezra, boasting that, in the wake of his sermons, his Sephardic listeners had sent away their foreign wives.[15]

Foreigners were not the only ones dismayed by the sexual mores of Sephardic Jews. The native, albeit Ashkenaz-influenced, Jonah Gerondi was much upset with the practice, left over from Islamic times, of taking concubines—usually Muslim women—without regard for religious niceties or legalities. Naḥmanides, though in many ways a devotee of similar moral strictures, recognized the halakhic permissibility of concubinage and argued that such a practice was a preferred way for a Jewish man to satisfy his sexual needs. Menaḥem ben Zerah, whose family left royal France for the peninsula with the expulsion of 1306, acknowledged the extent of concubinage in his newly adopted culture. Agreeing with Naḥmanides, he suggested in *Tzeidah la-Derekh,* his vade mecum for courtiers, that singling out one woman as a concubine was less objectionable than sexually indiscriminate behavior.[16] In 1281, the Jewish community of Toledo issued a *ḥerem* (ban) that attempted to control sexual promiscuity and especially frowned upon the possession of non-Jewish concubines, but there is little evidence that such limitations enjoyed any success.

Another, more fundamental distinction between Sephardic and Ashkenazic attitudes concerning relations between the sexes can be observed in their stances toward polygamy. The Jews of northern Europe followed their Christian neighbors in not taking a second wife. Yet this practice of monogamy, which was established within the Jewish community allegedly as the result of a ban on polygamy by the early Ashkenazic scholar Gershom of Mainz, was not accepted by Jews within Iberian lands. Having been fashioned in Islamic al-Andalus, Sephardic culture had little difficulty tolerating the taking of more than one wife. The Crown of Aragon, however, maintained stricter laws against polygamy than rulers elsewhere on the peninsula, and those who wished to acquire a sec-

ond wife had to appeal to the royal authorities for dispensation, as did Ḥasdai Crescas at the end of the fourteenth century.[17]

Still, the writings of the courtier poets and communal preachers within Sepharad itself suggest a real tension between sexual license and restraint. When the thirteenth-century poet Todros ben Judah ha-Levi Abulafia described the lives of the Jewish courtiers, he wrote openly of their amorous activities. Todros, whose poetry exhibits a measure of realism about sexual life as well as a degree of lustfulness not even found in the love poetry of al-Andalus, was consciously aware of his irreverent stance toward traditional values. But when the preacher Todros ben Joseph ha-Levi Abulafia, the poet's namesake, denounced immoral behavior, even Todros ben Judah agreed and composed confessional poetry lamenting the lifestyle and values of his social class.[18]

There is much evidence that Todros's poems reflect actual sexual behavior and were not simply contemporary literary conventions. Nevertheless, we remain in the dark about what this evidence tells us about the lives of Jewish women in Christian Iberian lands. The tradition of misogynist literature prevalent in al-Andalus during the Muslim period also found expression among the Jewish writers in the Christian kingdoms and testifies to the manipulation of these standard literary forms in a new environment. The existence of such a genre tells us that Jewish literary culture allowed for such negative views of women, but it teaches us little about actual relations between men and women.[19]

When ha-Lorki suggested that perhaps Solomon ha-Levi yearned to have sexual relations with non-Jewish women, he was alluding to an attraction that was already acknowledged in the culture. But it was not only Eros in human relations that preoccupied Jews of Sepharad. By the time ha-Lorki wrote his letter to ha-Levi, Iberian Jewish culture had been developing a mystical doctrine of divine love for nearly two centuries. Rather than gaze at "the resplendent beauty of the countenance of gentile women," the kabbalists (as the disciples of this movement that emerged in southern France and Spain in the early thirteenth century came to be known) desired to "behold the beauty of the Lord" (Psalms 27:4) in the form of the feminine aspect of the Deity, the *shekhinah*.

These mystics believed that the human body and its sexual functions could serve as metaphors regarding relationships within the divine realm and that sexual acts were capable of augmenting God's holiness. One early-fourteenth-century Sephardic kabbalist expressed a positive disposition to the sexual act and was excited by the implications of preferred sexual behavior for harmony in the divine realms. The author of this influential "Holy Letter" attempted to regulate many aspects of intercourse between husband and wife as well as to guide the intention of the participants so that their sexual congress would truly be "for the sake of heaven." The greatest work of Sephardic Kabbalah in the Middle

Ages, the *Zohar* (The Book of Splendor), also devoted much effort to the exploration of the sexual relationships between the masculine and feminine aspects of the Deity. According to the *Zohar*, after the soul dies, it frequents the shekhinah, which the text refers to as a "chamber of love." But the *Zohar*'s compiler and author, Moses de Leon, was nevertheless ambivalent about the pleasure to be derived from the act itself. Like other Jewish writers of his time, he fulminated against sex with non-Jewish women and was much perturbed by the keeping of Muslim concubines by Jews.[20]

No, ha-Lorki told his mentor, you did not seek to bask in the countenance of alien women; rather, you were careful to observe all the commandments. But gazing into the countenance of the shekhinah did have a profound impact not only on the reasoning offered for a variety of halakhic practices but also, over time, on the nature of the observance of some Jewish laws and rituals. Many observations and discussions of Jewish law—some of Sephardic provenance and others from outside the peninsula—were current in Iberia during the thirteenth century and can be found in the *Zohar*. Although The Book of Splendor was fundamentally a work of mystical thought, it was soon reckoned with by those who saw themselves as expositors of Jewish law.[21]

Even though Sephardic rabbinic culture fostered creativity in a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from biblical and talmudic exegesis to poetry, philosophy, and Kabbalah, halakhic (legal) preoccupations were central. Ha-Lorki, dismissing the possibility that his teacher was seduced by either wealth or women, notes ha-Levi's passion for the law:

> You were always shoring up breaches in the faith, being punctilious with the commandments and their performance, never doubting any of its principles, or being lax in any of its particulars or preventative restrictions as is appropriate behavior for anyone who takes religion seriously.

Rabbinic learning in Sepharad—both in its Andalusi and northern Christian manifestations—was the patrimony of an elite upper stratum within Jewish society, and Solomon ha-Levi was a member of this caste. He shared the assumptions of that culture by demonstrating his concern with the details of Jewish law. Ha-Levi's faithfulness regarding the performance of these obligations proved to his correspondent that the erstwhile Solomon had been sincerely attached to Jewish tradition and to the Jewish community. Moreover, for ha-Lorki, ha-Levi's devotion to the law stood as a refutation of other writers' denunciations of the lax behavior of the courtier class. Here, at least, was one Jewish leader who remained punctilious in his observance.

Moralists had been concerned for many years about the attachment of

A page from *Tur Orah Hayyim* by Jacob ben Asher.
(Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America,
New York; Mayer Sulzberger Collection. Photo: Suzanne Kaufman)

Iberian Jews to the *mitzvot* (commandments). When Moses of Coucy, who denounced the lax sexual morality of the Sephardic Jews, arrived on the peninsula in 1236, he also spoke of the neglect of the daily donning of phylacteries and of the placement of *mezuzot* on doorposts (as he had in other locales in Northern Europe). His denunciations, as well as the fulminations of an Iberian-born yet north-European-educated and -influenced moralist like Gerondi, are ample testimony to the halakhic and pietistic ideas that blew in from Ashkenazic lands, but they reveal little of the actual behavioral patterns of Iberian Jews. Although we may never know about their daily religious lives with any certainty, there are

some indications that, for those not in the rabbinic elite, the law was also of central importance: the *Sefer ha-Ḥinukh*, an attempt to tease out the 613 principal commandments from the Pentateuch, probably written by a Catalonian scholar in the latter part of the thirteenth century, was wildly popular in Sepharad.[22]

Interest in halakhic matters resulted in a prodigious literary output that was already visible from the early days of the transition of Sephardic culture from its southern Andalus ambience to the Christian north. The main focus of Talmud study in al-Andalus, as for other Jewish communities living within the orbit of Islam, was the extraction of the practical halakhic relevance from those rabbinic writings. After an understandable lull, as Andalusi Jewry gradually made its way to Christian-dominated lands within the peninsula, there was a remarkable outpouring of Sephardic legal writings and talmudic commentaries from the end of the twelfth through the end of the fourteenth centuries. Within the Sephardic communities, a rabbinically learned Jew, *talmid ḥakham*, was a halakhic decisor. Law was central to Sephardic culture, even if those who administered the local Jewish courts were not as well versed in the correct interpretations of the legal materials as the leading rabbinic authorities on the peninsula would have liked.[23]

Over the course of the thirteenth century, there was an observable shift in the study of Talmud, from a stress on practical halakhah to an emphasis on exegesis itself. This process was precisely the reverse of what occurred in the Ashkenazic Jewish communities to the north, where the energy that had long been devoted to talmudic commentary was now directed to practical legal matters. The mutual influence of Ashkenaz and Sepharad is instructive; these two civilizations were not isolated from each other. Not only did Moses of Coucy arrive in Sepharad endowed with his Ashkenazic ideology, but Jonah Gerondi also transmitted the theology of the medieval Ashkenazic pietists to his native Iberia. The Sephardic culture that emerged and developed in the thirteenth century was no less influenced by the creativity of the Jewish communities to the north than it was by the civilization of al-Andalus.

In the early years of the fourteenth century, Asher ben Yeḥiel left war-torn Ashkenaz, where he was a student of the towering halakhic authority Meir of Rothenburg and where he had himself assumed a respected position after his teacher's death. He traveled through southern France in 1303 and arrived the following year in Barcelona, where he spent some days with the great Catalonian talmudist, Solomon ibn Adret. The latter provided him with a personal letter of reference, and in 1305 Rabbi Asher arrived in Toledo, Castile, where he was able to secure an important position.

Asher's rabbinate was distinguished by his loyalty to the teachings of his Ashkenazic teachers and to their communal traditions. But his position within the Sephardic communities influenced his halakhic thinking, even as his legal

decisions affected Iberian Jews in their daily lives. Asher found himself reluctantly agreeing to the Sephardic practice of sentencing to death those who, according to the leaders of the Jewish community, had jeopardized the security of the Jewish population. Despite halakhah, he even urged disfigurement as punishment for a widow suspected of having been impregnated by her Muslim lover. He hoped that this decision would help restore the political and religious boundaries that were threatened by the woman's social and sexual behavior. More profoundly for the history of halakhah, Asher—according to Sephardic practice—began to collect and file his legal decisions. This systematization of law reflected developments in contemporary Spanish culture, for it was in the Castilian royal court of Alfonso X that the compilation of legal tradition and practice entitled Las Siete Partidas was composed.[24] Asher's *responsa* were edited by his son Jacob, who had lived in Sepharad for a couple of decades and had preceded his father to Toledo. Jacob's edition of his father's decisions formed the basis for his own *Tur Shulḥan Arukh*, a milestone in the codification of Jewish jurisprudence.[25]

The presence of Ashkenazic ideas in Sepharad was not always as obvious as in the immigration of Asher. The pietistic philosophy of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz had a profound impact on the moralistic tracts written by Sephardic Jews, just as Ashkenazic modes of Talmud commentaries developed by the Tosafistic school revolutionized the methodology of talmudic exegesis practiced by Sephardic scholars. Indeed, the greatest refinement of this dialectical style and its most coherent literary expression can be found in the talmudic commentaries of the Sephardic scholars Naḥmanides and Ibn Adret.

After raising sheer opportunism as a motivation for ha-Levi's conversion, ha-Lorki discounted this possibility as a serious factor and recalled an encounter with ha-Levi at the wedding of a friend:

> And ever since the time that I was eagerly drinking your waters when you made your servant one of those who ate at your table, I knew of your comings and goings and I saw in you the intensity of desire, for speculative discourse and for essential truths, and you held back from the pursuit of great deeds and wondrous things. Indeed let me remind your honor about the time I went there to the wedding of your friend Don Meir Benveniste, when you began to occupy yourself with matters of state and you had acquired for yourself a chariot, horses, and runners to do your bidding, you stated privately to me: "I regret that I have subjected myself to the rule of these seeming successes, for they are vanity and works of delusion. They produce nothing but sorrow of heart. If only I could have back as my own that garret where my tent was pitched in those early years and where I spent day and night in diligent study." This was the gist of what you said—rightly—and such expressions were frequently heard from you.

Many Iberian Jews did indeed enjoy the good life, and the courtiers among them probably delighted in these pleasures more than most. But for ha-Lorki such satisfactions did not necessarily lead to legal laxity. Although he seems a bit naive in believing the professions of ha-Levi that he would have forfeited all his worldly success for the garret room where he had spent his youthful days reflecting on religious issues of great moment, ha-Lorki did not view the courtier lifestyle enjoyed by ha-Levi as essentially antagonistic to a life of restraint that entailed the scrupulous observance of the minutiae of halakhah.

PHILOSOPHICAL SEDUCTIONS

Philosophy and Kabbalah, like their literary precursors within the Jewish tradition such as aggadah, served to provide both the motivation and the spiritual underpinning for the practical life that the dictates of rabbinic Judaism ordained. Indeed, the public dissemination of kabbalistic ideas may well have been a response to the rationalists' claim that it was philosophical ideas that contained the secrets of the Torah. But for ha-Lorki as for many others during the Middle Ages, philosophy was seen as an unreliable ally in the goal of persuading the Jews to follow the halakhah and to be loyal to rabbinic Judaism. Ha-Lorki conjectured:

> Or perhaps you were seduced by philosophical inquiry to overturn the bowl and to consider the underpinnings of all faiths to be vanity and works of delusion and so you turned to a religion more conducive to bodily calm and to peace of mind and not accompanied by terrors and fear and dread.

It was not that philosophy led the Jews directly to the baptismal font. Far from making such an assertion, ha-Lorki wondered whether such inquiry weakened the Jews' attachment to the principles of Judaism as well as to those of all other (monotheistic) faiths and lured the Jews to pursue a life more attuned to bodily and spiritual comfort.

Whether philosophical investigation was the acme of the educated Jews' curriculum or at best an uneasy if not treacherous bedfellow in the rabbis' attempt to enforce normative behavior was the subject of intense discussion and even conflict from the very beginning of Sephardic culture. When the Christians were

achieving notable success in their military campaigns against the Muslim *taifa* (small states controlled by "party-kings") in the late eleventh century, Moses ibn Ezra feared that the fructifying cultural and social symbiosis enjoyed by the Jews and Muslims in al-Andalus could not easily be transferred to the north. It was the pursuit of philosophical truths that was considered the most praiseworthy intellectual activity in this culture. Indeed, possession of the specialized knowledge born of such inquiry indicated more than anything else that its bearer was a cultured gentleman.

But Ibn Ezra's protégé Judah Halevi asserted that, though philosophy may have at times provided the Jews with a defense of their faith, especially in their encounter with the dominant Islamic culture, it also weakened the attachment to truths that were only in the possession of Judaism. In Halevi's view, echoed over two centuries later by ha-Lorki, such study bred the conviction that the pillars of any inherited faith were not as important as rigorous philosophical inquiry. For Halevi, religions were dissimilar not only in their possession of the truth but also in the ability of their adherents to perceive it. Not all lands were equally conducive to its pursuit, nor were all languages equal to the task of explication. The irony of it all was that Halevi composed his seemingly anti-philosophical treatise, the *Kuzari,* in Arabic, the language of philosophical inquiry for the Andalusi intellectual. Indeed, this work, which was born in a culture known for having raised the systematic study of philosophy to its most exalted form, marked but a new speculative trend.[26]

Philosophical skepticism, according to Halevi, was as threatening to the well-being of the Jewish people as was the belief of many that they could find a comfortable home in *galut,* in any Jewish community outside the Land of Israel. Jewish high society came under Halevi's censure because he believed that the members of this elite, in their attempt to enjoy the benefits of their Andalusi life, were not concerned with particular religious observances, even as they celebrated philosophy. In this sense, the attractions of philosophy, which ha-Lorki suggested as the second possible motivation for the conversion of Solomon ha-Levi, were only an extension of his first argument from hedonism.

With the shift of the Jewish community to the Christian lands, philosophy could no longer be described simply as the most important discipline of Jewish learning. Rather, the conflict over the rightful place of philosophy within the curriculum assumed a central role in the definition of Jewish culture. Abraham ibn Daud, schooled in Andalusian Jewish culture (as was Judah Halevi), hoped that this culture could survive intact its translation to the north. Contrary to Halevi, Ibn Daud maintained that Sephardic culture was still in its prime. Toledo could become the new Córdoba, and philosophical speculation might

still remain a bulwark for the observance of Judaic precepts. Ibn Daud's philosophical magnum opus, *Exalted Faith,* was the first serious attempt to synthesize Judaism with a mix of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism (only to be eclipsed by a far more celebrated work, *Guide of the Perplexed,* by the Córdoba-born Moses Maimonides, written sometime between 1185 and 1190). *Exalted Faith* was not only a brave work methodologically but also a triumphant proclamation that the philosophical curriculum embraced by the Jews of al-Andalus was now thriving on the Christian side of the divided peninsula.

But Ibn Daud only represented one trend in the intellectual world of the Sephardim. As Sephardic culture migrated north, it underwent significant changes, not the least of which was increasing resistance to philosophy, a trend that found expression in emerging opposition to Maimonides' attempt to wed Aristotle to Judaism. Judah Halevi was not the only one to reject philosophy as a threat to traditional religious and social values. Writing from Toledo in the early years of the thirteenth century, Meir ha-Levi Abulafia perceived Maimonides' spiritual interpretation of resurrection, in its reflection of a rigid dualism between body and soul and in its tendency to value natural causation over divine intervention and omnipotence, as a break with some of the fundamental principles of Judaism.[27] The quarrel that ensued over Abulafia's critique was a preview of the dispute that erupted among Jewish intellectuals in Sepharad, Provence, and Ashkenaz in the 1230s. Underscoring the change in Sephardic Judaism and its values, the "Maimonidean controversy" indicated that Sephardic Jewry was now linked with European Jewish civilization. Writings born of the Muslim-Jewish symbiosis and the resultant philosophical tradition were destined to be unsettling to those operating with other cultural assumptions. Some Provençal scholars feared that, because *Guide of the Perplexed* and the philosophical prolegomena to Maimonides' halakhic work, *Mishneh Torah,* attempted to offer a rational basis for all the commandments, commitment to those very precepts would be undermined. They sent a Sephard intellectual, Jonah Gerondi, who had studied with the Tosafists of northern France and was then sojourning in Provence, to elicit support within Sepharad for their anti-Maimonidean campaign. Those in Provence who were offended by this initiative placed these anti-Maimunists themselves under a ban.[28] The controversy raged on, spreading north to Ashkenaz as well as to the Iberian Peninsula.

Anti-philosophical positions had been articulated in Sephardic culture under Islam, but the positive valence of philosophical studies was never seriously questioned. When the Provençal pro-Maimunists chose David Kimḥi to rally approval among the Iberian Jewish communities for a ban against the anti-Maimunists, he achieved mixed success in Barcelona but, strikingly, encoun-

tered a deadlocked community in Toledo. Naḥmanides attempted to broker a peace accord by explaining the pro-Maimonidean position to the northern French scholars and attempting to persuade the Sephardic rationalists not to react immediately and enter the fray against the Provençal anti-Maimunists. Abulafia, who earlier had been marginalized by many of the rationalists during the controversy over resurrection, wrote to Naḥmanides about the ultimate futility of his (Abulafia's) own efforts. The debate, however, was abruptly curtailed. Pro-Maimunists asserted that the anti-Maimunists had involved the Dominicans and the newly founded papal Inquisition in Montpellier in this conflict over heresy within the Jewish community. Although there is no independent confirmation of this allegation, the controversy did come to a halt without any attempt to arrive at a reasonable solution.[29]

The Maimonidean controversy signaled both the demise of the Jewish-Andalusian civilization born within the orbit of Islam and the emergence of a new Sephardic culture. Not that the opponents to rationalism in Sepharad were of one mind with either their allies in Provence or the Tosafists, their supporters in northern France. Andalusi traditions did live on in their writings. Unlike their Tosafist brethren, these Sephardim asserted the permissibility of philosophical study and approved of the rationalist ideas in Maimonides' *Sefer ha-Madda* even as they were uncomfortable with some of the implications of the *Guide of the Perplexed.* They merely wished to counter the radical excesses of the rationalist position. Naḥmanides, for instance, presented a modified antirationalist position, suggesting that philosophy only be studied by an elite group of students. He often utilized Maimonides' historical explanations in his own biblical commentary and was sympathetic to Maimonides' critique of rabbinic literature when the ideas of the rabbis ran contrary to reason. Yet when Naḥmanides was confronted with Maimonides' philosophical naturalism, or when Maimonidean comments did not square with kabbalistic interpretations, his criticism was aroused. A well-grounded philosopher simply did not indulge in idle speculation when the Torah, a revelatory source of empirical data, provided clear instruction. Nevertheless, for Naḥmanides, philosophy remained a useful method of clarification.[30] With a similar nuanced sensibility, Naḥmanides, who was one of the early kabbalists, hinted at mystical secrets in his commentary on the Torah even while he opposed the spread of such ideas beyond a small circle of initiates. And, in his talmudic and halakhic works, he was open to the influence of the Tosafists, even though his interpretations were often based on older Sephardic traditions. In all these fields—philosophy, Kabbalah, and talmudic study—Naḥmanides represented the new cultural idiom.

Although the public debate over the role of philosophy within European

Judaism came to an abrupt end in 1233, the issue of whether allegorical interpretations of the Bible led to a disdain for the halakhically observant life remained on the agenda of Jewish intellectuals. Less than a century later, the controversy over rationalism broke out again in Provence, where southern and northern traditions collided and where fear of extreme rationalism troubled a small minority. After much correspondence from anxious and insistent Provençal writers, Solomon ibn Adret, one of Naḥmanides' students and a prodigious halakhist, talmudic commentator, and sometimes kabbalist, declared that one had to be 25 years old before being allowed to study philosophical texts written by non-Jews. Exposing underage students to philosophy, Ibn Adret argued, was akin to feeding hard foods to children incapable of digesting them. Still, this ruling, which was proclaimed in Barcelona following Ibn Adret's suggestion, did not significantly alter the study of philosophy in the Sephardic world.[31]

For many Sephardic thinkers writing in the wake of the conflicts over philosophical study, a moderate position on all these matters seemed in order. Ibn Adret had been troubled only by those extreme rationalists who appeared to view the Bible and its commandments as allegorical teachings. He understood that philosophy was a helpful device to understand Holy Writ so long as basic traditional beliefs were not contradicted. Reason of course had to be subservient to revelation, philosophical reflection to prophecy. In Ibn Adret's commentaries on various aggadot of the Talmud, philosophical ideas were presented, some accepted and others rejected; kabbalistic interpretations, on the other hand, were consciously submerged. This intellectual stance did not represent a new departure; Ibn Adret was, after all, a student of the subtle Naḥmanides.[32] Yet, for Naḥmanides, Ibn Adret, and their later disciples, the lines between philosophy, Kabbalah, and halakhah were not as clearly drawn as they may seem today: each of these disciplines could shed light on the others.

A circle of individuals surrounding Ibn Adret reflected their master's basic approach to the study of Judaism. Following Ibn Adret, who was the most prolific halakhic decisor of the later Middle Ages, they highly valued the study of halakhah and viewed the legal enterprise as central to the curriculum of learned Jews. They were also enamored of Kabbalah and devoted much energy to studying Naḥmanides' occasionally esoteric Commentary on the Torah. Yom Tov ben Avraham al-Isbili, a great halakhist and first-rate talmudic commentator and the most prominent student of Ibn Adret, wrote an analysis of Naḥmanides' commentary entitled *Sefer ha-Zikkaron.* In it, though al-Isbili defended Maimonides against the overt criticisms of Naḥmanides, he repeatedly endorsed the latter's kabbalistically informed conclusions as fundamentally sound.

The students of Ibn Adret also blurred the disciplinary lines between ha-

lakhah, philosophy, and Kabbalah. This group did not oppose the study of philosophy. Rational explanations for the mitzvot were welcome in these disciples' popular-legal compilations just as they had been earlier for the author of the *Sefer ha-Ḥinukh.* Open philosophical reflections and judicious hints at kabbalistic truths pepper their writings. There is no sense among these writers that these two approaches to understanding the commandments were fundamentally incompatible. Still, though ideas of philosophical provenance were to be found among this circle, its members resisted the approach of the radical philosophers—those who seemed to suggest that the study of philosophy was theoretically more important to the adept than the observance of Jewish law. Such radicalism continued to encounter fierce opposition among this generation of writers, as it had for their teachers.[33]

The experience of Asher ben Yeḥiel reflects this unresolved tension within Sephardic culture. During his stay in Montpellier in transit to Sepharad, Asher wrote a letter of support for the antiphilosophical party. In Barcelona, where he encountered Sephardic Jews and their culture directly, he argued for a compromise approach. Still, in early 1306, he threw his support behind the ban that was encouraged by Ibn Adret. Although Asher was appointed to a rabbinical post in Toledo, Israel ben Yosef ha-Yisre'eli, the secretary of the kahal and one of his opponents in a communal dispute, argued that a man who did not read Arabic, and was therefore incapable of reading earlier communal statutes, was insufficiently prepared to be a community leader. His legal decisions, according to ha-Yisre'eli, were not binding: the knowledge of the historical culture of the ruling elite, of which philosophical awareness was an essential ingredient, was a necessary credential for a communal judge.[34]

Philosophy therefore remained part of Sephardic culture. But in contemplating whether the corrosive effects of philosophy prompted Solomon ha-Levi's conversion, ha-Lorki dismissed the idea even more quickly than he discarded the argument from hedonism:

> Also of philosophical knowledge, you ate the essence and cast aside the shells. And so the first two causes have been dispensed with.

When the rabbis of the Talmud had speculated how the esteemed Rabbi Meir could have associated with the acknowledged heretic Elisha ben Avuyah, one offered the opinion that Meir "found a pomegranate. He ate of its fruit and cast aside its shell." For ha-Lorki, the dangers that philosophy presented were real but manageable. As anyone who pondered the "order of creation" knew, the tree of knowledge of philosophy bore fruit that was both available and tempting. If the

serpent was to be believed, it could transform one into a divine being, knowing good and evil. This was not an intellectual opportunity to be forfeited.[35]

THE ENDLESSNESS OF EXILE

Mainstream Sephardic intellectuals viewed halakhah as central to Jewish life and the disciplines of philosophy and Kabbalah as important handmaidens in the study of the Torah. For ha-Lorki, any of the theoretical underpinnings of the observant Jewish life, whether philosophy or Kabbalah, did not necessarily lead to conversion. As a result, he turned his attention elsewhere in contemplating what may have spirited Solomon ha-Levi to the baptismal font:

> Or when you observed the destruction of our homeland and the many troubles that have recently befallen us, consuming us and scattering us—and that God has almost hidden his countenance from us and made us as food to the birds of the heaven and the wild beasts of the earth, it occurred to you that "the name of Israel will be remembered no more."

Did ha-Lorki imagine that ha-Levi's decision was grounded in recent events within Iberia? Or did he think that lengthy reflection on the course of Jewish history had led ha-Levi to conclude that God's presence no longer resided with his chosen people and that they were consequently doomed to disappear?

Despite all the glorious successes of which the Sephardim could rightfully be proud, the saga of Iberian Jewry also contained an important chapter in the history of Jewish suffering. We need not go back to the riots against the Jews of Minorca in the fifth century or to the more widespread and relentless persecution of Jews that marked the last century of Visigothic reign over their southern European lands. When the Jews of medieval Christian Iberia began to emerge in their own right as a significant community, it was as much a result of the invasion of the peninsula by Almoravids and Almohads and their mistreatment of the Jews as it was the economic lure of the invigorated kingdoms of Portugal, Castile, Aragon, and Navarre.

Although Ibn Daud had celebrated the conquest of Toledo by Alfonso VI in 1085, and though thirteenth-century Jews maintained positive relations with the royal court under the militarily successful Fernando III and his son, Alfonso X, Jewish life in Castile was not simply one of unalloyed security. Jews did reach great heights of power and influence at the court of Alfonso X; still, he was unsure of their loyalty. After his hopes of ascending the throne of the Holy Roman Empire were dashed, and after he faced rebellion by both his son and the no-

bility, the king possibly imagined that the Jewish courtiers were siding with the rebels. He imprisoned all the Jewish tax-farmers in 1279 and hanged one of them, Don Çag de la Maleha. In Toledo—the city of the king—Jews were detained within their synagogues on a Sabbath in January 1281 and large sums of money, twice their annual tribute, were demanded of them.[36] Toledo was where Ibn Daud had reported with great pride that infirm Jews had been brought inside its walls because of the high esteem in which Judah ha-Nasi ibn Ezra was held by Alfonso VI.

So how secure did the Jews feel? Living under the rival monotheisms of Christianity and Islam, they had long realized that both harbored unflattering views of them and their religion. If they did not adopt the faith of the rulers and of the majority population, Jews were, at best, second-class citizens. So when Alfonso X composed poems and compiled an anthology of verse entitled *Cantigas de Santa María* that featured many anti-Jewish stereotypes, the Jews well may have understood that he was not expressing any particular animus toward them. He was simply repeating attitudes prevalent in medieval Christian Europe about the Jews and their behavior.[37]

Aragonese Jews held significant posts at the court of Jaume I the Conqueror in the fields of administration, diplomacy, colonization, and finance, and yet they too found their situation somewhat insecure. In 1283 Pere II, Jaume's son and successor, dismissed the Jews from royal service. Although they continued unofficially to work at the court and at positions that had been declared off-limits, they were surely stunned by the reversal in their fortunes. Additionally, the Jews suffered from other economic disabilities. Subject to accusations of usury, they could not set the rates of interest they wished to charge. Furthermore, the king declared moratoria on the loans that they had tendered, and taxes became increasingly onerous. As the crucial role that the Jews had played in the conquests diminished, they were eliminated from significant sectors of the economy, such as the burgeoning maritime trade. Although their connection to the monarch remained intact despite repeated attacks, the growing competition and animosity from other groups within the kingdoms—whether from the growing bourgeois class or from segments within the church—reminded the Jews that their success was not admired or approved of by all.[38]

The Jews were the objects of royal economic aggrandizement in all the Christian Iberian kingdoms, but they generally viewed themselves as economic free agents, capable of influencing governmental decisions. They did not expect to have unimpeded success in their interventions, but they were relatively confident of access to the monarch. One of the professions through which they were able to flex this influence, albeit irregularly, was that of medicine. In al-Andalus

the Jewish courtiers, aside from those possessing skills as financial administrators and diplomats, were often physicians whose entrée to the ruler was perhaps more informal than that of other royal advisers. This intimacy was greatly prized by the Jews; the physician garnered much prestige among his peers and in turn was the recipient of attempts to influence him. He was often resented by others, Jews and Christians alike. The Church at Rome manipulated traditional suspicions, declaring that Jewish physicians should not be employed by rulers, even though the popes themselves frequently turned to Jewish doctors.[39]

The success of the Jews extended beyond Castile and Aragon to the kingdom of Portugal. Blessed with long-reigning monarchs of the same dynasty until the penultimate decade of the fourteenth century, Jews played an important role within the economy of Portugal and could boast of their share of courtiers and advisers to the king. In 1373, after King Fernando intervened in the war that the other peninsular kingdoms were waging against Enrique II of Castile and his French allies, Portugal was invaded by the Castilians, and the kingdom's stability was challenged. With the death of Fernando in October 1383, revolts swept the countryside, and pressure was applied by the cities to oust the Jews from some of their more prestigious posts at the royal court. This unrest, which included an assault on the main Jewish quarter in Lisbon, was soon overshadowed by another Castilian invasion, which was finally repulsed by the Portuguese at Aljubarrota. Jews continued at their old posts under the new monarch, João, despite his promises and that of his regent mother to the contrary. Security may have been the condition of Portuguese Jews, but anti-Jewish tension constantly lurked beneath the surface.[40]

Toward the end of the fourteenth century, Navarrese Jews began to enjoy relative prosperity. They had endured the excesses of the Shepherds' Crusade, which had also harmed Aragonese Jews; scores of Jews in Estella and the surrounding area had been massacred in 1328 with the eclipse of the Capetian dynasty; and, like the Portuguese, they suffered from the Castilian civil war. A powerful centralizing monarch, Carlos III, came to the Navarrese throne in 1387. He inaugurated what was arguably one of the most tranquil periods in the history of the small Pyrenean kingdom.[41]

During the fourteenth century, the Jews of Castile were able to maintain the status that they had enjoyed a hundred years earlier, probably because a Christian middle class had not emerged within the kingdom as it had in the Crown of Aragon. Indeed, in the mid-fourteenth century under Pedro I, Samuel ha-Levi Abulafia was appointed treasurer of Castile, a sure sign that the influence of prominent Jews had not waned within royal circles. The architecturally fine synagogue that Abulafia had built in Toledo was perhaps a further indication of

the physical security that some Jews felt within the kingdom. Although the synagogue may only have been intended for the use of his family and its entourage, it seemed to reflect the famed convivencia of the three faith-cultures in Castilian society. It was constructed in the *mudejar* style, and in all likelihood the plaster work and decoration were executed by Muslims. The synagogue was dedicated in honor of the monarch, Abulafia's employer, and the lavish encomia bestowed upon Pedro could probably be interpreted not only in light of his role as Abulafia's patron but also in his capacity as defender of Jewish rights and security.

It is hard to know how these signs of well-being were understood by Castilian Jewry. After all, when Jews emerged from the synagogue of Samuel Abulafia or from their other houses of worship in Toledo and gazed skyward, they could not fail to miss the large cathedral towering over them from the highest point within the city. Their minority status was made clear to them with just one glance. Yet from all indications they had every reason to trust Pedro's devotion to their concerns and had no compelling reason to doubt their security. Even when Abulafia and his retinue fell out of favor with the king, other Jews soon occupied themselves with the diplomatic and financial tasks that Abulafia had performed.

Following the policy of his father and predecessor, Alfonso XI, Pedro relied upon the Jews and kept the nobility distant. But this course of action did not secure his hold on the Castilian throne. He had to contend with a rebellion that, after initial setbacks, he was able to quash. He then embarked upon a war with the Crown of Aragon that he appeared to be winning until France, allied with the Castilian nobility led by his half-brother Enrique, came to Aragon's aid and ultimately emerged victorious. The climax of the Castilian civil war came when Enrique murdered Pedro at Montiel in March 1369 and founded the Trastamaran dynasty.

Enrique was able to gather support among the nobility, city-dwellers, and others within the kingdom through his use of blatantly anti-Jewish messages. He continually called for the dismissal of Pedro's Jewish advisers and forced Jewish communities to support his side during the civil war; the Jews of Burgos were threatened twice during his campaign. Upon Enrique's ascension to the throne, he immediately declared a moratorium on the repayment of Jewish debts. Surprisingly, though, Jews were again appointed at court to fill some of the same roles as they had played under Pedro. While it was clear that the Jews were essential to the sure functioning of the kingdom, the hatred for them could not be dismissed.[42]

In Aragon, latent anti-Jewish attitudes were also revealed in a violent manner during the outbreak of the plague in 1348. Not only did Jews die in the same proportions as the rest of the Aragonese population, but they were also killed during popular upheavals in the wake of this terrible scourge. The Jewish cemetery at Lleida, for example, could not contain the bodies of all those who had died of the epidemic, and local Jews appealed to King Pere III for an additional plot of land.[43]

Was ha-Lorki correct, then, that the tale of endless suffering which seemed to be the fate of the Jews had persuaded ha-Levi that his former coreligionists could never be assured of God's protection? In considering this possible motivation for ha-Levi's conversion, ha-Lorki addressed the specific question of whether the decline of Sephardic Jewry should cause Jews to wonder about their ultimate survival as a people:

> And I cannot argue that the third reason, that is the destruction of the people, may have deluded you, because I am confident that you are not ignorant of the fact that is well-known amongst us from the travelogues of those who have journeyed the length and breadth of the world, or from the letters of Maimonides of blessed memory, or from the accounts of merchants who voyage across the seas—that at present most of our people are to be found in the lands of Babylonia and Yemen, where the exiles of Jerusalem settled at first, besides the exiles of Samaria who today are as numerous as the sands on the seashore and who dwell in the lands of Persia and Media. Some of these exiles live under the domination of a king who is called the Sultan of Babylonia and of the Ishmaelites, some in districts where the yoke of no other people is upon them, such as those who live on the border of the lands of the Cushites which is called al-Habash adjacent to the Edomite prince called Prester John, who have a treaty with him that is renewed annually. And that is an irrefutable fact.
>
> And furthermore all the Jews who dwell in Christian lands are only descended from those who returned to Jerusalem [under Ezra and Neḥemiah] who without doubt were not of the leaders of the Exile but rather of the humblest people. As the rabbis have said about them, "Ezra did not ascend from Babylonia to Israel until he left Babylonian Jewry like pure sifted flour."
>
> Following this assumption, even if it were God's decree to destroy and exterminate all the Jews who live within Christendom, the people would remain alive and intact, so this should not lead to a weakening of faith.

Even if all the Jews in Sepharad and the rest of Christendom were destined for extinction, ha-Lorki argued, the faith of the observant Jew should remain unaffected. This is a far cry from what Ibn Daud, living in Christian Toledo, wrote about his community and its future in the twelfth century. For Ibn Daud, the Sephardic Jews were not only the nobility of the Jewish people but also the ones

amongst whom the eschatological drama would first unfold. Whereas Ibn Daud employed the biblical phrase "exiles of Jerusalem that are in Sepharad" to refer to his peninsular coreligionists, ha-Lorki employed a talmudic citation in the name of Rabbi Eliezer to indicate that the Jews of Sepharad, like all Jewry living in Christian lands, were a genealogically mixed group whom Ezra the Scribe had taken against their will to Judaea. Indeed, for ha-Lorki, it was Babylonian Jewry purged of these impure individuals that remained the refined essence of the Jewish people. Unlike Ibn Daud, Judah Halevi had no such exalted notion of his native Andalusi community. The purifying essence of the Jewish people was the Land of Israel where Ezra had taken the Babylonian exiles. There was no place, east or west, where Jews could find rest; only their homeland afforded spiritual security. But ha-Lorki parted company with Halevi on the Land of Israel: the Jews' ancestral home could not provide the answer for Solomon ha-Levi's theological crisis.

Sephardic Jewry was not insulated from world Jewry, either in reality or in their imagination. Ha-Lorki assumed that the literate population in Iberia would be aware of Diaspora communities from the letters of Maimonides and from merchants' reports and travelers' accounts. For example, in the late twelfth century Benjamin ben Jonah, for reasons that are not immediately apparent, famously departed from his hometown of Tudela on a trip that took him through the Mediterranean world, the Middle East, and the Near East.[44] From the beginnings of Sephardic Jewry, peninsular Jews were conscious of their place within the Diaspora. Whereas the Jews of al-Andalus were part of the Islamic world and their community maintained links to the centers of Jewish life in Qayrawan, Baghdad, or the Land of Israel, the Jews in the Christian kingdoms mainly turned their gaze northward to the other Jewish communities of Western Europe.

The connections between the peninsula and the Jews of Ashkenaz and Provence, as we have seen, were many. The talmudic glosses of Rashi and the Tosafist school, less so their halakhic rulings, were influential in the writings of Naḥmanides and Ibn Adret. Naḥmanides and Gerondi were also much impressed with the penitential and mystical ideas of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, the German pietists. With the arrival of Asher ben Yeḥiel and his family, Ashkenazic halakhic decisions made a significant foray into the thickets of Sephardic legal literature. And in the debates over the valence of philosophical studies, the ideas of these centers flowed, albeit polemically, between these areas of Jewish life. Sephardic Jews exported not only philosophical ideas but also grammatical monographs, legal decisions, and codes of Jewish law. Despite the obvious differences in the elite written culture of these Jewish communities, they did not develop in isolation from each other.

The role in this process of the flow of Jews across political borders cannot be underestimated. As noted, Iberian merchants traveled abroad and brought back tales of foreign communities. The persecutions and especially the expulsion of the communities of Western Europe also caused many individuals from different Jewish cultures to seek refuge on the peninsula. Of particular import was the banishment of Jews from France in 1306. The Jews of *reconquista* Iberia came to constitute a West European culture.[45]

Sephardic Jews devised neat categories for the various diasporas, referring to the Jews settled in Christian-dominated countries as living under Edom (the biblical name for Esau, Jacob's brother, and a symbol, for the rabbis, of the Roman Empire and therefore of its heirs, the Christians). Those under Islam dwelt within the domain of Ishmael (biblical half-brother of Isaac). Christian lands provided a haven for the Jews when the intolerant Berber tribes overran al-Andalus, but even during this period some Jews, including Maimonides and Moses ibn Ezra, viewed north European civilization as irremediably backward. In the late thirteenth century, with most of Sephardic Jewry living comfortably within the Christian states of the peninsula, Baḥya ben Asher, a kabbalist and biblical exegete living in Saragossa, transformed the old rabbinic saying "Better under a gentile than [an] Ishmael[ite]" into "Better under Edom than under Ishmael." Christendom, at least in its Iberian format, was recognized as far more hospitable to Jews and Judaism than Islamic civilization.[46]

Ha-Lorki's fears for the future of the Jewish people were not allayed by his knowledge of European communities but rather by his awareness of Eastern Jews. Some Sephardim had fled Iberia for Muslim territories in the wake of the riots of 1391. But when ha-Lorki turned his gaze eastward, he saw not only these Jews, whether in the Land of Israel or in Babylonia and Yemen, but also the "irrefutable fact" of the Jews who lived a politically independent existence in the far-off land of the Cushites, linked by treaty with an Edomite prince by the name of Prester John. Edom was still seen as an ally in the land of al-Habash.

The fantasy of a Jewish community free of the overlordship of non-Jews was rife both within and outside of the peninsula. In ninth-century al-Andalus, people had been taken with Eldad ha-Dani, who had presented himself as having come a great distance with news of Jews—indeed, the ten lost tribes of the Bible, who were living in a place far removed from the Islamic world and were alleged to be militarily powerful and politically dominant. In the century following Eldad's appearance, Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut, diplomat at the court of Abd al-Raḥmān III in al-Andalus, sent a letter to the Jewish king of the Khazars eagerly seeking information about his people and asking as well about the whereabouts of the "ten lost tribes" and the far-away lands they inhabited.

The notion of a Christian prince living in distant lands was similarly preva-

lent within European Christendom. In the second half of the twelfth century, this prince, also called Prester John, ruled the ten lost tribes and was readying himself to avenge the enemies of the Cross. By the early fourteenth century, his abode was located in the land of the Cushites in Ethiopia (al-Ḥabash).[47] The Jewish version of the story had a particular polemical valence vis-à-vis Christianity. For Jews living under the rival monotheistic civilizations of Christianity and Islam, and especially for those dwelling under Christendom, the reality of their political subservience to others was a constant challenge to their faith. If indeed God was on the Jews' side, the argument went, why were they not favored with a politically independent state? The Bible shared by Jews and Christians had declared that the "scepter will not depart from Judah." The Jews would only maintain political sovereignty, according to Christian exegetes, "until Shiloh comes"—that is, until Jesus the Messiah would arrive. For the Christians, the subjection of the Jews was clear proof of the advent of their Messiah. Even the proud Jews of Sepharad, who reveled in their power (and Ibn Shaprut was a wonderful embodiment of such sentiments), were painfully aware that they were politically dependent. Stories of Jewish kings, such as those who ruled the Khazars, or, more fantastically, of places where the ten lost tribes not only dwelt but wielded military power and levied taxes—the clearest sign of authority for medieval Jews—circulated among the Sephardim. These tales afforded an important psychological boost and helped stock the polemical arsenal against the Christians and Muslims. For Judah Halevi, the legend that the king of the Khazars had embraced Judaism was the point of departure for the *Kuzari*, his classic defense of his faith (which ha-Levi himself described as "the despised religion") against the rival claims of Islam and Christianity. Along with his mystical attachment to the Land of Israel, he was able to imagine another land where, in ha-Lorki's words, "the yoke of no other people is upon [the Jews]."

The state of affairs described by ha-Lorki—that "many troubles have . . . come but recently, that have consumed us and scattered us"—indicated, according to Christian theology, "that God had . . . given us as food to the birds of the heaven and the wild beasts of the earth." The Christians concluded and never ceased to remind the Jews that "God has hidden [and not "almost has hidden" as ha-Lorki was piously obliged to write] his countenance" from the Jews, indeed that God had rejected the Jewish people, and that the name of Israel would be remembered no more. Earlier in the fourteenth century, the physician Abner of Burgos, born a Jew and later a convert to Christianity, wrote that when he had beheld the oppressed Jews, burdened by taxation and generally afflicted, he had been pained by Christians asking his people why it seemed that God was not watching over them.

The third motivation that ha-Lorki offered for Solomon ha-Levi's conversion reflected the Christian argument that God had deliberately rejected the Jews—Israel in the flesh—as punishment for their rejection of Jesus and had therefore chosen another people—*verus* Israel, those who confessed Christ. Ha-Lorki confidently asserted in response that the "exiles of Samaria"—the ten tribes of the northern biblical kingdom of Israel—were "as numerous as the sands on the seashore and dwelled in the biblical lands of Persia and Media." In medieval Jewish thought, ruminations about the whereabouts of the ten lost tribes were always connected with the coming of the Messiah. The discovery of these ten lost tribes would be a sure sign that the messianic advent was near. No, ha-Lorki appeared to be saying to ha-Levi, not only were the Jews flourishing in many countries, but the advent of the Jewish Messiah was also imminent. Admittedly, this was a far cry from Ibn Daud's contention that the messianic drama would begin with the redemption of Sephardic Jewry. Ha-Lorki expected both the site of flourishing Jewish communities as well as the provenance of the Messiah himself to be far away from this western corner of the Mediterranean.

THE SPECTER OF CHRISTIANITY

> Or perhaps there were revealed to you the secrets of prophecy and the basic principles of faith and their proofs, such as were not revealed to the pillars of the world amongst our people during all the days of our long Exile, and you concluded that our forefathers had inherited falsehood because of their limited understanding of the Torah and of prophecy and therefore you chose what you chose because it is true and certain.

The specter of Christianity had loomed over ha-Lorki's discussion of whether the Jews would continue to survive as a people, and now it explicitly became the fourth way to justify ha-Levi's decision to alter the order of creation. Ha-Lorki's formulation of this possibility was cloaked simultaneously in cynicism and yearning. The notion that the erstwhile rabbi from Burgos had been the recipient of a revelatory experience was unsettling to ha-Lorki and consequently had to be held up to ridicule. He had only to go back a few years in time to when Abner of Burgos (ha-Levi's hometown) was also beset by doubts. In a dream, Abner claimed to have beheld an individual who rebuked him for sleeping and who explained that the Jews were mired in the galut because of their inability to recognize the ultimate truth. After first ignoring the evident import of his dream, Abner continued to reflect on the meaning of the Torah and its prophe-

cies until visited yet again by this Christ-like figure, who this time induced him to embrace Christianity.

Abner's contemporaries wondered about his decision to convert and questioned his motivation. Abner had read widely in philosophy and mysticism. In the final analysis, despair over the suffering of the Jews and the failure of their messianic prophecies were the decisive factors in bringing him to the Cross.[48] For those faithful to Judaism, the most chilling idea to contemplate was that their forefathers, the pillars of the world, had inherited falsehood. The Christians who sought to convert the Jews had been arguing for years that the Jews did not truly understand the meaning of the Torah and the prophecies. As ha-Lorki concluded, "you chose what you chose because it is true and certain."

This was not an indirect argument. Ha-Lorki had dismissed the idea that ha-Levi's conversion derived from hedonistic motives or from a relativist position regarding religious truth that had resulted in turn from devotion to philosophy. Rather, he proposed that ha-Levi had decided that the Christians were right and the Jews were wrong:

> Therefore only the last reason remains for me to consider and that involves the study and weighing of opinions regarding religions and prophecies, especially since I know that you are acquainted with the rarest of the books of the Christians—and their interpretations and their principles—since you are proficient in their language, books of which no contemporary scholar is familiar. In addition, about two months ago, the text of the letter which you sent to Yosef Orabuena in Navarre came into my possession via Saragossa; in it I saw that you believe of the man who came during the last years of the Second Temple that he is the Messiah for whom our people have waited from then until now, and that all the prophecies which speak of the Messiah and the redemption fully conform with his particulars; that is to say with his birth, his death, and his resurrection.

Competitive tension with the two monotheistic religions under which the Jews lived during the Middle Ages was one of the central features of their lives. In Iberia, where the three religions cohabited, these tensions assumed more complex and variegated forms. When Judah Halevi, who lived in both Muslim and Christian states, wrote the *Kuzari*, his first few pages were openly devoted to the truth-claims of Christianity and Islam. Not surprisingly, he found the arguments for their religious beliefs to be wanting.

Even during the heyday of Jewish life in Christian Iberia in the thirteenth century, the Jews faced and responded not only to the literary accounts of this

conflict but to personal and state-sanctioned challenges to their faith as well. A concerted movement by Christians to missionize among the Jews had found its most significant early expression in France in the 1230s. Fueled by the zeal of Jewish converts who set out to vindicate themselves among their former coreligionists, a new methodology was developed and implemented in the attempt to actualize the age-old dream of the conversion of the Jews. In this view, rabbinic literature, which formerly had been seen as lacking any religious value because Christ had already come, was now perceived as the main obstacle to the Jews' recognition of the truth of the Christian message. Possessed of this understanding, the Talmud was put on trial in Paris on a variety of charges, including blasphemies against God and the Holy Family, abuse of Christianity, and the promotion of absurd ideas. The Talmud was found guilty, and as a result many copies of this text were burned in the streets of the city.

Just as Jewish learning crossed the Pyrenees and altered the texture of Sephardic Judaism, so Christian ideas about conversion traversed political boundaries and dramatically affected Jewish-Christian relations. Even in thirteenth-century Aragon, where Jaume I employed Jews at the highest levels of government, the king compelled Jews (and Muslims) in 1242 to attend conversionary sermons, and new ideas were promoted about how best to convince the Jews of the truth of Christianity. Turning the Parisian stratagem on its head, friars of the newly founded Mendicant orders argued that a thorough study of rabbinic literature would yield important proofs of the truth-claims of Christianity. This audacious new approach, first pioneered in Provence, emerged on the peninsula in 1263.[49]

Naḥmanides, whose intellectual brilliance was acknowledged by both his Christian and his Jewish contemporaries, was called upon by the king to debate these new ideas with the Dominican friar Pablo Cristiani (Pau Christià), formerly Saul, a Jew from Montpellier. They had already confronted each other in Girona, Naḥmanides' hometown. But in the royal palace of Barcelona, with noble, ecclesiastical, and municipal worthies as well as King Jaume himself in attendance, the setting was far more dramatic. After the opening session on Friday, July 20, 1263, three additional meetings were held, and the disputation was concluded the following Friday. In the immediate aftermath of the debate, Cristiani and the king, joined by other Christian dignitaries, visited a Barcelonan synagogue on the Sabbath and preached there to those assembled. Naḥmanides briefly responded to their comments. The encounter in the synagogue indicated that this disputation was part of a larger effort to bring the gospel to the Jews of Aragon.

Two years later, Naḥmanides wrote an account of his debate with Cristiani. Aside from wishing to promote his perspective on the proceedings and to stem

Detail of a page from *Cantigas de Alfonso X*, showing a disputation between a Catholic prelate and a group of Jews wearing distinctive pointed hats. (Library of the Monastery of El Escorial, Madrid. Photo: Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic, Barcelona)

any criticism of what might have been perceived as an inadequate performance, Naḥmanides may have also intended his report as a handbook for Jews in their future encounters, public and private, with Christian neighbors and missionaries. In the wake of the publication of his account, the Dominicans charged that Naḥmanides had defamed the Christian faith. This accusation may have forced him to leave Sepharad for the Land of Israel.[50]

There were other public disputations between Jews and Christians. The merchants and travelers of the Mediterranean world served as the channel through which the Christian-Jewish debate was brought to the island of Majorca in 1286. There was a debate in Avila, Castile, in the 1370s, and another in 1375 in Pamplona in Navarre. There is much evidence of private debates as well. In these encounters, the climate of ill-will was far more muted than in the public confrontations, and the prevailing atmosphere of greater tolerance allowed for more open and less scripted interchanges between the protagonists.

Some of the Jewish accounts of actual disputations are found in much larger polemical works whose authors only used the debates as a point of departure for their anti-Christian arguments. Moses ha-Kohen of Tordesillas wrote an expanded record of a disputation in which he had argued with two converts to Christianity in the cathedral of Avila, after these proselytes had delivered conversionary sermons to their former coreligionists. The Jewish community had encouraged ha-Kohen to write an account of the event in commemoration of what had transpired and as a guide and sourcebook to assist them in future disputations. The debates occurred in 1373 or 1374; ha-Kohen first penned his account in 1375 and added to it in 1379, including a refutation of the interpretations of biblical and talmudic passages that the converts had used as proofs for the truth of Christianity. Ha-Kohen's expanded work also served to combat the arguments found in *Pugio Fidei*, the massive compilation of Raimundus Martini written in the previous century and directed against Jews and Muslims, and the more re-

cent writings of Abner of Burgos and his disciples. Indeed, one of Abner's students threatened ha-Kohen with another public debate unless he responded to a list of accusations that the man had leveled against a number of objectionable talmudic passages. This individual argued menacingly that, since these paragraphs reflected anti-Christian hostility, it did not behoove Christians to tolerate Jews in their society, even as this same writer had brought other talmudic citations as support for Christian truth-claims.

What distinguished the work of ha-Kohen from efforts by other Jewish apologists was the tone he adopted toward his interlocutors and toward the sacred texts he attempted to defend. Jewish biblical exegetes in the Middle Ages had always been concerned with the conflicting claims of Christianity, and Jewish commentators on the talmudic aggadot were conscious of the uses to which the Christians put these rabbinic texts. From Naḥmanides' report on the Barcelona disputation to the aggadic commentaries written by Ibn Adret (who may have debated some of these issues with Martini himself), such an awareness is clearly in evidence. Admittedly, it was difficult for Jewish writers to argue that some talmudic passages needed to be reinterpreted or that the ideas they contained were not central to rabbinic theology. But the confident assertiveness noticeable in the behavior and writings of the earlier Sephardic defenders of the faith was not in evidence in the work of ha-Kohen. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, this apologetic genre of Jewish literature had become even more defensive, exhibiting a deeper fear of the Christians and a concomitantly greater desire to please the host society that had been calling into question the modicum of tolerance shown to the Jews.[51]

The polemical literature reflected the concerns of all Jews living in the Iberian Christian kingdoms. The debate with Christianity writ large was in some ways a constant of daily life and not only a concern of the Jewish intellectual elite. In these wars of attrition, the identity of the Messiah appeared at the vanguard of both the Christian and the Jewish initiatives. If the Messiah had already arrived in the person of Jesus, as the Christians had argued at Barcelona in 1263, then the laws and ceremonies of the Jews had ceased to possess any theological meaning, and the entire order of creation for medieval Jews had come to an end. If there is much writing about the Messiah among Sephardic Jews, it is mainly because the notion of the Redeemer was essential to justify their continued existence as a separate community living under the aegis of Christianity.

The hopelessness engendered among the Jews because of the endlessness of the exile and the frightening conclusion that God might no longer be a watchful presence on their behalf, expressed so clearly by ha-Lorki in the third possibility for ha-Levi's conversion, was directly connected with his astonishment that his

mentor believed that the man who had come toward the end of the Second Temple period was "the Messiah for whom our people have awaited from then until now." Naḥmanides had taken such concerns as his point of departure in his essay *Sefer ha-Geulah*. As the Bible was often the site where rival interpretations about the Messiah warred with each other, the exegesis of scriptural passages formed the centerpiece of his arguments. Naḥmanides argued against the Christian position that the messianic promises had already been fulfilled. Even the intensification of aspects of the messianic idea within Jewish mystical writings of the thirteenth century can be understood against the background of the Christian attempt to convert the Jews. When moderate rationalists in the fourteenth century viewed some of the messianic core beliefs as metaphors for the stages in the intellectual development of man, it might have reflected their desire to move away from the actual messianic debate with Christians that had proved such a problematic issue for the Jewish community.[52]

Ha-Lorki recalled that ha-Levi was fluent in "their" language, a reference not to the Iberian vernaculars in which Jews had been conversant since the thirteenth century but, rather, to Latin. In al-Andalus the Jews had not only spoken Arabic but were well versed in the Koran and in the literature of the Muslim intellectuals. Indeed, Jews composed works in Arabic ranging from philosophical treatises to verse. Hebrew was still employed for a variety of genres in al-Andalus, but it was not the exclusive language of Jewish creativity, as it was in Ashkenaz and in Christian Iberia as well. In the large-scale translation projects sponsored by Alfonso X in thirteenth-century Toledo, Jews aided in translating works from Arabic into Latin and then into the Iberian vernacular. Arabic, or more correctly Judeo-Arabic, was still current among Sephardic Jews even in the fourteenth century. Jews did not have the same relationship with Latin as they had with Arabic, probably because Latin was predominantly a sacred language but Arabic functioned both as a literary medium and as a spoken tongue. The symbiosis that developed between the Hebrew and Arabic languages among the Jews never emerged between Hebrew and Latin. Nevertheless, there were individuals, a subset of the intellectual class such as astronomers, physicians, and philosophers, who did read Latin works. Ha-Lorki may therefore have been exaggerating when he wrote to ha-Levi that "you are aware of the ideas—and their interpretations . . . which are . . . in the books of the Christians . . . , ideas of which no contemporary scholar is cognizant." Nissim Gerondi, who lived in the mid-fourteenth century, was aware of the current philosophical literature available in Latin, and we know that ha-Kohen knew Latin and read the New Testament and later Christian writings.[53]

Ha-Lorki inserted the particulars of Jesus' life into his monologue with the

erstwhile Solomon ha-Levi by introducing Yosef Orabuena of Navarre, to whom ha-Levi as Paulus de Sancta Maria (Pablo de Santa María) had written a letter about the Messiah. Orabuena was the physician of Carlos III of Navarre, and he also served as tutor to members of the royal family, an efficient tax collector, and the chief rabbi of Navarrese Jewry. As a prototypical Sephardic courtier, he was expected to be involved in the cultural conversations of the time. The letter he received from ha-Levi was copied and distributed to all who were engaged in the debate over whether the prophecies of the Bible had been fulfilled in Jesus. Ha-Levi, like Abner of Burgos before him, continued to write to Jews even after his conversion. Although written by someone who was now a Christian, and therefore formally as a piece of Christian-Jewish polemic, ha-Levi's letter to Orabuena also seemed to be part of an internal Jewish debate.[54]

While ha-Lorki may have designed his letter as a private missive, it was also intended for a public audience intrigued by ha-Levi's conversion and his possible motivations. Ha-Lorki's letter therefore needs to be seen as yet another volley in the long polemical match between European Jews and Christians. Still, the personal element for ha-Lorki is abundantly clear in his closing remarks. After offering ha-Levi four options for explaining his behavior and analyzing all of them, ha-Lorki concluded:

> If only I were as in earlier times, I would fly away and find rest in the shadow of your halls and you would teach me and tell me that which was revealed to you about these matters, one by one. Perhaps you would quiet the throbbing of my heart and you would remove the surging doubts that are my constant companions. And God knows that from the moment, close to four months ago, when the changes that transformed you were announced and came to our attention, I have thought to confront you face to face so that my ears may hear directly from your mouth the reasoning and opinions that moved you to cross the boundaries set by the ancestors, your fathers and your fathers' fathers, the holy and distinguished ones among our people. I [would have done so] except for the fact that the attempt to travel there would lead to harm, about which it is not appropriate to put in writing. A word to the wise should suffice.

Ha-Lorki stands here in all of his many contradictory reactions to his teacher's conversion. He simultaneously yearned for the erstwhile ha-Levi yet battled against his truths, was cynical about ha-Levi's possible revelatory experiences yet could imagine the tenderness he would feel should they meet again. The religious devastation caused by ha-Levi's change of faith reminded ha-Lorki of the physical destruction his people had just endured. Ha-Levi had dared to

cross the boundaries of faith set by their ancestors; the borders of the Christian Iberian kingdoms were more easily traversed by rioters and by polemicists. Ha-Lorki's cryptic remark about the dangers inherent in traveling to ha-Levi is not easy to interpret. Ha-Levi lived in Castile, ha-Lorki in Aragon, and their mutual correspondent Orabuena resided in Navarre. Was the danger physical or theological? And from whom in his imagined audience was he protecting himself with his remark that a hint sufficed for the wise?

Ultimately, ha-Lorki wished his audience to understand that all his speculation regarding the motivation for ha-Levi's conversion had served simply as an introduction to yet another confident polemic against a challenging Christian adversary. After explaining to ha-Levi that a face-to-face interview was not in the offing, he wrote with the demanding mien of a prosecuting attorney yet softened by a touch of subservience. "And therefore I saw fit to write your honor an outline of those doubts. My teacher and master, I am in need of instruction. After appropriately begging your pardon, I will set out my case before you; I will put questions and you shall respond to me." What followed at great length were a variety of challenges to many aspects of Christian theology, including arguments that Jesus could not have been the Messiah. No innovative ideas were introduced in these paragraphs; their content was similar to other Sephardic polemics against Christianity fashioned over the previous 150 years.

Only after the completion of this extensive polemic did ha-Lorki return to his biblically and rabbinically laden personal remarks. He wrote that Christian theological claims had been intruding on his thoughts since his teacher's conversion and that neither Christian nor Jewish scholars had been helpful in silencing the tremors of his heart about whether individuals were obligated to seek the true religion.[55] But since ha-Levi has mastered "the Scripture of both Torahs more than any of the learned men of our time," ha-Lorki wrote hopefully, "I knew that you would quench my thirst and therefore to you I lifted my eyes." Ha-Lorki concluded his letter:

> And since Time has decreed to settle me in the remote regions of this land and there my dwelling is established, inaccessible to travelers, I cannot write when the spirit moves me. Therefore, my lord, I beseech your eminence to answer me at length on all the particulars of this letter. Also if perchance your refined intellect has recently composed a new treatise on these matters, please send it to me by letter courier. "May the Lord open up for you his bountiful store," the treasure-house of intellect and wisdom, so that you may gaze upon the beauty of true things and that you may behold the path in which precious illumination lies. As someone who is wholeheartedly with you, whose soul lies down in fear and rises in horror, and who is bound to you with cords of love, I will not abandon your service even to swallow my spittle.

Infatuated with and struggling against the former ha-Levi, ha-Lorki was nevertheless lured and repelled by Christianity. He wrote to ha-Levi without a trace of self-consciousness about "our people" and "our Torah" even as he described him as learned in "the Scripture of both Torahs," referring to the Old and New Testament (and not to the rabbinic notion of a Written and Oral Law). The details of the polemical arguments that ha-Lorki amassed and with which he interrogated the erstwhile ha-Levi may have eluded most Sephardic Jews, and Iberian Christians for that matter. But the realization available to all living on the peninsula was that the truth of Christianity was predicated on the falsehood of Judaism, on God having chosen a new Israel, and on the erstwhile chosen people being bereft of divine protection. That was a conclusion the Jewish community in the wake of 1391 surely found profoundly unsettling. Sephardic culture had been created within the boundaries of Christian society and shaped by the daily competitive struggles between the peninsular monotheisms. The devastation wrought by the attacks had left the Jews reeling both physically and religiously.[56]

In a brief response,[57] ha-Levi chose only to address the question of whether those who were raised within false religious systems such as Judaism and Islam were obligated to search for the true faith. Unsurprisingly, ha-Levi answered this query in the affirmative and then concluded his missive in a manner that would leave no doubt—either to ha-Lorki or to anyone else—about his stance on the relative truth-claims of Judaism and Christianity:

> Do not scrutinize the words, only the ideas, for, in truth, I have actually turned away from the Hebrew language and I am too occupied with my studies to find the time to produce something properly edited. From your brother the Israelite, once a Levite, who, owing to the disqualification of the first is seeking another Levitical role—and dearer is the latter than the former—to serve in the name of his God, his righteous Messiah, to be sanctified with the holiness of Aaron. Formerly in Israel when he did not know god, Solomon of the House of Levi, and now since his eyes have beheld God, he is called Paulo de Burgos.

Ha-Levi probably imagined that this response would settle any and all speculation about his motivation to convert. He claimed that it was only after having renounced his former Levitical priesthood that he was sufficiently unencumbered to actually behold the God of Israel, as did Moses, Aaron, and their elite entourage at Mount Sinai.[58] So it was not lust or radical philosophical speculation that

drew him to sanctify himself with this new priesthood but rather his reflections on matters of faith that led him to believe in the truth of Christianity and enabled him to gaze upon the Divine. Such an assured response must have struck terror in the hearts of its recipients. The Jewish community was unraveling as a result of the physical destruction and religious coercion of 1391, and this display of faith, exhibited by a former rabbi, surely did little to shore up its crumbling identity.

The confidence that peninsular Jews may have possessed in the continuity of Sepharad must have been further shaken by the observation that the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon were incapable of protecting their Jews or of restoring their communities. In the Crown of Aragon, many Jewish communities simply disappeared as their numbers drastically declined through emigration and conversion. Many Castilian Jews abandoned the large urban centers where they had established their important communities and moved to the smaller towns and villages of the kingdom. The Jews of Portugal and Navarre, on the other hand, living in kingdoms possessed of strong centralizing monarchs during the last decade of the fourteenth century, were able to emerge from this catastrophe relatively unscathed. Indeed the Portuguese João I, and probably Carlos III of Navarre as well, permitted Jews fleeing Castile to cross their borders, and the Portuguese king even permitted those who had converted in Castile to return to Judaism within his lands.[59] Even though, as we shall see, the Jews who remained on the peninsula reestablished many elements of their earlier culture, the wave of mass conversions created unsettling new social and religious dynamics.

FROM 1391 TO 1498

Some two decades after ha-Levi had left ha-Lorki reeling from his decision to abandon the Jewish faith and adopt Christianity, ha-Lorki himself took the waters of baptism along with a new name, Gerónimo de Santa Fé (Hieronymus de Sancta Fide). In 1412, he had encountered Vicente Ferrer, a fiery preacher who spoke of the end of days and described in hair-raising detail the glories of the Last Judgment, and who had been sent by the Avignon pope Benedict XIII on a mission to convert mankind prior to the arrival of the Antichrist. On his tour of Aragon, Ferrer found ha-Lorki in his hometown, Alcañiz. For almost 20 years, since he had written his open letter, ha-Lorki had been thinking deeply about why Sephardic Jews had converted to Christianity. Now, he too zealously embraced the Christian faith and, like ha-Levi and Abner of Burgos, sought to demonstrate its truth to his former coreligionists. So it was not opportunism and it was not philosophy that led ha-Lorki to the baptismal font. Instead, he had acquired a profound sense, from a theological understanding of Jewish history both past and present, that God had indeed forsaken the Jewish people and had chosen a new Israel. It was his realization as well that all the biblical prophecies about the messianic future were indeed bound up with the person of Jesus. To this end, ha-Lorki compiled midrashim that relied heavily on Martini's *Pugio Fidei* and were designed to prove to the Jews that the Christian prophecies regarding the Messiah were true.[60]

Armed with these newly acquired beliefs, ha-Lorki sought to stage a public disputation in Alcañiz. But the debate, which was first seen as a modest affair, became projected as a major confrontation between representatives of the Jewish communities of Aragon and the Christians led by ha-Lorki. The pope himself addressed letters to each of the Jewish communities toward the end of 1412, asking them to send their most learned scholars to the papal court at Tortosa to participate in this debate. For the Aragonese Jews, who had not yet recovered from the riots of 1391 and the ensuing wave of conversions (whether by force or choice), the timing could not have been worse. They were well aware that the disputation was being staged in order to encourage even more of their people to convert. And what an extravaganza it was. When the Jews arrived at the papal court on February 7, 1413, for the formal opening of the debate, they found 70 seats in the large courtyard occupied by cardinals, bishops, and archbishops, all turned out in their finest vestments. The audience, which numbered almost a thousand people, included distinguished members of the papal court and of the local nobility and municipality. Jewish intellectual and political leaders from the entire kingdom of Aragon were also in attendance.

The methodology employed by the Christian as well as the Jewish disputants had not changed much since 1263, when Pablo Cristiani had confronted Naḥmanides. Unlike the debate at Barcelona, however, this dispute dragged on for months. The disputation appeared to have ended with ha-Lorki's final address on April 19, but the debate over the Talmud resumed in June 1414 in the village of San Mateo, midway between Tortosa and the pope's fortress in Peñiscola, and it only reached a conclusion on November 10, 1414, nearly two years after it began.

The Tortosa disputation was a sign that the intense polemics characterizing Jewish-Christian relations before 1391 were to continue, but now against the backdrop of the violence and mass conversions of that fateful year. As we have seen, these formal disputations were part of a larger conversation between Jews and those who had abandoned Judaism for Christianity. Although the events of 1391 had eroded the Jewish communities, this conversation continued to flow between those who remained Jews and their former coreligionists. The exchange of letters between ha-Lorki and ha-Levi was not an isolated occurrence. Isaac

bar Sheshet Perfet, one of the leading halakhists among Sephardic Jews and a rabbi in Valencia, was blackmailed into converting to Christianity during the riots. Some of Valencia's Christians had hoped that other Jews would follow him. After more than a year had passed, Perfet fled the peninsula and resumed his professional calling, serving as a rabbi to communities in North Africa. There he was asked to determine the legal status of Jews who had converted and had lived their lives, privately and publicly, as Christians before fleeing the peninsula. At first, Perfet displayed great sensitivity to the psychological, familial, and financial dynamics that would cause a Jew to convert and live as a Christian on the peninsula rather than emigrate immediately. Eventually, though, he argued that even those who were forcibly baptized could not be assumed to be loyal to the Jewish people or to Judaism unless they behaved in ways consistent with halakhah.[61]

On the peninsula, the conversations continued. Ḥasdai Crescas, Saragossan rabbi and royal adviser, worked with the Aragonese king and queen to rebuild the communities of their realm. Crescas was an innovative philosopher who attempted to diminish the role of Aristotelian thought in Jewish philosophical reflections. He sought to substitute his own work on philosophy and halakhah, *Or Adonai,* in place of the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides, that essential building block of Sephardic culture. As Crescas assembled his magnum opus, he willingly confronted the population of those newly converted. By arguing that the title of heretic could not be applied to one who was a forced worshiper of idols, he gave encouragement to those who had converted under duress and did not wish to be read out of the Jewish community. Crescas stressed as well that the sincere impulse to behave according to Jewish principles was at times even more meritorious than to adhere to the positive and negative commandments themselves.[62]

The fight for the souls of Jews, those who remained in the faith and those who had converted, prompted Crescas to write a polemical pamphlet entitled "A Refutation of Christian Principles." In this complexly argued work, written in an Iberian vernacular and focused on Christian theological principles such as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, Transubstantiation, and, of course, the Messiah, Crescas broadened his reading audience to include those Jews who were philosophically sophisticated yet not fluent in Hebrew. Ha-Levi made it known that he wished to debate Crescas; these two intellectuals were at the center of the battle over the souls of the Jews.[63]

The debate was also joined by thinkers whose religious identity was not immediately apparent. Isaac ben Moses ha-Levi, also known as Profiat Duran or Efodi, the Hebrew acronym of his name, furnishes us with an intriguing example of this phenomenon. Duran was born in the mid-fourteenth century, probably in Perpignan, in the northern reaches of Catalonia. He made his way to the major intellectual centers in pursuit of the study of sciences and languages and found a home personally and intellectually with Crescas in Saragossa. During 1391 or in its immediate aftermath, he converted to Christianity; whether he was forced or chose to do so voluntarily is not clear. He lived in Perpignan until 1393, and probably for over a decade more, as the Christian Honoratus de Bonafide. He was a man of considerable wealth, thanks especially to his money-lending activities. He may have at times left the kingdom, especially for southern France, as did other erstwhile Jews of Perpignan, but he returned to his native Catalonia and lived as a Christian.

About four years after his conversion, Duran wrote a letter in Hebrew entitled "Do Not Be Like Your Fathers," which announced that his intellectual and emotional ties remained both with Judaism and the Jewish people. Joseph ibn Shem Tov, who translated Crescas's "Refutation of Christian Dogma" into Hebrew in the mid-fifteenth century, explained how the letter came to be written. According to Ibn Shem Tov, Duran and his friend Bonet ben Goron, both of whom had converted to Christianity, decided to travel to the Land of Israel and to resume their Jewish identity. While Bonet was preparing to set sail and Duran had already left, Bonet encountered the erstwhile Solomon ha-Levi in Avignon, who persuaded him of the truth of Christianity. Having decided not to meet up with his friend, Bonet wrote a letter to Duran, outlining his new theological stance, to which "Do Not Be Like Your Fathers" was a rejoinder.

Whatever the truth of this story, some of its details do find an echo in the letter itself. The presence and influence of ha-Levi is referred to explicitly. Ha-Levi's decision to convert clearly loomed large for the entire coterie of Jewish intellectuals of that generation. Bonet's original conversion to Christianity was understood; his sincere belief in Christian dogma, though, clearly rankled Duran. Filled with anger at his friend's betrayal, and surely aware of the delicacy needed in writing an open letter attacking his friend's newly appreciated religious faith, Duran resorted to a missive infused with biting sarcasm.

Duran wrote that his own faith had not wavered since his conversion and that his friend's current rejection of his theological and actual Jewish ancestors was a rejection of the Jewish people and of Judaism. Duran's own discomfort with his conversion is apparent in a letter he wrote about the same time to his friend En Yosef Avram in Girona upon the death of his father, the poet Abraham ben Isaac ha-Levi. According to Duran, God knew what was in the hearts of those who had been forcibly converted and did not eliminate them from the category of "the seed of Abraham." Conversion could only be justified, according to Duran, if, as a nominal Christian, Bonet would strive to "give praise and thanks to Him."

Duran was not content to leave these personal and theological issues alone. At

the suggestion and encouragement of Crescas, with whom he apparently kept in contact during these years, Duran wrote a profound anti-Christian polemic entitled *Kelimat ha-Goyim* (Shame of the Gentiles) in which he attempted to show the correctness of Judaism. Dedicated to Crescas, whose presence as the "glory of the rabbis" he constantly evoked, Duran hoped that this penetrating essay on Christianity, based on a learned familiarity with the New Testament and the writings of the significant Christian authorities of the Middle Ages, would be of use. His audience consisted of those who were contemplating conversion to Christianity as well as those who were reexamining their outward Christianity and wondering if they should commit themselves intellectually as well as practically to their new faith-community. That certain individuals—some of them as distinguished as Duran himself—continued to embrace both identities in different arenas of their lives was puzzling to many of their contemporaries, but it was a dramatic demonstration of a key aspect of a new Iberian culture that emerged after 1391.[64]

Although the conditions would admittedly never be the same for the peninsular Jews after the events of 1391–1416, did the deaths and the conversions of those years spell inevitable doom for their culture? Would it be fair to describe the fifteenth century simply as a period of uninterrupted decline for them? Or did the hallmarks of Sephardic civilization as highlighted by ha-Lorki in 1391 remain prominent features of the Iberian landscape, despite the large-scale abandonment of Judaism during those years?

Despite the trauma of 1391–1416, there was still wealth and honor to be attained by Jews in the various kingdoms. The rapidly expanding opportunities of these societies in the immediate aftermath of the thirteenth-century conquests may have been perceived by both Jews and Christians as ancient history, but the good life could still be enjoyed by fifteenth-century Sephardim. The anti-Jewish legislation of the first two decades was rescinded as the Jews legally regained the status that was theirs prior to the riots. Some communities that had dissolved under the pressure of events were able to reconstitute themselves by mid-century. Their economic activities, though mainly local in scope, were diverse.[65] The courtier class continued to mix with Christians and Muslims as part and extension of its official duties—activities that may have guaranteed their community's security in the minds of many Jews—and in fact Jews of all classes interacted with their social and economic counterparts from the other faiths. Despite the riots and the conversions, or possibly because of them, Iberian society and its norms, including its class prejudices, were a constant in the daily lives of the Sephardim. A particular familiarity with Iberian culture is reflected during these years. When Isaac Caro wrote his Hebrew commentary on the Bible, he

utilized words in the vernacular and geographical features of the peninsula to help his readers understand his interpretation of the texts. Caro's references to military matters and the fine points of swordsmanship reflected the interests of a politically savvy inhabitant of the peninsula during the 1470s and eighties, when the Christian reconquista geared up for its final successful forays against Muslim Granada.[66]

Remarkable connections can be observed between Sephardim and Christians after 1391, even on matters central to the Jewish-Christian debate. The master of the Order of Calatrava commissioned Moshe Arragel of Guadalajara to translate the Hebrew Bible into the vernacular and to pen a commentary to accompany the volume. Initially hesitant to accept the commission, Arragel finally agreed and worked on the project from 1422 to 1433. In his commentary, he not only cited a wide array of Jewish authors but included the exegesis of Christian scholars as well. The tone of his work was generally impartial, and at times he even appeared to support the Christian interpretation of specific passages. The Bible was published with illustrations executed by Christians because Arragel refused to be involved in this aspect of the project. The volume reflected the two religious traditions whose exegesis was cited in the commentary. Although the illustrators depicted Arragel in an honored fashion, they dressed him in identifiably Jewish costume with the distinguishing mark that had been ordained two centuries earlier by the Fourth Lateran Council.[67]

Jews were familiar with the vernacular Romance languages that were used in each of the Christian kingdoms; indeed, they used these languages in their daily lives. Songs, liturgical texts, proverbs, and other compositions reflecting Christian models were written in Romance languages and at times were even appropriated wholesale from Christian culture. Vernacular literature in Castilian and Catalan had thrived during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the Jews' interest in creating in these languages mirrored the current style in Iberian society. Hebrew, which had been developed in Sepharad following Arabic models, remained stuck in its classicist mode and in its learned traditions, and, with a few exceptions, it was not able to adapt itself to the new modes of poetry being pioneered on the peninsula.[68]

Although battered by Christianity during the period 1391–1416, late-medieval Sephardic Jewry was intimately involved with Iberian society and its written and oral culture. But was this immersion pursued at the expense of an interest in the older forms of Jewish learning? Did the persecutions and conversions result in a decline in the traditional subjects of Jewish study? Sephardic Jewish culture in the fifteenth century did not deteriorate as much as it exhibited a change in its emphases. Although the older forms of Talmud commentary—such as the dis-

tinguished *novellae* (brief episodic commentaries) of Naḥmanides and Ibn Adret—were no longer being systematically pursued, there was no decline in talmudic exegesis. Drawing on philosophical discourse and especially ideas about logic, Isaac ben Jacob Campanton, who founded a yeshivah in Zamora, Castile, promoted an innovative methodology with which to study the Talmud. Assuming that the talmudic text was written with great care and precision, Campanton argued that its words needed to be carefully examined in order to elicit the range of meanings embedded within a particular passage. Campanton read the exegesis of medieval commentators by associating their comments with the options available within the text itself. Although little information is available on Campanton's life, we do know that he, along with Ibn Shem Tov, the son of Abraham Benveniste (a communal reformer), and two wealthy Jews, were involved as a group in assessing the taxes of the Castilian Jewish communities. One can easily argue that the presence of such individuals in powerful positions within the communities indicate that the older Sephardic style of leadership still prevailed. For this group, philosophy was not only (to paraphrase ha-Lorki) a fruit whose essence should be eaten while its shell is cast aside; speculative reasoning could also serve as the source to discover the truth about the Talmud, the foundational document of rabbinic Judaism.[69]

In the wake of 1391, there were those who argued that excessive devotion to the study of Talmud to the detriment of other traditional subjects was one of the reasons that many Jews deserted the faith. Duran maintained that the educational curriculum of Sephardic Jewry had to be reformed. Greater emphasis had to be given to the study of the Bible and to the mastery of the Hebrew language—subjects, he suggested, that would make the Jews more steadfast in their faith. Writing in 1403, Duran censured the talmudists themselves, not only because they refused to study other subjects, including the Bible, but also because they possessed overweening pride and felt that "all should stand up before them." The Aragonese philosopher Abraham Bibago also vehemently decried those talmudists who, while steeped in rabbinic knowledge, did not possess sophisticated ideas about their faith.[70]

Biblical study was not neglected; it remained central to the profile of the Jewish intellectual. Exegesis was alive and well in the moderate philosophical commentaries of the Aragonese Isaac Arama, in the kabbalistically tinged writings of Abraham Saba, who wrote in Portugal after his departure from Castile in 1492, and in the works of Saba's contemporary, the Lisbon rabbi Joseph Ḥayyun. The most distinguished exemplar of fifteenth-century commentators was the prolific Isaac Abravanel, who composed commentaries on almost all of the biblical books. Abravanel's writings reflect the beginnings of a profound shift away from

medieval modes of thinking. This turn was not surprising for a man who was born in a Portugal influenced by humanist ideals and who moved in the last decades of the fifteenth century to Castile, where Renaissance modes of thought had permeated court culture. His exegesis indicated a sophisticated grasp of geography and a chronological awareness that supported a profound distinction between past and present. Abravanel subjected the Bible to the same stylistic questions he would have posed to any other literary text. He wondered in a letter to Ḥayyun (who may have been a teacher of his) whether the book of Deuteronomy had been written by God or by Moses. Although he wrestled with the authorship and the dating of biblical books as well as of rabbinic sources, Abravanel never undermined the idea of the Torah of Moses in his own commentaries.[71]

Many new educational institutions were founded over the course of the fifteenth century on the northern half of the peninsula (reflecting the demographic shift), where a burgeoning cadre of students was enrolled. These were yeshivot that emphasized the study of the Talmud and of the halakhah, as was the tradition among Sephardic yeshivot in previous centuries. Yet other subjects such as Kabbalah were also included in the curriculum, and some students may have been encouraged to pursue their mystical studies in greater depth. Campanton's academy in Zamora may have been one of these institutions. Philosophical topics were often explored in institutions separate from the talmudic academies. Students would leave their regular studies and travel to these schools to pursue the disciplines of physics and metaphysics.[72] Yeshivot served as copying centers for manuscripts that, presumably, were studied in their institutions. Although manuscripts were also produced elsewhere on the peninsula, the printed Hebrew book made its appearance in towns that may have also hosted these educational institutions. A variety of repositories existed for these books and manuscripts, such as private libraries owned by Jews and Christian converts and those managed by social institutions such as confraternities.[73]

The study of philosophy and Kabbalah was cultivated in the fifteenth century, though their precise place within the curriculum of Sephardic Jews is not clear. These disciplines offered important prisms through which to view the foundation works of rabbinic culture and to look at the greater world. Toward the end of the century, there were thinkers who combined both of these fields of study into a unified perspective on Judaism and the Jewish people, even though some kabbalists demonized philosophy as the root of all evil.[74] The study of philosophy had taken a new turn with the writings of Crescas and his attack on Maimonides. Although many philosophers defended Maimonides and his ideas about free will and determinism, they followed Crescas by retreating from Mai-

monides' contention that the ultimate end of human life was the perfection of the intellect. Crescas's disciples argued in opposition that what led to the immortality of the soul was fealty to the word of God as expressed in the Torah and to the performance of the commandments. The works of Maimonides, as in previous years, remained the focal point around which the arguments about the appropriate place of philosophy within the Sephardic curriculum continued to swirl. The physician Abraham Shalom, writing in Catalonia in the mid-fifteenth century, agreed with the Maimonidean position on the creation of the world and defended the role of philosophy (that is, Aristotle's writings) within Judaism. But Shalom departed from Maimonides by asserting that it was knowledge of halakhah and not metaphysics that was necessary for the perfection of human beings. By arguing that the Law was an expression of Divine Love, he was espousing a Jewish particularism in the fashion of ha-Levi, Naḥmanides, and Crescas. Further, by asserting the importance of Divine Law, he was supporting those who had refused to convert to Christianity and had been willing to suffer because of that conviction.[75]

The beginning of the fifteenth century proved to be a time of renewed interest in kabbalistic ideas after mystical creativity had suffered a decline during the fourteenth century. This attention was expressed in the study of works such as the *Zohar*. As a result of the fascination it held for its readers, this book earned a quasi-canonical status. So great was the focus on the written word as opposed to oral transmission that Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov bemoaned the fact that he could find no one to teach him Kabbalah. The philosopher Joseph Albo also decried this reliance on the texts. But the goal of this student of Crescas (Albo was also one of the chief disputants at Tortosa) was to limit those mystical ideas that could serve as a springboard for further philosophical speculation to those that were received as oral communications from a master. Kabbalah was achieving status as authoritative rabbinic interpretation even for those who were not kabbalists by training. We have already observed how mysticism was accorded an important place in the curriculum in the philosophically oriented school of talmudic studies founded by Campanton.

Some of the kabbalists' specific attitudes, such as Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov's scathing critique of the philosophical enterprise, grew out of internal intellectual developments, but the general interest in Kabbalah may well have been a reaction to the theological quandaries posed by the events of 1391. The author of the mystical *Pokeaḥ Ivrim*, living near Burgos in 1439, boasted not only of the superiority of the study of the Kabbalah (philosophy was deemed inferior, not dangerous) but also of the greatness of Castilian Jewry, who had endured the disasters of the turn of the century. This author viewed the survivors who re-

mained within the Jewish faith as "sanctifiers of the name," possessing the same spiritual stature as that generation of Israelites who had received the revelation at Sinai.[76]

The options for an imaginative mystic, in the absence of reliable oral transmissions and in the face of the seemingly sterile world of speculative exegesis, were severely limited. In response to this predicament, a small and highly idiosyncratic group of mystical writers emerged toward the end of the century whose teachings were grounded in part on revelatory experiences that had been stimulated by acts of magic. These authors, fierce antirationalists all, blamed the ills of Jewish society on the study of philosophy. During the last few decades of Iberian Jewish life, however, some kabbalists eschewed this radical path and were well integrated into the intellectual mainstream. Among them were Abraham Saba, the great exegete who was exiled to Portugal from northwest Castile in 1492, and those who studied in Campanton's yeshivah in Zamora, also in northwest Castile. Indeed, at the end of the century there were also those who combined both philosophical and mystical reflections in establishing their worldview. Isaac Arama and Joel ibn Shua'ib utilized philosophy and Kabbalah in their exegetical works in such a fashion that it is not easy to disentangle these intellectual strands within their writings.[77]

After the destruction and the conversions of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, some Jews reevaluated their cherished notion that their people fared better in Christian lands than in Islamic countries. A Saragossan Jew wrote a letter of introduction for a friend who had decided to emigrate to the Land of Israel from Tudela, Navarre—which had barely been affected by the events of 1391–1416. He let loose a string of invective against the accursed soil of Sepharad, and he praised the Land of Israel as a land of bounty. Sephardic Jews did emigrate to the Land of Israel as part of a general migration in the Mediterranean world. There was a small but consistent stream of emigrants after 1391, but it was only after 1453, in the wake of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople and amid speculation about the reorganization of the political and religious world order, that the ancient homeland became a magnet for a larger number of emigrants. Yet even as some counseled their friends to leave the paradise of Sepharad for the humiliation and poverty of the Jewish communities of the Islamic Diaspora, it remained axiomatic for these Sephardim that there was less hatred toward the Jews in Christian lands than there was under the Muslims.[78]

As Sephardic ideas and people began to spread to the eastern Mediterranean and even to central Europe, the Iberian Sephardim paid close attention to events taking place outside the peninsula. Their continued interest during the fifteenth century in the mythical figure of Prester John and his exploits not only reflected

a broadening of geographical horizons, which was symptomatic of Renaissance culture, but also indicated the desire of Jews to imagine that their redemption was in the offing. Ḥasdai Crescas demonstrated curiosity in stories regarding the whereabouts and adventures of Prester John, and Isaac Abravanel was devoted to news about the ten lost tribes and their settlement in far-away lands.[79]

As before 1391, speculations about distant Jewish communities served as a psychological buffer against the arguments of the rival faith. Issues of Jewish sovereignty and the location of the ten lost tribes were intimately connected to Jewish expectations about the coming of their Messiah and to their assertion that God had not forgotten his chosen people. Crescas may have been supportive of a messianic pretender in the 1390s. According to our correspondent ha-Lorki, speaking as Gerónimo de Santa Fé during the proceedings at Tortosa, Crescas had "preached in the synagogue" about reports of a Messiah born in the northern Castilian village of Cisneros. Nevertheless, there is scarcely any indication that Sephardic Jews participated in a messianic movement. Indeed, Crescas maintained that belief in the Messiah was not a dogma within Judaism, and his student Joseph Albo argued, contra Maimonides, that one who denied the Messiah was a sinner but not an infidel. Still, ruminations about the Messiah and recommendations about the activities Jews might perform to hasten his coming were crucial in maintaining the equilibrium of the community within an ever more confident Christian society.[80]

Preoccupation with Christian truth-claims shadowed and informed Jewish life in Christian Iberia, and understandably cast an even more intense pall during the fifteenth century. A half-century after Crescas composed his vernacular Refutation of Christian Principles, Joseph ibn Shem Tov, a Castilian courtier who was engaged in polemical activities with Christian scholars, translated it into Hebrew, presumably to serve as a sourcebook for Jewish specialists. Ibn Shem Tov understood that the Jewish-Christian debate was not confined to strictly polemical treatises but informed philosophical and exegetical works as well. The arguments ha-Lorki made while a Jew to the erstwhile Solomon ha-Levi were still being combated over 40 years later in the latter's magisterial biblical commentary, *Scrutinium Scripturarum.*[81]

Toward the end of the fifteenth century, the virulence of Jewish literary attacks against Christianity intensified. A noted kabbalist, Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi, asserted the demonic nature of the Christian faith. The author of an anonymous contemporaneous work, the *Book of the Answering Angel,* which claimed to be a product of divine revelation, derided Christian theology and expressed deep and unmitigated hostility to the person of Jesus. Yet this same writer adapted Christian ideas about the birth and nature of the Messiah in his own description of the redeemer. He foretold that at the end of days the power of Christianity would be destroyed, but Christianity would prove to be an ally of Judaism at the time of the redemption. The juxtaposition of this author's hatred of the historical expression of Christianity with his attraction to its theology strikingly underscored the complex and paradoxical attitude of Sephardic Jews to Christian society at the end of the fifteenth century.[82]

This convoluted attitude was even more emblematic of those who had converted to Christianity during the last decade of the fourteenth century and the first two decades of the fifteenth. Whether willingly or forcibly converted, these individuals had formed, unawares, another religious grouping within the Christian Iberian kingdoms: the *conversos.* The variegated religious behavior of these converts and the response of Jews and Christians to their activities profoundly affected the fortunes of Sephardic Jewry and proved to be crucial factors in the development of Spanish and Portuguese civilization.

As the fifteenth century continued to unfold, some of the conversos had become socially and religiously integrated into the older Christian community, while others had remained as faithful as they could to the Judaism they had willingly or forcibly abandoned. Given the failure of the host Christian society to assimilate them and the prohibition in canon law against their return to Judaism, the vast majority of conversos led a double religious existence distinguished by practices characteristic of both Judaism and Christianity. When riots broke out against the "New Christians" (a designation that reflected their incomplete acceptance within Christian society) in southern Castile in the 1460s and 1470s, Iberian Christian society recognized that the conversos presented not only a religious problem but a social one as well. In response to this challenge, some Christian writers argued for educational initiatives to assist the conversos in their Christianization. Others asserted that, as judaizers, these New Christians were heretics deserving of the death penalty. Ferdinand and Isabella charted a position between the two views by founding a papal Inquisition under Crown control to investigate the behavior of converts in Castile and Aragon.[83]

Some Jews (on and off the peninsula) viewed their converted brethren as members of their own community, deserving both friendship and religious encouragement. Others viewed the apostates with little sympathy and asserted that the conversos' daily behavior undermined their status as members of the Jewish people. These Jews criticized the converts for their unwillingness to observe the laws of Judaism in private and for their reluctance to embrace a public as well as private Jewish existence by emigrating from the peninsula. Although social and religious ties between Jews and conversos were maintained in the immediate aftermath of the conversions, changing occupational and residential patterns of

the New Christians and the ever-widening gaps between the religious expressions of these two groups over the course of the fifteenth century loosened and frayed those earlier bonds.[84]

After a few years of operation, the tribunals of both the Castilian and the Aragonese Inquisitions concluded that a majority of the conversos were following Jewish practices and posed a religious threat to the "old Christians" as well as to their own souls. In the late 1480s, senior inquisitorial officials began to promote a solution to this seemingly intractable problem. By preventing Jews from associating with conversos, they suggested, the Jews would not be able to influence their former coreligionists to practice Jewish rituals. Free of this negative influence, the conversos would be free to turn to the Christian faith with great sincerity and devotion.

Gradually, the idea of a kingdom-wide expulsion of the Jews gained support within government circles as the most effective means of resolving the social and religious difficulties raised by the converso population. The Jews were completely surprised by this development. After all, their position within Iberian Christian society had been relatively stable ever since the 1420s. In addition, the king and queen had displayed a conservative stance in domestic affairs, a posture that had reassured the Jews that their political status would not be altered. To be sure, Ferdinand and Isabella had separated Jews from New Christians in a number of towns and cities within Castile and Aragon and had even expelled the Jews from Andalusia in order to prevent their religious contamination of the conversos. But the monarchy had, for the most part, continued to support the rights and privileges of the Jewish community.[85]

On March 31, 1492, only a few weeks after Ferdinand and Isabella had brought the centuries-old reconquista to a successful conclusion, they signed the edict banishing the Jews from their realm. The Jews had until the last day of July 1492 to leave Castile and Aragon or to convert to Christianity and remain within their homes. Many Jews chose to convert, but others decided to cross the borders into Portugal and Navarre or to reestablish their lives outside of the peninsula.[86] As the fifteenth century drew to a close, however, the two kingdoms that had provided refuge for the exiled Jews followed the example of Castile and Aragon. At the end of 1496, King Manoel decreed the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal. Because of the absence of a substantial converso population that could have filled some of the economic roles left vacant by the departing Jews, the expulsion evolved into a forced conversion of all of Portuguese Jewry. At the end of 1497 or the beginning of 1498, King Juhan and Queen Catalina of Navarre decided to expel their Jews to prevent the invasion of their kingdom by powerful neighbors to the south. Unable to leave the country without traveling through off-limits territory, almost all the Navarrese Jews converted.[87]

And so the saga of Iberian Jewry came to a close. Sephardic Jews would continue to build their communities and to fashion their traditions, albeit no longer within the geographical boundaries where their culture was born and where they had cultivated their unique identity. Exiles took with them not only their well-developed Sephardic culture but also their personal perspectives on the past and the future. The Portuguese-born Abravanel, who served at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, remained convinced that peace and prosperity had been the lot of Sephardic Jews even on the eve of the expulsion. But others, such as Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi and his brother-in-law, the chronicler Abraham Zacuto (who was imprisoned in Portugal upon refusing to convert in 1497), held a much darker view of the last two decades of peninsular Jewish life. Similarly, though some exiled Sephardim recalled their Iberian past and its cultural accomplishments with great pride, others remained dejected and pessimistic and did not find in their history anything that might augur well for the successful regeneration of their community.[88]

The fear that God had turned His countenance away from His people haunted the exiles as it had ha-Lorki. For some of the refugees, the messianic exegesis of biblical texts and of rabbinic commentaries allowed for a defense against despair and encouraged the suppression of the frightful conclusion that Christianity might indeed have triumphed. Living on the Italian peninsula in the wake of the expulsion, Abravanel composed three treatises devoted to the rehabilitation of the messianic prophecies of Judaism. In "Salvations of His Annointed," his exploration of rabbinic reflections on the messianic advent, Abravanel expressed nothing but contempt for ha-Lorki, "the chief of all heretics, may his name and memory be blotted out."[89]

Let Abravanel, the great exemplar of the Sephardic courtier tradition, have the final word. He may have summarized the conflicted perspectives of the exiles when they looked back at the glories of Sephardic Jewry and their ignominious exile. He asserted, in his commentary on Jeremiah 2:24, that the last day Jews were permitted to reside in Castile and Aragon was the ninth of Av, the day on which they commemorated the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. With this calendrical sleight of hand, he taught us much about Sephardic Jews and their culture. Abravanel surely knew that July 31, the last official day of Jewish presence in Castile and Aragon, was the seventh of Av. (The actual ninth of Av, two days later, was a day that, for many of the exiles or even those remaining on the peninsula, was decidedly horrific.) But by identifying the ninth of Av as the date of expulsion, Abravanel gave voice to the Sephardic perception that the downfall of the community—"the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad"—was to be equated with the great national tragedies that the Jewish people had suffered. Even as he viewed the trauma that befell his people,

he was also suggesting a parallel between the grand accomplishments of Sephardic Jewry and the glories of the distant past.

NOTES

1. The translation here—and throughout this chapter—is mine. For the Hebrew text and a German translation, see L. Landau, *Das Apologetische Schreiben des Josua Lorki* (Antwerpen, 1906). See also the University of California dissertation by Judith Gale Krieger, *Pablo de Santa María: His Epoch, Life and Hebrew and Spanish Literary Production* (1988), in which the Hebrew text is accompanied by an English translation on pp. 262–309, and Michael Glatzer, "Between Joshua Halorki and Shelomo Halevi—Towards an Examination of the Causes of Conversion Among Jews in Spain in the Fourteenth Century," *Pe'amim* 54 (1993): 103–16.

2. See, for example, Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1966), 2: 95–169 and *passim*.

3. Samuel Krauss, "The Names Ashkenaz and Sepharad" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 3 (1931–32): 431, 435.

4. Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Rabbi Moses ibn Ezra on the Legitimacy of Poetry," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 7 (1976): 101–15.

5. Two recent articles of note on Judah Halevi, whose life has attracted much scholarly attention, are Yosef Yahalom, "The Leningrad Treasures and the Study of the Poetry and Life of Yehuda Halevi" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 46–47 (1991): 55–74, and Ezra Fleischer, " 'The Essence of Our Land and Its Meaning'—Toward a Portrait of Judah Halevi on the Basis of Geniza Documents" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 68 (1996): 4–15.

6. The classic work on Abraham ibn Daud is Gerson D. Cohen, ed., *Sefer ha-Qabbalah (The Book of Tradition) by Abraham ibn Daud* (Philadelphia, 1967).

7. See, for example, José S. Gil, *La escuela de traductores de Toledo y los colaboradores judíos* (Toledo, 1985); Robert I. Burns, ed., *The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror* (Princeton, N.J., 1985); and, on courtiers in Aragon, the work of David Romano, especially his *Judíos al servicio de Pedro el Grande de Aragón* (Barcelona, 1983).

8. Eleazar Gutwirth, "Hispano-Jewish Attitudes Toward the Moors in the Fifteenth Century," *Sefarad* 49 (1989): 237–62.

9. Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1973–84), and Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry* (London, 1997), 13–18 and *passim*.

10. For a re-creation of these events, see Bernard Septimus, "Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Medieval Jewish History* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1979), 197–230.

11. On the physical remains of the Sephardic communities on the Iberian Peninsula, see José Luis Lacave, "Material Remains," in Haim Beinart, ed., *The Sephardi Legacy*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1992), 452–73. For an introduction to a facsimile edition of the fourteenth-

century haggadah, see Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* (Beograd, Yugoslavia, 1975), 7–45, esp. 15, 21–22, and the illuminated pages.

12. Ross Brann, *The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain* (Baltimore, Md., 1991).

13. On the relationship of the Jewish community and governmental authorities during the Middle Ages, see Shmuel Shilo, *Dina de'Malkhuta Dina* (Jerusalem, 1974). On the judicial system of the Jews in medieval Iberia, see, generally, Abraham Neuman, *The Jews in Spain*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1942), 112–46. On the situation in the Crown of Aragon, see Assis, *Golden Age*, 145–63, and especially his "The Jews of Spain in Gentile Courts (XIIIth–XIVth Centuries)" (Hebrew), in Menahem Ben-Sasson et al., eds., *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewish History* (Jerusalem, 1989), 399–430.

14. Moses of Coucy, *Sefer Mitzvot ha-Gadol*, Prohibition 112, no. 3. On the sexual mores of the Spanish Jews, see Yom Tov Assis, "Sexual Behaviour in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society," in Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London, 1988), 25–59.

15. See Assis, "Sexual Behaviour," 37.

16. Reference to the herem of 1281 is in *Zikhron Yehudah* (Berlin, 1846), no. 91, fol. 45b. See Mordechai A. Friedman, "Menahem ben Aaron Ibn Zemah's Anti-Polygyny Torah Commentary from the Geniza," in Marc Z. Brettler and Michael A. Fishbane eds., *Minḥah le-Naḥum* (Sheffield, Engl., 1993), 103–16.

17. Assis, *Golden Age*, 299–307.

18. Brann, *Compunctious Poet*, 143–57.

19. Talya Fishman, "A Medieval Parody of Misogyny: Judah ibn Shabbetai's 'Minḥat Yehudah sone hanashim,' " *Prooftexts* 8 (1988): 89–111. See also Assis, "Sexual Behaviour," 28. The beginnings of a discussion of medieval Sephardic women, relying on scattered data, can be found in Renée Levine Melammed, "Sephardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," in Judith R. Baskin, ed., *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 2d ed. (Detroit, 1999), 128–49.

20. Monford Harris, "Marriage as Metaphysics: A Study of the *Iggereth Hakodesh*," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 33 (1962): 197–220. See also Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 3 (New York, 1989), 1371, and David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (New York, 1992), 101–20.

21. Jacob Katz, "Halakhic Statements in the Zohar" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 50 (1980–81): 405–22, reprinted in his *Halakhah and Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1984), 34–51. See also Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigle She-Banistar* (Tel Aviv, 1995), and the review by Yehuda Liebes in *Tarbiz* 64 (1995): 581–605.

22. See Israel Ta-Shma, "The Author of Sefer 'Ha-Hinnukh' " (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 55 (1980): 787–90.

23. Abraham Grossman, "Legislation and Responsa Literature" and "Relations Between Spanish and Ashkenazi Jewry in the Middle Ages," in Beinart, ed., *Sephardi Legacy*, 1: 188–239.

24. A mixed attitude toward the Jews prevailed in Las Siete Partidas. Alfonso devoted an entire section to the Jews and, in so doing, acknowledged their important presence within his kingdom. Although his rules understandably reflected classical Christian theological attitudes toward the Jews and the influence of the newly resurgent Roman legal system, Alfonso also expressed particular views about this minority. For while the code gave voice to the blood libel that had appeared in mid-twelfth-century England for the first time, Alfonso did not claim that such crimes had ever occurred and further asserted that only he and his royal judiciary would sit in judgment on these matters. And while he ordered the Jews to wear a distinguishing mark on their clothing so that they could be identified, in accordance with the proceedings of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, he also explained, contrary to traditional Christian teachings, that the reason no one could deface a synagogue was that the name of God was praised therein. See Dwayne E. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition of and Commentary on Siete Partidas* (Berkeley, Calif., 1986), 7, chap. 24 "De los judíos."

25. The convenient Hebrew translation of Alfred Freimann's German articles on Rabbi Asher and his family is *The ROSh, Rabbenu Asher ben R. Yehiel and His Descendants* (Jerusalem, 1986). See also Israel Ta-Shma, "Rabbenu Asher and his Son R. Ya'akov Ba'al ha-Turim—Between Ashkenaz and Sepharad" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 46–47 (1991): 75–91, where on p. 88 he discusses the relationship between Las Siete Partidas and Tur.

26. Cohen, *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah*, 295–300. See also Jan D. Katzew, "Moses ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi: Their Philosophies in Response to Exile," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984): 179–95.

27. Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 39–60.

28. Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy, 1180–1240* (Leiden, 1965).

29. Septimus, "Piety and Power."

30. See the articles by Bernard Septimus, Moses Idel, and David Berger in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Rabbi Moses Naḥmanides (RaMBaN): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

31. A convenient summary is David Berger, "Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures* (Northvale, N.J., 1997), 100–108.

32. See the unpublished master's thesis of David Horwitz, "The Role of Philosophy and Kabbalah in the Works of Rashba" (Yeshiva University, 1986).

33. Dov Schwartz has written voluminously on these issues. See, especially, his "Theology and Learning in Medieval Jewish Philosophy: A Chapter in Maimonidean Influence" (Hebrew), *Da'at* 37 (1996): 153–79, and "A Study of the Philosophical Variety in Spain and Provence Before the Expulsion" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 49 (1991): 5–23.

34. Israel Ta-Shma, "Philosophical Considerations for Halakhic Decision-Making in Spain" (Hebrew), *Sefunot*, n.s. 3, no. 18 (1985): 99–110, and reprinted in his *Ritual, Custom and Reality in Franco-Germany, 1000–1350* (Jerusalem, 1996), 79–93.

35. See Schwartz, "Theology and Learning" and "A Study of the Philosophical Variety." See also Warren Harvey, *Hasdai Crescas' Critique of the Theory of Acquired Intellect* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973), 2: 86–89 and *passim*.

36. Norman Roth, "Two Jewish Courtiers of Alfonso X Called Zag (Isaac)," *Sefarad* 43 (1983): 75–85.

37. Dwayne E. Carpenter, "The Portrayal of the Jew in Alfonso the Learned's *Cantigas de Santa María*," in Bernard Dov Cooperman, ed., *In Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews Between Cultures* (Newark, Del., 1998), 15–42.

38. Assis, *Golden Age*.

39. See Joseph Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine and Medieval Society* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994), and Yom Tov Assis, "Jewish Physicians and Medicine in Medieval Spain," in Samuel S. Kottek and Luís García-Ballester, eds., *Medicine and Medical Ethics in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Jerusalem, 1996), 33–49.

40. Maria José Pimenta Ferro, *Os judeus em Portugal no século xiv* (Lisbon, 1979).

41. Beatrice Leroy, *The Jews of Navarre in the Late Middle Ages* (Jerusalem, 1985).

42. Julio Valdeón Baruque, *Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara* (Valladolid, 1968).

43. See the perceptive remarks of David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), esp. 231–45.

44. See Marcus Nathan Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (London, 1907).

45. See, generally, Grossman, "Relations Between Spanish and Ashkenazi Jewry."

46. Bernard Septimus, "Hispano-Jewish Views of Christendom and Islam," in Cooperman, ed., *In Iberia and Beyond*, esp. 43–48.

47. Abraham Gross, "The Expulsion and the Search for the Ten Tribes," *Judaism* 41 (1992): 130–47.

48. Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1: 327–31.

49. Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989).

50. Robert Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992).

51. See, generally, Hanne Trautner-Kromann, *Shield and Sword* (Tübingen, 1993), and Jeremy Cohen, "Towards a Functional Classification of Jewish Anti-Christian Polemic in the High Middle Ages," in Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner, eds., *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1992), 93–114. Ora Limor has written on the disputation in Mallorca in 1286; see her "Missionary Merchants: Three Medieval Anti-Jewish Works from Genoa," *Journal of Medieval History* 17 (1991): 35–51. On Ibn Adret's involvement in the Christian-Jewish debate, see Jeremy Cohen, "The Christian Adversary of Solomon ibn Adret," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 71 (1980–81): 48–55. David Berger, "Christians, Gentiles and

the Talmud: A Fourteenth-Century Jewish Response to the Attack on Rabbinic Judaism," in Lewis and Niewöhner, eds., *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, 115–30, analyzes the work of ha-Kohen.

52. Dov Schwartz, "The Neutralization of the Messianic Idea in Medieval Jewish Rationalism" (Hebrew), *Hebrew Union College Annual* 64 (1993): 37–58 in the Hebrew numbered pagination.

53. Yom Tov Assis, "The Judeo-Arabic Tradition in Christian Spain," in Daniel Frank, ed., *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity* (Leiden, 1995), 111–24, and E. Gutwirth, "Actitudes judías hacia los cristianos en la España del siglo xv: Ideario de los traductores del latín," *Actas del II Congreso Internacional. Encuentro de las tres culturas* (Toledo, Spain, 1985), 189–96. On Nissim Gerondi, see Warren Zev Harvey, "Nissim of Gerona and William of Ockham on Prime Matter," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 87–98; on ha-Kohen, see Trautner-Kromann, *Shield and Sword*, 148.

54. Beatrice Leroy, "Le Grand Rabbin de Navarre Josef Orabuena," in Carlos Barros, ed., *Xudeus e 'conversos' na historia* (Santiago de Compostela, 1994), 153–67.

55. On ha-Lorki's view, see Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Engl., 1985), 348–50.

56. See Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, esp. 200–230, on Holy Week violence. His ruminations about the riots of 1391 are in ibid., 248–49.

57. Ha-Levi's letter to ha-Lorki can be found in Landau, *Das Apologetische Schreiben*, 19–21. The Hebrew text, accompanied by an English translation, is in Krieger, *Pablo de Santa María*, 311–17.

58. See the writings of the second-century bishop Melito of Sardis, as reported in Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law* (Berkeley, Calif., 1999), 10–11.

59. See Elias Lipiner, *Two Portuguese Exiles in Castile: Dom David Negro; Dom Isaac Abravanel* (Jerusalem, 1997), 20, and, generally, Pimenta Ferro, *Os judeus em Portugal*. For Navarre, see Beatrice Leroy, "From 1390 to 1460, King Charles III of Navarre, Protector of Foreign Jews in his Kingdom" (French), *Sefarad* 52 (1992): 463–71.

60. Moisés Orfali, "Jerónimo de Santa Fé and the Christian Polemic against the Talmud" (Spanish), *Annuario di Studi Ebraici* 10 (1980–84): 157–78.

61. Jaume Riera i Sans, "On the Fate of R. Isaac Bar Sheshet (RIBaSh) During the Persecutions of 1391" (Hebrew), *Sefunot*, n.s. 2, no. 17 (1983): 11–20. The most recent discussion of Perfet's attitudes toward the Iberian conversos is in Norman Roth's argumentative *Conversos, Inquisition and the Expulsion* (Madison, Wisc., 1995), 35–38.

62. See Natan Ophir, "A New Reading of R. Ḥasdai Crescas' *Or ha-Shem:* The Conversos' Perspective" (Hebrew), *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 3/2 (Jerusalem, 1994), 41–47.

63. Daniel J. Lasker, *The Refutation of the Christian Principles by Ḥasdai Crescas* (Albany, N.Y., 1992).

64. Frank Talmage, "The Polemical Writings of Profiat Duran," *Immanuel* 13 (1981): 69–95.

65. For Aragon, see the many articles by Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, among them "The Disappearance of the Jewish Community of Daroca in the Beginning of the 15th Century," *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 2/2 (Jerusalem, 1990), 143–50. See also Mark D. Meyerson, "The Economic Life of the Jews of Murviedro in the Fifteenth Century," in Cooperman, ed., *In Iberia and Beyond*, 67–95.

66. Eleazar Gutwirth, "Contempt for the Lower Orders in 15th-Century Hispano Jewish Thought," *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos* 30 (1981): 83–93, and Gutwirth, "Isaac Caro in His Time," ibid. 40 (1991): 119–30.

67. Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1978), 159–60.

68. See Eleazar Gutwirth, "Towards Expulsion: 1391–1492," in Elie Kedourie, ed., *Spain and the Jews* (London, 1992), esp. 58, and Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Secular Hebrew Poetry in Fifteenth-Century Spain," in Benjamin R. Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World* (New York, 1997), 31–37.

69. Daniel Boyarin, *Sephardi Speculation: A Study in Methods of Talmudic Interpretation* (Jerusalem, 1989).

70. Eleazar Gutwirth, "Conversions to Christianity Amongst Fifteenth-Century Spanish Jews: An Alternative Explanation," in *Shlomo Simonsohn Jubilee Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1993), 103–21.

71. Abraham Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn: The World of Rabbi Abraham Saba* (Leiden, 1995), and his *Rabbi Joseph ben Abraham Hayyun* (Ramat Gan, 1993). See also Eric Lawee, "On the Threshhold of the Renaissance: New Methods and Sensibilities in the Biblical Commentaries of Isaac Abarbanel," *Viator* 26 (1995): 283–319, and his "The Ways of Midrash in the Biblical Commentaries of Isaac Abarbanel," *HUCA* 67 (1996): 107–42.

72. Joseph R. Hacker, "On the Intellectual Character and Self-Perception of Spanish Jewry in the Late Fifteenth Century" (Hebrew), *Sefunot*, n.s. 2, no. 17 (1983): 21–95, and Abraham Gross, "A Sketch of the History of Yeshivot in Castile in the Fifteenth Century" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 31 (1987): 3–21.

73. Michael Riegler, "Were the Yeshivot in Spain Centers for the Copying of Books?," *Sefarad* 57 (1997): 373–98, and Menahem Schmelzer, "Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books Among the Sephardim Before and After the Expulsion," in Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity*, 257–66. On libraries, see Eleazar Gutwirth and Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, "Twenty-six Jewish Libraries from Fifteenth-Century Spain," *The Library*, Sixth Series 18 (1996): 27–53, and Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, "Majorcan Jews and Conversos as Owners and Artisans of Books," in Aharon Mirsky et al., eds., *Exile and Diaspora: Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Ḥaim Beinart* (Madrid, 1991), 125–30.

74. Shaul Regev, "About the Problem of the Study of Philosophy in Fifteenth-Century Thought; R. Joseph ibn Shem Tov and R. Abraham Bibago" (Hebrew), *Da'at* 16 (1986): 57–85.

75. Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Political Philosophy in the Thought of Abraham Shalom" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990): 409–40. See also Eric Lawee, "The

Path to Felicity: Teachings and Tensions in *'Even Shetiyyah* of Abraham ben Yehudah, Disciple of Ḥasdai Crescas," *Mediaeval Studies* 59 (1997): 183–223.

76. Schwartz, "A Study of the Philosophical Variety in Spain and Provence," and Boaz Huss, "On the Status of Kabbala in Spain After the Persecutions of 1391" (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 56 (1993): 20–32.

77. Moshe Idel, "Inquiries in the Doctrine of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*" (Hebrew), *Sefunot*, n.s. 2, no. 17 (1983): 185–266, and Abraham Gross, "Satan and Christianity: The Demonization of Christianity in the Writings of Abraham Saba," *Zion* 58 (1993): 91–105. See also Isaiah Tishby, *Messianism in the Time of the Expulsion from Spain and Portugal* (Jerusalem, 1985).

78. Haim Beinart, "A 15th-Century Hebrew Formulary from Spain" (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 5 (1961): 116–17; Joseph R. Hacker, "Links Between Spanish Jewry and Palestine, 1391–1492," in Richard I. Cohen, ed., *Vision and Conflict in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1985), 111–39; and Septimus, "Hispano-Jewish Views of Christendom and Islam," 48–50.

79. Gross, "The Expulsion and the Search for the Ten Tribes."

80. Warren Zev Harvey, "The Messianism of Rabbi Ḥasdai Crescas" (unpublished paper delivered at Yeshiva University conference, "Creativity in a Community in Decline," 1992), and Eric Lawee, " 'Israel Has No Messiah' in Late Medieval Spain," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 5 (1996): 245–79.

81. Lasker, *Refutation of the Christian Principles*, and Glatzer, "Between Joshua Halorki and Shelomo Halevi."

82. Moshe Idel, "The Attitude to Christianity in the *Sefer ha-Meshiv*," *Immanuel* 12 (1981): 77–95.

83. Haim Beinart, "The Converso Problem in 15th-Century Spain," in R. D. Barnett, ed., *The Sephardi Heritage* (London, 1971), 425–56.

84. The literature on this subject is abundant and frequently contentious. The following are but a sampling: Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial* (Jerusalem, 1981); Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition* (New York, 1995); Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition and the Expulsion;* David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia, 1996); and Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel?* (New York, 1999). The remarks of Hillgarth, *Spanish Kingdoms*, 2: 410–83, on the religion of the conversos and generally on late-fifteenth-century Iberian Jewry are persuasive.

85. Maurice Kriegel, "The Making of a Decree: The Expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492" (French), *Revue historique* 260 (1978): 49–90.

86. Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1994); Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, *La expulsión de los judíos del reino de Aragón*, 2 vols. (Saragossa, 1990); Benjamin R. Gampel, *The Last Jews on Iberian Soil: Navarrese Jewry 1479–1498* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), 89–119; and Pimenta Ferro Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século xv*, vol. 1 (Lisbon, 1982 and 1984), 252–57.

87. Maria José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, "Expulsion or Integration? The Portuguese Jewish Problem," in Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity*, 95–103, and Benjamin R. Gampel, "Ferdinand and Isabella and the Decline of Portuguese and Navarrese Jewries," in Yom Tov Assis and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Jews and Conversos at the Time of the Expulsion* (Jerusalem, 1999), 65–92.

88. Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "The Generation of the Spanish Exiles Considers Its Fate," *Binah* 1 (1989): 83–98, and Joseph R. Hacker, "Pride and Depression—Polarity of the Spiritual and Social Experience of the Iberian Exiles in the Ottoman Empire" (Hebrew) in Menahem Ben-Sasson et al., eds., *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry*, 541–86.

89. Benzion Netanyahu, *Abravanel* (Philadelphia, 1968), 195–257.

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