GRAETZ HEINRICH

HISTORY OF THE JEWS, VOL. 4 (OF 6)

Heinrich Graetz

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Graetz H.

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1270–1328 C.E

The secret science of the Kabbala, which hitherto had assumed a modest deportment and been of a harmless character, began to foment discord in Ben Adret's time, ensnare the intelligence and lead astray the weak. What it lacked in intrinsic truth and power of conviction, it endeavored to supply by presumptuousness. It had already spread from Gerona, its original seat, and from northern Spain by way of Segovia to southern Spain, as far as the Castilian capital, Toledo, the Jewish community of which had before strenuously opposed obscurantism. In the city of Toledo the Kabbala won the adherence, among others, of one man who, by his noble birth, his princely state, his high position, his wealth and learning, gave it great weight. This man, whose influence is even now not fully recognized, was Todros ben Joseph Halevi, of the noble Toledan family of Abulafia (born 1234, died after 1304). He was a nephew of that Meïr Abulafia who had been so obstinate an adversary of Maimuni and rationalistic thought. Todros Abulafia took as a model his uncle, who in his old age had laid his hands on his head, and blessed him. When he grew up, he applied himself to the Talmud and to secret lore; but he must have been a man of affairs, too, for he obtained an honorable position at the court of Sancho IV, and was in special favor with the wise queen, Maria de Molina, as a physician and financier. By the Jews he was esteemed and venerated as their prince (Nasi). When the king and queen of Spain held a meeting in Bayonne with the king of France, Philip le Bel, to settle their mutual hostilities (1290), Todros Abulafia was in the train of the former, and received the most flattering homage from the Jews of southern France. Todros, like his uncle, was a determined opponent of philosophy and its devotees. He had no words bitter enough against the would-be wise people who hold everything which appears incompatible with logic as incredible and impossible. Even Maimuni, whom he highly respected, he censured for undervaluing the importance of the sacrifices so greatly as to explain them merely as a concession to the heathen propensities of the people, and for calling the offering of incense an expedient for purifying the air. He waged vehement warfare against the philosophy which denies the existence of evil spirits, which to him was identical with doubting the existence of angels. Having been initiated into the secret science by one of the earliest Kabbalists, perhaps by Jacob of Segovia, who formed a school of his own, Todros valued it as divine wisdom, to uncover whose veil to laymen was fraught with danger. The recognition of the secret doctrine by a

person of so high a position could not but produce some effect. His sons, Levi and Joseph, likewise plunged headlong into its study. Two of the four Kabbalists of his time, who developed the Kabbala, and extended its influence, ranged themselves under the banner of Todros Abulafia, and dedicated their compositions to him. These four Kabbalists of the first rank, who established new theories with more or less success, were Isaac Ibn-Latif, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Jikatilla, and Moses de Leon, all Spaniards. They obscured the mental light, with which men of intellect, from Saadiah to Maimuni, had illumined Judaism, and substituted for a refined religious belief, fantastic and even blasphemous chimeras. The intellectual degradation of the Jews in the following centuries is to a large extent their work. They led astray both their own times and posterity through designed or unintentional imposition, and the injuries which they inflicted on Judaism are felt even at the present day.

The least harmful of these four was Isaac ben Abraham Ibn-Latif or Allatif (born about 1220, died about 1290). He no doubt owed his origin to the south of Spain, for he was acquainted with Arabic. Nothing is known of his history beyond the fact that he was on friendly terms with Todros Abulafia, to whom he dedicated one of his works. His writings, as has been said by one who came after him, seem to "stand with one foot on philosophy and with the other on the Kabbala." But Allatif only toyed with philosophical formulæ, their meaning does not seem to have become known to him. He was not of a thoughtful nature, and did not enrich the Kabbala, although he attempted to give himself the appearance of following original methods, and avoided the usual Kabbalistic expressions. Allatif started with the thought that a philosophical view of Judaism was not the "right road to the sanctuary," and that it was, therefore, needful to seek a higher conception, but, instead of making the way clear, he concealed it by empty allusions and unmeaning phrases. Allatif laid more weight than his predecessors on the close connection between the spiritual and the material world – between God and His creation. For the Godhead is in all, and all is in it. In soul-inspiring prayers the human spirit is raised to the world-spirit (Sechel ha-Poel), to which it is united "in a kiss," and, so influencing the Divinity, it draws down blessings on the sublunar world. But not every mortal is capable of such spiritual and efficacious prayer; therefore, the prophets, the most perfect men, were obliged to pray for the people, for they alone knew the power of prayer. The unfolding and revelation of the Deity in the world of spirits, spheres and bodies, were explained by Isaac Allatif in mathematical formulæ. Isaac Allatif must, however, be considered a clear thinker, when compared with his enthusiastic contemporary, Abraham Abulafia, who endeavored to establish a new order of things by Kabbalistic sophisms.

Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia (born 1240, in Saragossa, died 1291) was an eccentric personage, full of whims, and fond of adventures. Endowed with a lively mind and with more than a moderate amount of knowledge, he renounced the ways of common sense to throw himself into the arms of enthusiasm. His whole life from his entry into manhood was a succession of adventures. His father, who had instructed him in the Bible and the Talmud, died when his son was a youth of eighteen, and two years later Abraham undertook a journey of adventure, as he relates, in order to discover the mythical river Sabbation or Sambation, and to become acquainted with the supposed Israelite tribes dwelling on its banks, no doubt with a Messianic purpose. His mind was in a constant tumult. He wrestled for clearness, but fell ever deeper into mazes and illusions. One thing, however, became evident to him, that the philosophy with which he had much occupied himself offered no certainty, and, therefore, no satisfaction to the religious mind thirsting after truth. Even the trite Kabbala as commonly accepted, with its doctrine about the Sefiroth, did not satisfy his soul, since both only nursed the pride of knowledge. He, a Kabbalist, criticised the unsoundness of this mystic theory so severely and correctly that it is surprising that he should have conceived still more insane notions. Abraham Abulafia sought after something higher, for prophetic inspiration, which alone opens the fountain of truth, without traversing the laborious path of systematic application.

At length Abulafia believed that he had found what his soul was yearning for, and that through divine inspiration he had come upon a higher Kabbala, in relation to which the lower mystical doctrine

and philosophy were only handmaids. This Kabbala alone, he maintained, offers the means of coming into spiritual communion with the Godhead, and of obtaining prophetic insight. This means was far from new, but the firm conviction of its effectiveness and his application of it are peculiar to Abulafia. To decompose the words of Holy Writ, especially the all-hallowed name of God, to use the letters as independent notions (Notaricon), or to transpose the component parts of a word in all possible permutations, so as to form words from them (Tsiruf), or finally to employ the letters as numbers (Gematria), these are the means of securing communion with the spirit-world. But this alone is not sufficient. He who desires to render himself worthy of a prophetic revelation, must adopt an ascetic mode of living, must remove himself from the turmoil of the world, shut himself up in a quiet chamber, deliver his soul from earthly cares, clothe himself in white garments, wrap himself up with Talith and Phylacteries, and devoutly prepare his soul, as if for an interview with the Deity. Besides, he must pronounce the letters of God's name at intervals, with modulations of the voice, or write them down in a certain order, at the same time making energetic movements, writhing and bending forward till the mind becomes dazed, and the heart filled with a glow. Then the body will be surprised by sleep, and a sensation will arise, as if the soul were released from the body. In this condition, if it become lasting through practice, the divine grace is poured into the human soul, uniting with it in a kiss, and the prophetic revelation follows quite naturally. This means of working himself up into a state of ecstasy Abulafia certainly practiced, exciting his heated fancy to delirium. He considered his Kabbala to be prophetic inspiration, by means of which he alone could penetrate into the secrets of the Torah. For the plain sense of the words and the simple practice of the religious precepts were merely for the uninitiated, like milk for children. Experts, on the other hand, find the higher wisdom in the numerical value of the letters and in the manifold changes of the words.

In this way he laid down his Kabbala, in antithesis to the superficial or baser Kabbala, which occupies itself with the Sefiroth, and, as he gibingly said, erects a sort of Decem-unity instead of the Christian Trinity. He lectured on his Kabbala in Barcelona, Burgos, and Medina-Celi. So low was the general intelligence, that this half-insane enthusiast found old and young to listen to him. Two of his disciples, Joseph Jikatilla, and Samuel, alleged to be a prophet, both of Medina-Celi, proclaimed themselves to be prophets and workers of miracles. Abulafia appears, nevertheless, to have aroused opposition in Spain, or at least not to have found any real sympathy; he left his native country a second time, betaking himself once more to Italy, where he reckoned upon stronger support. In Urbino for the first time he produced prophetic writings, and alleged that God had spoken with him. At last he conceived the mad idea of converting the pope to Judaism (Sabbath-eve, 1281). The attempt cost him dear. He was arrested two days later in Rome, languished twenty-eight days in prison, and escaped the stake only through the circumstance that God, as he expressed it, had caused a double mouth (or tongue?) to grow in him. Possibly he told the pope that he, too, taught the doctrine of the Trinity. After this he was allowed to walk about Rome in freedom. Thence Abulafia proceeded to the island of Sicily, and in Messina he met with a favorable reception, gaining six adherents. Here he finally proclaimed that he was not only a prophet but the Messiah, and set forth his claims in writing (November, 1284). God, he said, had revealed to him His secrets, and had announced to him the end of the exile and the beginning of the Messianic redemption. The gracious event was to take place in the year 1290. Mysticism has always been the ground on which Messianic fancies have thriven.

Through strictly moral deportment, ascetic life and revelations veiled in obscure formulæ, perhaps also through his winning personality and boldness, Abraham Abulafia found many in Sicily who believed in him, and began to make preparations for returning to the Holy Land. But the intelligent part of the Sicilian congregation hesitated to join him without investigation. They addressed themselves to Solomon ben Adret, to obtain information from him respecting Abraham Abulafia. The rabbi of Barcelona, who was acquainted with Abulafia's earlier career, sent an earnest letter to the community of Palermo, in which he severely condemned the self-constituted Messiah as illiterate and dangerous. Naturally, Abulafia did not allow this attack to remain unanswered, but proceeded to

defend himself from the denunciation. In a letter he justified his prophetic Kabbala, and hurled back Ben Adret's invectives in language so undignified that many thought the letter not genuine.

But his abusive retort was of no avail, for other congregations and rabbis, who may have feared that a persecution might be the consequence of his fantastic doctrines, also expressed themselves against Abulafia. He was harassed so much in Sicily that he had to leave the island, and settle in the tiny isle of Comino, near Malta (about 1288). Here he continued to publish mystical writings, and to assert that he would bring deliverance to Israel. Persecution had embittered him. He leveled charges against his brethren in faith, who in their stubbornness would not listen to him: "Whilst the Christians believe in my words, the Jews eschew them, and absolutely refuse to know anything of the calculation of God's name, but prefer the calculation of their money." Of those who exclusively occupied themselves with the Talmud, Abulafia said that they were seized by an incurable disease, and that they were far inferior to those skilled in the higher Kabbala. Abraham Abulafia, besides twenty-six on other subjects, composed at least twenty-two so-called prophetic works, which, although the product of a diseased brain, were used by the later Kabbalists. What at last became of the prophetic and Messianic enthusiast and adventurer is not known.

His extravagant conduct did not fail to produce evil consequences, even in his own time, and was as infectious as an epidemic. About the same time there arose in Spain two enthusiasts, of whom one was probably Abraham Abulafia's disciple. One of them made his appearance in the small town Ayllon (in the district of Segovia), the other in the large congregation of Avila. Both proclaimed themselves to be prophets, and announced in mystic language the advent of the Messianic kingdom. Both found followers. The adherents of the prophet of Avila related, that in his youth he had been ignorant, and could neither read nor write; that an angel, who appeared to him in his sleeping, and sometimes also in his waking moments, suddenly endowed him through higher inspiration, with the power of writing a comprehensive work, full of mystical ideas, and a diffuse commentary (without which at that time no fairly respectable book could be conceived). When the people of Avila and remote congregations heard of this they wondered greatly. The story excited extraordinary interest, and the representatives of the congregation of Avila consulted Solomon ben Adret, the last commanding authority of that time, as to whether they should accept this new prophecy.

Himself a partial follower of the secret science, subscribing only to the Biblical and the Talmudical miracles, the rabbi of Barcelona replied that he would have considered the affair of the prophet of Avila as arrant fraud, if trustworthy people had not attested its truth. Still he could not possibly recognize him as a prophet, for he lacked the principal conditions which the Talmud lays down as essential to prophecy: outside of Palestine, prophecy is altogether impossible; the age is not suitable for prophetic revelation, and the prophetic spirit can not rest upon a perfectly ignorant person. It was incredible that a man should go to bed an idiot and get up a prophet. The story required the most painstaking and impartial investigation.

In spite of the warning of the most honored rabbi of the time, the prophet of Avila pursued his course, and fixed the last day of the fourth month (1295) as the beginning of the Messianic redemption. The easily influenced and ignorant multitude made preparations for its coming, fasted, and spent money lavishly in alms, that they might be found acceptable in the Messianic kingdom, and be permitted to partake of its bliss. On the appointed day, the deluded people, dressed as on the Day of Atonement, hastened to the synagogues, and waited there to hear the trumpet-blasts announcing the Messianic advent. But the expected Messiah did not show himself, nor was there any sign of him. Instead, they are said to have noticed on their garments small crosses, for which they were totally unprepared, and which partly sobered and partly terrified them. It is possible that some of the incredulous in the congregation had fastened the crosses secretly on their garments, either to practice a joke upon their credulous brethren, or to point out to what end Messianic charlatanry was destined to lead them, and thus cure them of their delusion. Some of the impostor's followers are said to have gone over to Christianity in consequence of this incident; others, to have been plunged

into melancholy, because they could not explain the presence of the crosses. What became of the prophets, or beguiled deceivers, of Ayllon and Avila is not related. Like Abraham Abulafia they were lost sight of, and have importance only as the excrescences of a diseased state. It is possible that another disciple of Abulafia, Joseph Jikatilla, who also was looked upon as a performer of miracles, and had his dwelling not far from Ayllon, played a part in the mad or deceitful pranks of the prophets of Ayllon and Avila. Joseph ben Abraham Jikatilla (born in Medina-Celi, died in Penjafiel, after 1305), heard, at the age of twenty years, an exposition of the bewildering secret doctrine of Abulafia, and whilst the latter still was in Spain, he composed a Kabbalistic book of his own, in which he exhibits the same eccentricities as his master. He, too, occupied himself with the mysticism of letters and numbers, and with the transposition of letters. Joseph Jikatilla's writings are in reality only an echo of Abraham Abulafia's fancies; the same delusion is apparent in both. But far more influential and more pernicious than these three Kabbalists, Allatif, Abulafia, and Jikatilla, was Moses de Leon, whose ascendancy was felt both by his contemporaries and posterity. Although a contemporary and fellow-specialist unmasked his performances, Moses de Leon succeeded in introducing into Jewish literature and thought a book which gave the Kabbala a firm foundation and wide extension, in brief, raised it to the zenith of its power. The question about Moses ben Shem Tob de Leon (born in Leon about 1250, died in Arevalo, 1305) is only whether he was a selfish or a pious impostor. His intention was certainly to deceive and lead astray, and in this respect he appears much baser than Abulafia, who at all events was sincere and naïve in his delusion. A sciolist, who had mastered neither the Talmud nor any other subject thoroughly, Moses possessed the skill to use deftly the little that he knew, to write easily and fluently, to discover a connection between the most remote things and verses of Scripture piled up in the chamber of his memory, and to couple them with playful wit. Even the Kabbala was not present to him as a system; he knew merely its forms and technical terms, and employed them in a skillful manner.

Of careless prodigality, Moses de Leon expended everything that he had without reflecting what would remain for the morrow; he made use of the Kabbala which had come into fashion to procure for himself a rich source of revenue. He led a wandering life, lived a long time in Guadalaxara, then in Viverro, in Valladolid, and finally in Avila. At first he published his intellectual productions under his own name (about 1285). His writings, however, were not sufficiently noticed, and brought him but little fame and money. Moses de Leon then hit upon a much more effective means for opening hearts and purses. He commenced the composition of books under feigned but honored names. If he put the doctrines of the Kabbala, worn threadbare, to be sure, into the mouth of an older, highly venerated authority, some imposing name from the dazzling past, – taking care, of course, to make the coloring and the method of presentation archaic – would not such a composition be eagerly swallowed? Would he not be richly rewarded if he hinted that he was in possession of so costly a treasure? Moses de Leon knew well the credulity of those who devoted themselves with more or less earnestness to the study of the Kabbala; how they eagerly sought for every word which they were led to think originated from ancient times. For, since the secret science had been promulgated, and had striven for recognition, doctrines which sounded Kabbalistic had been fathered upon old and illustrious names, and thus had found acceptance. But Moses de Leon did his work much more cleverly than most forgers. He found the most likely author for the secret doctrine, against whom there could be little or no objection, in the person of the Tanaite Simon bar Yochaï, who is said to have spent thirteen years in a cave, solitary and buried in profound reflection, and whom ancient mysticism represented as receiving revelations. Simon bar Yochaï was assuredly the right authority for the Kabbala. But he must not be permitted to write or speak Hebrew, for in this language the Kabbalists would recognize the echo of their own voices. He must express himself in Chaldee, in a half obscure language, peculiarly fit for secrets, and sounding as if from another world. And thus there came into the world a book, the book Zohar (brilliancy), which for many centuries was held by Jews as a heavenly revelation, and was and partly is even now regarded by Christians as an old tradition. But seldom has so notorious a forgery

so thoroughly succeeded. Moses de Leon well knew how to produce the proper effect on credulous readers. He made Simon bar Yochaï appear in splendor, surrounded by a halo, in the book Zohar, and impart his revelation to a circle of select pupils (sometimes twelve, sometimes six), "scholars who shine with heaven's light." "When they assembled to compose the Zohar, permission was granted to the prophet Elijah, to all the members of the celestial conclave, all the angels, spirits, and higher souls to act in sympathy with them, and the ten spiritual substances (Sefiroth) were charged with the duty of revealing to them deeply hidden secrets, reserved for the time of the Messiah." Or in another version: Simon bar Yochaï summoned his followers to a great council, and heard the flapping of the wings of the celestial host, who also had assembled to listen to the disclosure of mysteries till then unknown even to the angels. The Zohar glorifies its author excessively. It calls him the holy light, who stands higher than the greatest prophet, Moses, "the faithful shepherd." "I swear by the holy heavens and the holy earth," the Zohar makes Simon bar Yochaï exclaim, "that I behold now what no other mortal since Moses ascended Sinai for the second time has beheld, aye, even more than he. Moses knew not that his countenance shone; I, however, know that my countenance shines." On account of God's love for the writer of the Zohar, his generation merited the revelation of truths till then hidden. As long as he who illumines everything lives, the sources of the world are opened and all secrets are disclosed. "Woe to the generation forsaken by Simon bar Yochaï." He is almost deified in the Zohar. His disciples once broke out into ecstatic praise that he had mounted the degrees to heavenly wisdom, which none of his predecessors had done; and of him it is written in Scripture, "All men are to appear before the lord," *i. e.*, before Simon bar Yochaï. This extravagant glorification and self-deification, sufficient to mark a forgery, are not without design. They were to meet the objection, how the Kabbala, so long unknown, and kept secret by the prudent Kabbalists – for they had hesitated to impart any of it in writing – how this mysterious wisdom could all at once come to light, and be revealed to every one's knowledge. The Zohar frequently uses the following excuse: As the time in which Simon bar Yochaï lived was especially meritorious and rich in grace, and as the Messianic period was near, the veil which had concealed the book so long could now be drawn aside.

There are certainly very few compositions which have exercised so much influence as the Zohar, or which can be compared with it in regard to the remarkable nature of its contents and form. It is a book without beginning or end, of which it is unknown whether it once formed part of a whole, whether the extant portions originally belonged to it, or were added later, or whether at an earlier period more of it was in existence. It consists of three principal parts, with appendices and explanatory comments. The absence of form in this farrago made it possible for certain portions to be imitated. It is so easy and tempting to imitate its wild though sonorous style. Thus the forgery was counter-forged. It is not positively certain whether the Zohar is to be regarded as a running commentary to the Pentateuch, as a theosophic manual, or as a collection of Kabbalistic sermons. And its contents are just as curious, confused and chaotic as its form and external dress. The Zohar with its appendages in no wise develops a Kabbalistic system like Azriel's, neither does it unfold an idea like Abraham Abulafia, but plays with the Kabbalistic forms as with counters – with the En-Sof, with the number of the Sefiroth, with points and strokes, with vowels, accents, with the names of God and the transposition of their letters, as well as with the Biblical verses and Agadic sayings – casts them about in eternal repetition, and in this manner produces sheer absurdities. Occasionally it gives a faint suggestion of an idea, but in a trice it evaporates in feverish fancies, or dissolves in childish silliness.

The underlying principle of the Zohar (if we may speak of principles in reference to this book) is that the historical narratives and religious statutes of the Bible were never intended to be understood in a plain, simple sense, but that they contain something higher, mysterious, supernatural. "Is it conceivable," the Zohar makes one of Simon bar Yochaï's circle exclaim, "that God had no holier matters to communicate than these common things about Esau and Hagar, Laban and Jacob, Balaam's ass, Balak's jealousy of Israel, and Zimri's lewdness? Does a collection of such tales, taken

in their ordinary sense, deserve the name of Torah? And can it be said of such a revelation that it utters the pure truth?" "If that is all the Torah contains," remarks Simon bar Yochaï (or Moses de Leon), "we can produce in our time a book as good as this, aye, perhaps better. No, no! the higher, mystical sense of the Torah is its true sense. The Biblical narratives resemble a beautiful dress, which enraptures fools so that they do not look beneath it. This robe, however, covers a body, *i. e.*, the precepts of the Law, and this again a soul, the higher soul. Woe to the guilty, who assert that the Torah contains only simple stories, and therefore look only upon the dress. Blessed are the righteous, who seek the real sense of the Law. The jar is not the wine, so stories do not make up the Torah." Thus the secret lore of Moses de Leon naturally has free play to pervert everything and anything, and give it the seal of sublimity, and in this manner to promulgate a false doctrine, not only absurd, sometimes even blasphemous and immoral. All laws of the Torah are to be considered as parts and constituents of a higher world; they resolve themselves into the mysteries of the masculine and feminine principle (positive and negative). Only when both parts meet, does the higher unity arise. Consequently, whenever any one transgresses one of the laws, he obscures the brilliant image of the higher world.

It is almost impossible to give an idea of the abuse which the Zohar, or Moses de Leon, practices in the interpretation of Holy Writ, and how he twists the sense of the words. In the verse, "Raise your eyes to heaven, and see who has created this," a profound mystery is supposed to reside, which the prophet Elijah learned in the celestial school, and revealed to Simon bar Yochaï; namely, that God had been unknown and obscure before the creation of the world, in a manner existing, and still not existing. He was the "Who" (the unknown subject). The creation is part of His self-revelation. It was by the creation that He first proclaimed Himself as God.

The Zohar is particularly concerned with that side of man which is an eternal riddle to man, – the soul, its origin and end. Like the older Kabbalists, the Zohar assumed the pre-existence of the souls in the brilliant world of the Sefiroth. They are there wrapped in a spiritual robe, and entranced in the contemplation of God's light. When the souls are about to enter this world they assume an earthly garment, the body; but as soon as they are to leave the earth, the angel of death divests them of this earthly garment. If a soul lives piously and morally here below, it receives its former heavenly robe, and can once more enjoy the blissful ecstasy of God's presence; if not, particularly if it departs from the world impenitent, it wanders about naked and ashamed till purified in hell. The nakedness of the soul, paradise and hell – depicted in fantastic, baroque, and terrible images – are themes for which the Zohar often and gladly makes digressions. What happens to the soul during sleep, and the shadows of life – sin, impurity in small and great things – are likewise favorite subjects for discussion in the Zohar, to which it frequently reverts, presenting them in the greatest variety of guises and repetitions. One of the older Kabbalists arrived at the notion that to the higher world, the world of light, of holiness, and of angels, there was a sharp antithesis – a world of darkness, of unholiness, of Satan, in short the principle of evil, which was likewise developed into ten degrees (Sefiroth) at the creation of the world. In spite of their opposite characters, the two worlds are of one origin, forming opposite poles, and are in the same relation to each other as the right side is to the left. Accordingly, evil is called in the language of the Kabbalists the left or other side. The Kabbalists gave another representation of the Satanic empire. On the border of the world of light, the world of darkness is situated, and encompasses it as the shell surrounds the kernel of the fruit. Hence the Zohar metaphorically designates evil, or sin, with its ten degrees, as shell (Kelifa). This side is the favorite topic of the Zohar; for here it can apply its peculiar exposition of the Scriptures. The ten Sefiroth of the left side, the Satanic kingdom, are enumerated and denominated by names which savor of barbarism. The names sound like those of the princes of the demons in the book of Enoch, and are perhaps borrowed thence: Samael or Samiel, Azael, Angiel, Sariel, Kartiel. The Zohar identifies all blasphemers and wicked people with the evil principle of the "shells" (Kelifoth) – the first serpent, Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, and Esau's empire, Rome, and the civil and spiritual power of Christendom in

the Middle Ages, which rested on violence and injustice. Israel and righteous people, on the other hand, belong to the world of light, the right Sefiroth. "He who goes after the left side (sin), and defiles his actions, draws upon himself the impure spirits; they attach themselves to him, nor do they ever leave him." The laws of the Torah have no other object than to effect and cherish the union of the souls with the world of light. Every transgression of them brings the souls to the world of darkness, evil spirits, and impurity. The Zohar coarsely represents the connection of the souls with light or with darkness by the image of wedded union, as, in general, it asserts the masculine and feminine principle in the higher world, even in reference to the Deity. As long as Israel lives in exile, the divine unity is deficient and disrupted; God will become one only in those days when the Mistress (Matronita) will espouse the King.

Moses de Leon would have left a gap, if he had not spoken of the Messianic period – the keynote of the Kabbala – and determined its date. In fact, the sudden revelation of the doctrine so long held secret rests on the assumption that the time of the Messiah is near. But here the forger betrays himself. Instead of indicating a period or a year for the appearance of the Messiah approximating the age of Simon bar Yochaï (in the second century), the Zohar, with its casuistical playing with letters and numbers, demonstrated that it would happen in the beginning of the fourteenth century, therefore in the lifetime of the author. "When the sixtieth or the sixty-sixth year will pass the threshold of the sixth thousand, the Messiah will show himself;" but some time will pass before all nations will be conquered, and Israel be gathered together. The Messiah will first be summoned to appear on earth from his secret abode in Paradise, "the bird's nest," where he has been dwelling in bliss since the beginning of the world. A bloody conflict will then break out in the world. Edom and Ishmael (Christian and Mahometan nations) will vehemently contend with one another, and eventually both will be annihilated by a mightier conquering people. Signs and miracles will presage the time, and the resurrection of the dead and a general diffusion of the Kabbalistic knowledge of God will constitute the end of the world. Moses de Leon intended to arouse in the minds of his contemporaries the hope that they would behold the time of the Messiah with their own eyes. He was perhaps as much a victim to Messianic enthusiasm as Abraham Abulafia. Despite the Zohar's endeavor to exalt rabbinical Judaism and its law, and by a mystical explanation to give every custom, however trivial, a special signification and higher import, it carps at and criticises the Talmud and its method, though in an obscure, equivocal manner, and with the most innocent air in the world. It represents the study of the Kabbala as of much higher importance than the study of the Talmud, and even of the Bible. The Kabbala has the power of soaring, and is able to follow the flight of the Deity in His inscrutable guidance of things; the Talmud, on the other hand, and its adherents, have clipped wings, and cannot elevate themselves to higher knowledge. The Zohar compares the Mishna (Talmud) with a lowly slave; the Kabbala, on the other hand, with a powerful mistress. The former has to do with inferior matters, with "clean and unclean," with "permitted and prohibited," with "what is and is not fit to be used." As long as this woman rules with her "now pure, at another time impure blood," the union of the Father with the Matrona (God with Israel) cannot take place. In the Messianic period, on the other hand, when the higher knowledge will awake, and gain the ascendency, the Kabbala will once more assert its dominion over the slave (Talmud), as in the time of the lawgiver Moses. The Zohar lastly compares the study of the Talmud with a rugged, unproductive rock which, when struck, gives out scanty drops of water, causing only disputes and discussions. The Kabbala, on the other hand, is like a spring flowing abundantly, to which only a word needs to be spoken to cause it to pour out its refreshing and vivifying contents.

When the Zohar or Midrash of Simon bar Yochaï was published, it aroused the greatest wonder among the Kabbalists. They seized upon it with avidity. Moses de Leon received vast multitudes of orders to send copies. The question, whence all at once had come so comprehensive a work of an old teacher of the Mishna, not a trace of which had been known till then, was thus answered: Nachmani had exhumed it in Palestine, had sent it to his son in Catalonia, by a whirlwind it had

been carried to Aragon or Alicante (Valencia), where it had fallen into the hands of Moses de Leon, who alone possessed the original document. The repute of the newly discovered Kabbalistic treasure soon spread through the whole of Spain. The school of Abulafia at once gave the Zohar the tribute of its acknowledgment, and considered it indisputably genuine. Moses de Leon's wildest hopes were more than realized. There were, of course, Kabbalists who doubted that the Zohar had originated with Simon bar Yochaï and his school, but none the less did they pay homage to the book as to a pure source for Kabbalistic theories. When the Kabbalist Isaac of Accho, who had escaped the massacre that had ensued upon the capture of that city, arrived in Spain, and saw the Zohar, he was staggered, and became desirous of coming to the root of the question, whether this alleged ancient Palestinian work was really genuine, as he had been born and educated in the Holy Land, had associated with Nachmani's pupils, and yet had never heard a syllable about it. When he met Moses de Leon in Valladolid, the latter took a solemn oath that he had in his house at Avila an old copy of the book from the hand of Simon bar Yochaï, and pledged himself to submit it to Isaac of Accho for examination. But Moses de Leon became ill on his journey home, and died in Arevalo (1305). The veil around the origin of the Zohar was wrapped still closer. Two influential men of Avila, David Rafan and Joseph de Avila, had indeed discovered the simple truth from Moses de Leon's wife and daughter. Moses de Leon had never possessed the original copy, but had evolved it out of his own inner consciousness, and had written it with his own hand. His wife frankly related that she had often asked her husband why he published the productions of his own intellect under a strange name, and that he had answered that the Zohar would not, under his own name, have brought him any money, but assigned to Simon bar Yochaï it had been a lucrative source of income.

Thus wife and daughter, without being aware of the full gravity of their assuredly unassailable testimony, unmasked Moses de Leon as a forger. Nevertheless, the Zohar met with the unqualified applause of the Kabbalists, because it supplied a want which would have had to be provided for in one way or another. The Kabbalistic doctrine, which had already gained so much weight, had hitherto been without firm basis; it had no other authority than the very doubtful one of Isaac the Blind. Now the dignified figure of a teacher of the Mishna in communion with departed spirits and celestial hosts and angels confirmed the truths which were not only doubted by many at the time, but absolutely ridiculed. Should they, then, not cling to it and defend it? What Moses de Leon put into the mouth of Simon bar Yochaï, "Many will range themselves round the book Zohar, when it becomes known, and nourish their minds with it at the end of days," actually happened soon after his death. If the Zohar did not bring the Kabbalists anything essentially new, it exhibited to them what they did know in so peculiar a form and language, that they were wonderstruck. Everything in it is contrived for effect, for illusion, and for fascination. The long discussions which Simon bar Yochaï holds with his circle or with the "faithful shepherd," have dramatic power, especially the scene in which, in premonition of his speedy dissolution, he imparts once more what he so often had proclaimed. Full of effect, and, upon minds easily accessible to faith, of transporting and overwhelming influence, are the oft-recurring exclamations in the Zohar: Woe, woe to those who believe, or do not believe, or fail to respect, this and that. Sometimes short prayers are interspersed, which, being elevated and imaginative, are peculiarly fitted to fill the soul with mysterious awe. Even the characteristic terms introduced instead of the usual Kabbalistic forms are calculated to arouse interest by their double sense. The author designated God and the higher spiritual substances (Sefiroth) collectively or in their single parts and effects, as father, mother, the prototype of man, bride, matron, the white head, the large and the small face, the mirror, the higher heaven, the higher earth, lily, apple-orchard, and so on. The pious were gained over to the side of the Zohar, as it attributes to every religious custom and every practice a higher import, a higher sanctity, and a mysterious effect.

So a new text-book of religion was by stealth introduced into Judaism. It placed the Kabbala, which a century before had been unknown, on the same level as the Bible and the Talmud, and to a certain extent on a still higher level. The Zohar undoubtedly produced good, in so far as it opposed

enthusiasm to the legal dry-as-dust manner of the study of the Talmud, stimulated the imagination and the feelings, and cultivated a disposition that restrained the reasoning faculty. But the ills which it has brought on Judaism outweigh the good by far. The Zohar confirmed and propagated a gloomy superstition, and strengthened in people's minds the belief in the kingdom of Satan, in evil spirits and ghosts.

Through its constant use of coarse expressions, often verging on the sensual, in contradistinction to the chaste, pure spirit pervading Jewish literature, the Zohar sowed the seeds of unclean desires, and later on produced a sect that laid aside all regard for decency. Finally, the Zohar blunted the sense for the simple and the true, and created a visionary world, in which the souls of those who zealously occupied themselves with it were lulled into a sort of half-sleep, and lost the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong. Its quibbling interpretations of Holy Writ, adopted by the Kabbalists and others infected with this mannerism, perverted the verses and words of the Holy Book, and made the Bible the wrestling-ground of the most curious, insane notions. The Zohar even contains utterances which seem favorable to the Christian dogma of the Trinity of the Godhead. The mystics dismembered the fair form of Holy Writ, indulged in mad sport, and stupefied all sense for truth, but they were scarcely more guilty in this respect than the so-called philosophers of the time. Maimuni's attempt to bring Judaism and its religious literature into consonance with reason, to give certain too realistic verses of the Bible a philosophical, or at least a tolerable sense, and place religious precepts on the basis of an intelligible, acceptable purpose, encouraged half-learned men to explain everything and anything in the same way. Hence the allegorizing of the Scriptures, the Agada, and the rites, was carried to an incredible extreme. These pseudo-philosophers divested the stories of the creation and of the patriarchs of their historical character, and interpreted them as philosophical commonplaces, in which they sported with Aristotelian and Maimunist terms, as the Zohar with Kabbalistic terms. Abraham and Sarah, for example, denote to the allegorists matter and form, Pharaoh denotes vicious desires, Egypt the body, the land of Goshen the heart, Moses the divine spirit, and the Urim and Thummim, which the High Priest wore on his breast in the Temple, were the astrolabe of the astronomers, with which they calculated time, longitude and latitude. If there had been at that time any Jewish thinkers of the first rank, they would have made serious efforts to put a stop to this childish proceeding, whether Kabbalistic or pseudo-philosophical. But the age of Ben Adret happened to be poor in great intellects. Even the two chief representatives of the philosophy of that time, Shem-Tob Falaquera and Isaac Albalag, were not above mediocrity, and were themselves tainted with the current errors.

There were, however, certain men of bolder spirit, who from philosophical premises drew conclusions endangering the stability of Judaism. Like their predecessors, the Alexandrine allegorists, many intelligent and consistent thinkers were induced at this time to disregard the ceremonies of Judaism by assigning erroneous purposes to religious precepts. As the ceremonies are intended simply to awaken certain religious, philosophical, or moral feelings, they argued, it is sufficient to call up these thoughts, to be penetrated by them, to occupy one's mind constantly with them, while the observance of religious customs is superfluous. Several members of this school denied Moses' prophetic character, accepting him only as an ordinary lawgiver, such as other nations had, and thus rejected the divinity of the Torah. The pseudo-philosophers cast a doubt upon the very fundamentals of Judaism, and thereby provoked a reaction injurious to free inquiry.

The chief authority of this allegorical school was a man of vast erudition, but full of crotchets, who, without desiring it, occasioned violent conflicts. This was Levi ben Abraham ben Chayim, of Villefranche, not far from Perpignan (born about 1240, died after 1315). Coming from a respectable family of scholars, he was deeply read in the Talmud; but he was more attracted by Maimuni's philosophy and Ibn-Ezra's astrology, being a warm adherent of the belief of the latter in the influence of the stars over human destiny. Of a volatile rather than a solid mind, Levi ben Chayim had no perfect conception of Maimuni's aims. To him Judaism resolved itself into philosophical platitudes,

which, preposterous and childish as they sound to us, were, strange to say, regarded by the people of early times as profound wisdom. Ben Chayim was the disseminator of that superficial method satisfied with formulæ instead of thoughts. He composed two chief works, one in verse, the other in prose, a kind of encyclopædia, in which he applied the theory derived from Maimuni to all branches of knowledge. In these books he translated the historical narratives in the Bible into philosophical generalities, explained the standing still of the sun on the occasion of Joshua's victory as a natural occurrence, and in general, adopted any method of expounding which depends on word-twisting. Levi ben Chayim repudiated the allegorical interpretations of laws; in fact, he denounced the allegorists as heretics, and desired to preserve the historical character of the biblical narratives as much as possible. Like his prototype, Ibn-Ezra, he tried to keep secret his deepest convictions, so that not even his friends could fathom his ideas. This Judaism, disfigured by absurd philosophical interpretations, was not only privately taught, but preached in the synagogues.

The home of this pseudo-philosophy was the not insignificant congregation of Perpignan, the capital of the province of Roussillon, which belonged to the kingdom of Aragon. Although the Jews had no enviable lot, and were compelled to live in the most miserable part of the town, that assigned to lepers, they nevertheless preserved a taste for science and free inquiry, and eagerly awaited the new theories taught by the exponents and followers of Maimuni's philosophy. Here poor Levi of Villefranche had found a place of refuge at the house of a rich and influential man, Don Samuel Sulami or Sen Escalita, whose piety, learning and liberality were praised beyond measure by his contemporaries. "From Perpignan to Marseilles there is not another who can be compared with Samuel Sulami in knowledge of the Law, benevolence, piety and humility. He gives charity in secret, his house is open to every traveler; and he is indefatigable in getting books for his collection." He corresponded on learned topics with Ben Adret, and took interest in the philosophical interpretation of the Bible and the Agada. Even the rabbi of Perpignan was a friend of free thought and a determined enemy of mummified orthodoxy and the unreflecting faith of the literalist. This was Don Vidal Menachem ben Solomon Meïri (born Elul, 1249, died about 1306), little celebrated in his own time, but none the less of great importance. Though not of commanding influence, he possessed an attractive personality. He had what nearly all his contemporaries sorely lacked, moderation and tact. These qualities are revealed particularly in Meïri's style. Nearly all the Jewish authors of Spain and Provence wrote their prose and verse in a redundant, bombastic style, as if the whole literary thesaurus of the Bible were needed to express a meager idea. The much-admired model of this time, the moral poet Yedaya Bedaresi, is so prolix in saying the most ordinary platitude, that one has to peruse whole pages of his apology, reflections, and miscellaneous writings before coming across a tolerable idea. The style in vogue, a mosaic of Biblical phrases, favored verbosity. But Don Vidal Meïri forms a glorious exception to this practice, his style being terse and clear. In his commentaries to the tractates of the Talmud which relate to ceremonial duties, he proceeds throughout in a methodical manner, advances from the general to the particular, arranges his material in lucid order, and seeks to give the reader information, not to confuse him. Of a similar character is Meïri's exposition of Holy Writ. The philosophers and mystics always endeavored to find some higher meaning in it, the simple explanation being too prosaic for them, and accordingly they put upon the Bible their own extravagant nonsense. Not so Meïri. He certainly assumed that there are many commands and narratives in the Bible which point to something higher than the literal meaning, but the majority of them must, he maintained, be taken quite literally. Meïri was naturally dissatisfied with the extravagant mannerisms of the allegorists, but it did not enter his mind to reject the good together with the bad, to interdict learning because of its abuse.

These proceedings were not regarded quite so calmly by certain bigots, dwelling in the city which had produced the obscurantist Solomon of Montpellier, the proscriber of Maimuni and his compositions, and author of so much dissension and evil. Although pseudo-philosophical extravaganzas were not more dangerous than the follies of the Kabbalists, the watchers of Zion

nevertheless overlooked the latter, and waged energetic warfare with the former, so that the philosophers obtained more weight than they would otherwise have had. The bigots of Montpellier well-nigh kindled the fire of discord in Jacob. The first instigator of this ill-timed zeal belonged to that class of men who mark off the province of faith according to an exact rule, denounce every movement and opinion which transgress their limit as heresy, and desire to have them rooted out with anathemas and scourges, where possible with fire and sword – a class of men in whom fanatical zeal cannot be separated from a kind of egoism. To this category belonged Abba-Mari ben Moses, of Montpellier, or, as his aristocratic title ran, Don Astruc En-Duran de Lünel. Of a respectable family, and of great influence in the capital of Languedoc, Abba-Mari was certainly not without culture, and he had great veneration for Maimuni and his compositions; but he had irrevocably attached himself to the Jewish creed as laid down by Nachmani, and was indignant if any one ventured to consider it from the point of view of another system. He did not object to miraculous tales; on the contrary, the more the better. The conclusions of philosophy and science, which denied the possibility of these miracles, in no way disturbed him. In the choice between Moses and Aristotle, or between the authorities of the Talmud and the upholders of philosophy, he was not for a moment doubtful to whom to give the preference. To be sure, this narrow-minded point of view is justifiable; but Abba-Mari wanted to thrust his opinion upon every one else, and to persecute all who thought otherwise. Not only did he hold in abomination the allegorical exegesis publicly preached, but he reprobated the study of all profane literature as the cause of this aberration. He regretted that the scourge could no more be brought into requisition to silence those who filled their minds with such learning as endangered religion.

Abba-Mari, however, did not possess sufficient authority to proceed against Levi of Villefranche and his school. He addressed himself to the most influential rabbi of the time, Ben Adret of Barcelona, and charged that their perversities would accomplish the dissolution of Judaism, if a restraint were not put upon them. He importuned Ben Adret to exercise his great influence. The rabbi naturally found the circumstance deplorable that "strangers had forced their way through the gates of Zion." He exhorted Abba-Mari to organize a party to oppose this extravagant movement, but positively refused his support, as he did not like to interfere in the affairs of congregations abroad. Other bigots, however, took up the cause, and hurried it to a crisis, among them Don Bonafoux Vidal, of Barcelona, and his brother, Don Crescas Vidal, who had moved to Perpignan, both highly respected and learned, but as intolerant as Abba-Mari. Don Crescas made a proposition, which met with much applause. The study of science, and the reading of profane literature in general, was to be prohibited to Jewish youths till their thirtieth year. Only men of mature age, "who had filled their minds with the Bible and the Talmud, were to be allowed to warm themselves by the strange fires of philosophy and the natural sciences." Although Ben Adret did not feel disposed to take measures against the study of science, he nevertheless considered it his duty to persecute the provoker of so much animosity. He took umbrage at the pious Samuel Sulami for granting a heretic shelter in his house, thus giving him an opportunity to spread his pernicious views. He harassed Samuel Sulami so unmercifully, and subjected his conscience to such torment, that the man, not very remarkable for strength of character, became shaken in his previous convictions. When a daughter of his died he believed that it was a punishment for his sinfulness, and renounced his hospitality to Levi. Many members of the congregation of Perpignan bitterly resented the suspicion of heresy cast upon Levi, and as they knew Ben Adret to be a man of stainless character, they vented their dissatisfaction on the instigator, Abba-Mari, to whom they imputed sordid ulterior designs and personal motives.

Abba-Mari and his allies, who felt themselves helpless without powerful support, labored without intermission to inflame the zeal of the Barcelona rabbinate, that it might forbid free inquiry and the study of science. At the same time they promised the co-operation of the whole congregation of Montpellier, which, being the chief one in southern France, would draw other communities after it. Ben Adret and his college, imagining from Abba-Mari's exaggerated description that Judaism was in the greatest danger, were at last determined to take up the matter, but desired first to sound the

congregation of Montpellier as to its feeling on the subject, and for this purpose sent a letter to be read before the members in case they felt disposed to join them in interdicting the study of the natural sciences. But as soon as the proposed ban against the sciences became known, decided opposition arose among the most important men of the congregation.

There was at that time in Montpellier a man, who by reason of his family, position, wealth and knowledge, was held in high estimation by his people, and who had imbibed a love for the sciences with his mother's milk. Jacob ben Machir Tibbon, known in Christian circles as Don Profiat, or Profatius (born about 1236, died after 1312), was descended on one side from the celebrated Meshullam of Lünel, the first to promote a revival of learning in southern France, and on the other side he was related to the Tibbonides. From his birth he was taught to look upon Judaism and science as twin sisters, dwelling together in the utmost harmony. Like all educated Jews of his time, he was well grounded in Jewish literature, the Bible, and the Talmud, practiced medicine as his profession, but devoted himself with particular zeal to mathematics and astronomy. His accurate observation of the inclination of the earth's axis to the orbit was taken by later master astronomers as the basis of their investigations. As he had acquired a knowledge of Arabic, he was able to translate useful scientific works from that language into Hebrew. His wealth of knowledge was not employed as a means of gratifying his vanity or ambition, but he properly regarded it as the distinction of man, enabling him to arrive at self-knowledge. Jacob Tibbon maintained that in the happy time of the Jewish people science had its home in their midst, but exile and suffering had banished it, and its former exponents now had to become students in order to learn the results arrived at by foreign nations. In his scientific labors Jacob ben Machir had a very noble end in view. He aimed at elevating his co-religionists in the eyes of the Christian world, and silencing the sneers of their enemies, who tauntingly said that they were destitute of all knowledge.

This man was now asked to assist in banishing science from the Jewish world. If Abba-Mari wished to carry out in Montpellier his scheme of holding the Jewish youth aloof from the study of the sciences, he was bound to take Jacob ben Machir into consideration. For he was held in high esteem by his congregation on account of his many excellent traits and his meritorious achievements, and had the greatest influence with the members entitled to a vote. Indeed, he was the first to whom Abba-Mari disclosed the project, supported by the Barcelona rabbinate, against the study of the profane sciences, and he reckoned upon Jacob's co-operation. With impressive decisiveness, Profiat not only refused participation, but pointed out the sad consequences of so serious a step, and importuned him to omit the public reading of Ben Adret's letter. Abba-Mari and his ally, Todros of Beaucaire, nevertheless persisted in their determination, and summoned the members of the congregation to an important conference in the synagogue on a Sabbath (Elul-August, 1304). It was immediately apparent that the zealots had deceived themselves, or had been too confident in their assertion that the Jews of Montpellier would give unanimous consent to the interdict to be laid on science. A portion of the congregation even abstained from taking part in the deliberations, and Jacob ben Machir raised an emphatic protest against the proposed enslaving of the intellect. A violent discussion ensued, and the meeting dispersed without coming to a resolution. Soon a party, consisting of advocates of science, and of friends, adherents and parasites of the highly esteemed leader, rallied round Jacob Machir, the most distinguished representative of science. The obscurantists and the simple-minded attached themselves to Abba-Mari, so that the congregation became a prey to division and conflict. Each party endeavored to gain supporters, both within and without the community.

It became a point of honor with Abba-Mari to bring the affair to a conclusion conformable to his own views, for his defeat had exposed his true position to Ben Adret and the Barcelona congregation. After the unfavorable issue of the first deliberation in the synagogue, he hardly ventured to answer the man whom he had assured of a unanimous adoption of his proposal. He, therefore, worked very energetically in collecting at least twenty-five signatures of members of the congregation, to give Ben Adret proof that he did not stand alone in his extreme views.

It was no less a point of honor with Jacob Tibbon not to allow the interdiction of science to come into force. For he and the Tibbonides believed that the attacks were directed chiefly against their highly-venerated ancestors, Samuel Ibn-Tibbon and Jacob Anatoli, because the latter's book of sermons (Malmed) had been the first to explain away Biblical tales and religious laws, and at that time was used in certain quarters for Sabbath devotions. Ben Adret, at Abba-Mari's instigation, did, indeed, treat Anatoli, the favorite of the Tibbonides, with scorn. Of Samuel Ibn-Tibbon, the translator of Maimuni's works, and propagator of his theories, the austere bigots had not a good word to say. Judah ben Moses, his great-grandson, consequently became the soul of what may be called the Tibbonide party, which agitated against Abba-Mari's plan. To attract outsiders, the Tibbonides gave out that the adversaries of science once more had in view the denunciation of Maimuni and his compositions as heretical, and that Abba-Mari wanted to take up the position of Solomon of Montpellier. This was a very happy party manœuvre; it won over even those who had shown indifference to the burning topic of the day, for they thought themselves in duty bound to take up arms on behalf of Maimuni's honor. The Tibbonide party, thus strengthened, sent a trenchant and pointed letter to Ben Adret and the Barcelonians, to ask them to reconsider their decision. It is true, they were not able to offer any convincing reasons for the admission of science into the Jewish curriculum; but the arguments which they set forth in its favor were considered satisfactory in a superficial age. They appealed to King Solomon's wisdom, "from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall," which, they said, referred to nothing but natural science. From the Talmud, too, reasons were adduced for the study of science. They would not admit the validity of the reply that it was not intended to interdict research generally, only to prohibit immature young men from its pursuit. That, they said, was an evasion of the main point at issue. For a man not familiar with science before his thirtieth year was permanently incapable of engaging in its study, and in advanced age could never retrieve the loss. The Tibbonides, moreover, protested that they were branded as heretics, because along with the Torah they paid homage to the profane sciences. They did not recognize the superiority of any one in piety and orthodoxy. Lastly, the Tibbonides exhorted Ben Adret and his college to bury the hatchet of denunciation and discord. The spirited and defiant tone assumed by Jacob ben Machir and his adherents greatly provoked the Barcelonians. The tension increased. Bitter and caustic letters flew hither and thither. Both sides labored to gain new adherents in other congregations, and to draw over the waverers. The communities of Argentière, Aix, Avignon and Lünel, through their representatives, declared in favor of Abba-Mari and his followers. In Perpignan, the chief seat of the much-assailed enlightenment, a relative of Abba-Mari agitated in his favor. The latter was particularly desirous of securing the assistance of a man who, by reason of his noble birth and highly honorable position, had powerful influence in Perpignan and elsewhere. This was Kalonymos ben Todros of Narbonne, thought to be a descendant of the house of King David. Kalonymos did not at first appear inclined to take part in the proscription of science; but Abba-Mari from the one side and Ben Adret from the other assailed him with such pertinacity that at length he promised his consent and co-operation. As the Tibbonide party had also gained new adherents, Ben Adret himself shrank from pushing the controversy to extremes, and decided not to issue the decree of excommunication till at least twenty congregations had declared themselves unequivocally in favor of it.

Whilst in southern France and Spain the balance was inclining now to one side, now to the other, in the dispute about the admission of scientific studies into Jewish circles, the German communities were passing through a series of the most deplorable events, which drove to Spain a man who spoke the deciding word in favor of the excommunication and proscription of free inquiry. He was of high morality, rare disinterestedness, of pure aspiration and sincere piety, and possessed profound Talmudical learning, but was filled with the fanatical hate of his countrymen against profane knowledge. The emigration of Asheri or Asher from Germany to Spain inaugurates an unhappy period for the Spanish and Provençal Jews in their efforts for the progress of culture.

Asher ben Yechiel (born about 1250, died 1327) of the Rhine district, sprang from ancestors who centered their whole world in the Talmud. A disciple of the celebrated Meïr of Rothenburg, Asher acquired the acute Tossafist method, composed Tossafist works, but had a finer sense of system and order than this school. After the death of his master, whose corpse the unprincipled emperor, Adolph of Nassau, refused to give up for burial without remuneration, Asheri was reckoned among the most influential rabbinical authorities of Germany. A paroxysm of persecutions of the Jews broke out in his time, far worse than those during the crusades; it robbed thousands of innocent men of their lives, or sentenced them to a lot worse than death. A civil war raged at that time in Germany between Adolph of Nassau and Albrecht of Austria, who were contending for the empty glitter of the German crown. This strife promised impunity for audacious attacks on the Jews, who were proscribed by the church and society, and an opportunity was easily found. A report was spread that the Jews of the little town of Röttingen (in Franconia) had desecrated a sacramental wafer and pounded it in a mortar, and blood was said to have flowed from it. A nobleman of the place, named Rindfleisch, took up the cause of the host alleged to have been desecrated, declared that he had received a mission from heaven to root out the accursed race of Jews, and gathered a credulous, besotted mob around him to assist in his bloody intentions. He and his troops first of all consigned the Jews of Röttingen to the flames (7th Iyar–20th April, 1298). From this place the rabble of slaughterers, under Rindfleisch's leadership, traveled from town to town, always swelling their numbers with others of their description, and destroyed all the Jews who fell into their hands, even those converted to Christianity. Rindfleisch, impelled by audacity and spurious enthusiasm, fairly forced the inhabitants of various towns to ill-treat their Jewish fellow-citizens brutally. The great community of Würzburg was completely blotted out (12th Ab–24th July). In Nuremberg the Jews had at first fled for refuge into the fortress, but being attacked there, too, they took to arms, and though assisted by humane Christians, were overpowered at last, and all butchered (22d Ab–1st August). Asheri's relative and fellow-student, Mordecai ben Hillel, who had compiled a very important rabbinical work, fell at about the same time, together with his wife and five children. Many parents, lest their children from fear of death should renounce their faith, threw them with their own hands into the flames, and plunged in after them. In Bavaria the congregations of Ratisbon and Augsburg were the only ones to escape the slaughter. In the first city, where they had the right of citizenship from time immemorial, the mayor protected them with great zeal. In Augsburg, too, the mayor and council defended them against the destroyers, Rindfleisch and his horde.

This bloody persecution spread from Franconia and Bavaria to Austria, swept away more than a hundred and forty congregations and more than 100,000 Jews, and lasted nearly half a year. The Jews of Germany all trembled, and were prepared to meet destruction. This would certainly have come if the civil war in Germany had not been brought to an end by the death of Emperor Adolph, and the election of Albrecht. The second Habsburger energetically restored the country to a state of peace, brought to book the perpetrators of the outrages on the Jews, and imposed fines on the towns which had participated in them, on the ground that he had suffered losses in his purse through the immolation of his "servi cameræ" and their goods. The majority of the Jews baptized through fear returned to Judaism, apparently with the connivance of the emperor and the representatives of the church. The after-throes of this massacre were likewise bitter enough. The wives of those who had perished could not authenticate the death of their husbands through Jewish witnesses, as no men remained alive competent to give testimony. They could appeal only to the statement of baptized Jews, whose evidence was considered by many rabbis to be invalid according to the Talmudical marriage laws. Asheri, however, was sensible enough to unbend from this strictness, and allowed the widows to marry again on the evidence of baptized Jews returned to Judaism.

Asheri did not feel very secure in Germany after this bloody massacre, or perhaps he was threatened with danger on the part of Emperor Albrecht. It was said that the emperor demanded of him the sum of money which the Jews were to pay as ransom for the imprisoned Meïr of Rothenburg,

for which Asheri had become security. He accordingly left Germany (summer of 1303), and traveled from one country to another with his wife, his eight sons and grandsons, and on account of his reputation, he was everywhere treated with the utmost respect, especially in Montpellier, even before the breaking out of the controversy. He finally settled in Toledo, the largest city of Spain (January, 1305). With joy the illustrious German rabbi was installed by the Toledo congregation in the vacant rabbinate. With Asheri the dismal spirit of over-piety, so hostile to knowledge, entered into the Spanish capital.

Asheri did not conceal his antipathy to profane culture. He could not conceive how pious Jews, in southern France and in Spain, could occupy themselves with subjects outside of the Talmud. With the utmost scorn he discountenanced the very aspiration of the Spanish and Provençal Jews on which they prided themselves. He thanked his Creator that He had protected him from the baneful influence of science. He did not give the southern Frenchmen and the Spanish Jews credit for thoroughness even in knowledge of the Talmud, and maintained that the German and northern French Jews alone had inherited wisdom from the time of the destruction of the Temple. A man like this, incapable of appreciating the sciences, and harboring enmity to everything not in the Talmud, was bound to exercise an influence prejudicial to knowledge. Next to him Solomon ben Adret himself appeared more or less of a freethinker. Abba-Mari forthwith availed himself of the man, from whom he expected effectual support for his party. He requested him to express his views on the pending question. Asheri, of course, gave Abba-Mari his unqualified approval, but was of opinion that he did not go far enough, for the evil would not be eradicated, if the pursuit of the sciences were allowed at a ripe age. The poison of heresy had spread too far, every one was infected by it, and the pious were open to the reproach that they shut their eyes to it. His proposal was that a synod should be convoked, and a resolution be taken that study was to be devoted solely to the Talmud, while the sciences were to be pursued only when it was neither day nor night – that is, not at all. This exclusive fidelity to the Talmud, which rejected all compromise, advocated by an energetic man of pure character, made an overpowering impression on the unsettled minds of Spanish Jews. Ben Adret himself, who had hitherto always hesitated to lead the movement, all at once declared that he was prepared to pronounce the ban, if Abba-Mari and the prince, Kalonymos, would prepare it. An officious zealot, Samson ben Meïr, disciple of Ben Adret, took upon himself to collect assenting signatures from twenty congregations. Toledo was especially reckoned upon, having been swayed by Asheri's mind, and next, Castile generally, which as a rule followed the guidance of the head community.

How artificial and opposed to the sentiment of the majority this zeal was, became apparent especially in the congregation of Montpellier, styled the tower of Zion by Abba-Mari's party. In this congregation the zealots did not venture to collect signatures for the sentence of excommunication. As if in defiance, one of the Tibbonides announced that he would give a reading from Anatoli's book of sermons on a certain Sabbath, and immediately drew a numerous audience. Abba-Mari, who had repeatedly boasted to Ben Adret of his mighty influence, and had persuaded him that the whole congregation, except a few deluded people, were on his side, now had to admit that Montpellier was not to be reckoned upon in this affair. In the consciousness that their party was in a minority in southern France, the two leaders, Abba-Mari and Kalonymos, of Narbonne, made the ecclesiastical ban unexpectedly mild, both as to wording and contents. First, the reading of works on natural science and of metaphysical books only was to be prohibited, all other branches of learning being expressly allowed. Secondly, the writings of Jewish authors, even those dealing with natural science or metaphysics, were to be excluded from the inhibition. Abba-Mari, with a view to meeting his adversaries half-way, had made the proposal to fix the period when the study of every department of learning was to be allowed, not at the thirtieth, but at the twenty-fifth year of the student's age. Ben Adret, however, who could not tolerate half-measures nor brook retreat, had now become more severe. He who formerly had to be driven and urged on, now became the propeller. Asheri's influence is not to be mistaken. On the Sabbath of Lamentation in commemoration of the destruction of

Jerusalem, he and his colleagues ordered the anathema against the study of the sciences to be read amid solemn ceremonies, the scroll of the Law in the arms of the reader (4th Ab–26th July, 1305). Whoever read any scientific book before the twenty-fifth year of his age was liable to the penalty of excommunication. The ban was to remain in force for half a century. The philosophical expounders of Holy Writ were doomed in the hereafter, and in this world subjected to excommunication, and their writings condemned to be burnt. As no exception was made of scientific works composed in Hebrew, according to the formulation of the ban, not only Anatoli's book of sermons was exposed to proscription, but also Maimuni's philosophical writings. Ben Adret and his college allowed only the study of medicine, on the ground that its practice is permitted in the Talmud. This was the first heresy-tribunal in Jewish history, and Ben Adret was at its head. The Dominicans had found docile emulators among the Jews.

According to the communal system in the Middle Ages, every congregation was independent, and the resolutions of one congregation had no force with another. The ban accordingly had validity only in Barcelona, unless some other congregation confirmed it. Ben Adret, however, labored to have it adopted by other congregations. The sentence, signed by Ben Adret, his two sons, and more than thirty of the most influential members of the Barcelona congregation, was dispatched to the congregations of Spain, Languedoc, northern France, and Germany. But the ban was not so readily adopted as the authorities of Barcelona had flattered themselves it would be. Jacob ben Machir and his party had already received notice that a blow was being meditated against them, and accordingly made preparations for a countermove. They resolved from the first to frustrate the effect of the ecclesiastical interdict of the study of science. They drew up a resolution in Montpellier which contained three important points. A sentence of excommunication was to fall upon those who, out of religious scruples, ventured to debar or withdraw their sons, whatever their youth, from the study of any science whatsoever, regardless of the language in which it was treated; secondly, upon those who presumed to utter an irreverent or abusive word against the great Maimuni, and, lastly, also upon those who presumed to denounce a religious author on account of his philosophical system. The last point was introduced for the sake of Anatoli's memory, which his opponents had vilified. Thus there was ban against ban. Jacob Tibbon and his friends caused their resolution in favor of science and its advocates to be announced in the synagogue, and the great majority of the congregation of Montpellier took his side. Party zeal, however, impelled the Tibbonides to take an ill-advised step, which threatened to produce the same evil consequences as had ensued at the time of the first conflict in Montpellier with the obscurantists. As Jacob ben Machir Profatius and others of his party had influence with the governor of the city, they wished to secure his assistance in the event of their opponents' endeavoring violently to carry the Barcelona interdict into effect. The governor, however, explained to them that he was interested only in one point: that the Jewish youth should not be prevented from reading other than Talmudical works. He should strongly deprecate any attempt to discourage the study of extra-Talmudical literature, because, as he frankly expressed himself, he would not consent to their being deprived through fear of excommunication of the means to potential conversion to Christianity. To the other points he was indifferent.

Abba-Mari and his party were now in despair on account of the activity of their opponents. As the resolution in favor of the unrestricted study of science had been adopted by the majority of the community, according to rabbinical law it was binding on the minority as well, and therefore on their leader, and they could not legally stand by the interdict of Barcelona. Thus the zealots, the provokers of the conflict, had their hands tied, and were caught in their own net. They did what they could; they protested against the resolution of the Tibbonides, and advertised their protest far and wide. But they could not conceal that they had suffered a defeat, and were obliged to consult certain authorities as to whether the resolutions of the Tibbonides were binding on them. Ben Adret was thus placed in an embarrassing position. The party of Jacob ben Machir believed, or wished to have it believed, that the prohibition of the rabbis of Barcelona in reference to the study of scientific books,

was meant to apply to Maimuni's works, too. They obtained the credit of having taken up the cudgels in behalf of Maimuni's honor, and of contending for the glory of Judaism; whilst their opponents, Ben Adret included, through their narrow-mindedness and obstinacy, were exposing their religion to the scorn of educated Christians. The vindicators of science seemed to be continually gaining in public opinion. There now appeared on their side a young poet, whose eloquent defense, written in a highly imaginative style, made a great impression. It gives a faithful picture of the feeling and excitement which agitated the souls of the champions of science, and, therefore, awakens interest even in the present day. In a modest manner, but with manly spirit, the poet tells Ben Adret truths which he never had the opportunity of hearing in his own circle. This young poet, more famous through his letter than through his verses, was Yedaya En-Bonet ben Abraham, better known under the name of Bedaresi (of Béziers) and under the poetical pseudonym of Penini (born about 1280, died about 1340). Yedaya Penini, son of the bombastic poet, Abraham Bedaresi, had more talent as a poet than his father. He possessed a lively imagination and overflowing wealth of language, and lacked only restraining tact, and a dignified, universally acceptable, uplifting aim for poetry. This deficiency gave his poems the appearance of empty grandiloquence and artificiality. He had inherited the defect of his father, inability to control the superabundance of words by the law of beauty. He was too ornate, and he moralized, instead of elevating and impressing. In his seventeenth year Yedaya Bedaresi wrote a book of morals (Pardes), and in his earliest years, whilst his father was still alive, he composed a prayer of about one hundred verses, in which all the words begin with the same letter (Bekashoth ha-Memin), and which his father, and perhaps his contemporaries, admired, but which is nevertheless very insipid. An admirer of Maimuni and Ibn Ezra, Bedaresi considered science and philosophy of equal importance with Judaism, or, like most thoughtful men of that time, he believed that the one contained the other.

Bedaresi conceived that his deepest convictions had been assailed by Ben Adret's anathema, and that it had in reality been directed against Maimuni's name, and, therefore, he could not restrain himself from addressing a sharp rebuke to the excommunicators. As he lived in Montpellier and was certainly attached to Jacob ben Machir's party, it is quite probable that he wrote the defense of Maimuni and of science, sent to Ben Adret, at their instigation (December, 1305, or January, 1306). This missive, like most of those written in this controversy, was intended not only for the individual addressed, but for the Jewish reading public in general. After Bedaresi had expressed his respect for the upright, learned rabbi of Barcelona, he remarked that he and his friends were not indignant about the ban, for science was invulnerable, and could not be injured by the fulmination of excommunicators. They were only hurt that Ben Adret should brand the Jewish congregations of southern France as heretics and renegades, and expose them to contempt in his message to many congregations and countries. Ben Adret, he continued, had allowed himself to be taken in tow by Abba-Mari, and had made a mountain of a mole-hill. From time immemorial, from Saadiah's age, science was not only tolerated in Judaism, but cherished and fostered, because its importance in religious knowledge was indisputable. Moreover, the denouncers of heresy were not consistent; they excluded the science of medicine from the ban, although this science, like every other, had a side which was in conflict with religion. How could they dare impugn the writings of Maimuni, whose dazzling personality outshone all his great predecessors? At the end, Yedaya Bedaresi observed that violent faction fights had broken out in Montpellier. Did they wish to continue to foment party strife, that the absence of unity among the Jews might occasion the Christians unholy satisfaction? "We cannot give up science; it is as the breath to our nostrils. Even if Joshua would appear and forbid it, we could not obey him, for we have a warranty, who outweighs you all, Maimuni, who has recommended it, and impressed it upon us. We are ready to set our goods, our children, and our very lives at stake for it." In conclusion, he invited Ben Adret to advise his friends in Montpellier to relinquish heresy hunting, and desist from stirring the fire of discord.

At the same time, furious disputes broke out in the church, between King Philip IV of France and Pope Boniface VIII, but here the subject of the dispute was not ideal good, not science and free research, but purely dominion, power and mammon. There was war to the knife between the chiefs of the two parties. The king accused the pope of heresy, simony, covetousness, perjury, and impurity. And the pope released the subjects from their oath to their hereditary king, and gave away his empire. The Jewish hostilities had neither the same wide range, nor yet the same bottomless wickedness.

Ben Adret and several who had signed the decree of excommunication, Moses Iskafat Meles and Solomon Gracian, were so unpleasantly affected by Bedaresi's letter, and feared its effect so much, that they hastened to offer the explanation that they had in no wise animadverted upon Maimuni's writings, whom they revered in the highest degree. They even exhorted Abba-Mari's party to make peace with their opponents, to vindicate their dignity before their common enemy. But the controversy was now at a stage when it could no longer be settled peaceably. The mutual bitterness was too violent, and had become too personal. Each party claimed to be in the right from its own standpoint; neither could consent to a compromise nor make concessions. Each adhered to its own principles; the one sought to enforce the freedom of science, the other protested that Jewish youth, before maturity, must be guarded from the deleterious poison of knowledge. Whilst the adherents of Abba-Mari were seeking legal decisions to prove the ban of their opponents unauthorized, a sad event happened, which, like a whirlwind, tore friends asunder, and dashed enemies against each other.

CHAPTER II.
THE FIRST EXPULSION OF THE JEWS FROM FRANCE, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Philip le Bel – The Jews of France plundered and banished – Estori Parchi; Aaron Cohen; Laments of Bedaresi – Eleazar of Chinon, the Martyr – Return of the Jews to France; their Precarious Position – Progress of the Controversy regarding the Study of Philosophy – Abba-Mari and Asheri – Death of Ben Adret – Rabbinical Revival in Spain – Isaac Israeli II – Samuel and the Queen Maria Molina – Don Juan Emanuel and Judah Ibn-Wakar – The Jews of Rome – Robert of Naples and the Jews – Peril of the Jews in Rome – Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, his Satires – Immanuel and Dante – The Poet Judah Siciliano – Leone Romano and King Robert – Shemarya Ikriti – Position of Karaism – Aaron the Elder and the Prayer-Book of the Karaites.

1306–1328 C.E

Philip IV, le Bel, at that time the king of France, one of those monarchs who made arrogant and unprincipled despotism familiar to Europe, suddenly issued a secret order (21st January, 1306), imposing the strictest silence, to the higher and lower officials throughout his kingdom, to put all the Jews of France under arrest on one and the same day, without warning of any kind. Before the Jews had fully recovered from fasting on the Day of Lamentation in remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem, and as they were about to begin their daily business, the constables and jailors appeared, laid hands upon them, and dragged young and old, women and children, to prison (10th Ab–22d July). There they were told that they had to quit the country within the space of a month, leaving behind both their goods and the debts owing to them. Whoever was found in France after that time was liable to the penalty of death. What could have induced this prudent rather than clerical prince so suddenly to change his sentiments towards the Jews? It was certainly not clerical intolerance, nor was it yielding to the will of the people. For the French, even in the Middle Ages, were not bigoted, and it was not their wish to remove the Jews to free themselves from usurers. Avarice was the first motive of this cruel order. For Philip's feud with the pope, and his war with the rebellious Flemish, had so exhausted his treasury, and had rendered necessary so unsparing an extortion of money that, as the ballads of the time scoffingly said, "The fowl in the pot was not secure from the king's grasp." The king wanted to replenish his coffers from the property of the Jews. Another circumstance is said to have moved him to this hard-hearted resolution. The German emperor Albrecht, who at that time was not on good terms with Philip, had demanded the surrender of the kingdom of Arles; further, that he should deliver up Jesus' supposed crown of thorns, and lastly, that he should acknowledge the authority of the successor of Vespasian, Titus, and Charlemagne over the French Jews, *i. e.*, yield to him a portion of the hard-earned property of the Jews. Philip is said to have consulted his lawyers, to decide to whom the authority over the Jews appertained, and as they adjudged it to the German emperor, the idea occurred to him to fleece the Jews of their property, and to send his "servi cameræ" naked and bare to Albrecht. Before the world the king covered his act of violence, inhuman as it was unstatesmanlike, with the excuse that incredible outrages of the Jews had rendered their expulsion imperative. That he had aimed at the possessions of the Jews was shown by his relentless plundering. The officials left the unhappy Jews nothing beyond the clothes they wore, and to everyone not more than seemed necessary for a day's living (12 gros Tournois). Wagonfuls of the property of the Jews, gold, silver and

precious stones were transported to the king; and less valuable objects were sold at a ridiculously low price. At the appointed time (September, 1306), they were banished, about 100,000 souls, from the country which their ancestors had inhabited, in part at the time of the Roman republic, long before Christianity had spread into France. Some who could not separate themselves from their property and the country which they loved went over to Christianity. The whole congregation of Toulouse is said to have been guilty of this cowardice, which scarcely seems credible. The celebrated seats, at which so much intellect had been displayed, the colleges of Rashi, Tam, and the Tossafists: Troyes, Paris, Sens, Chinon, Orleans; the places in which a higher culture had had its temple: Béziers, Lünel, Montpellier, whence the combatants for and against science were plunged into common misery, – all these schools and synagogues were sold to the highest bidder or given away. A German or an English king might have destroyed the holy places of the Jews – King Philip le Bel made a present of a synagogue to his – coachman. An approximate idea can be formed of the sums which the expulsion and robbery of the Jews brought in to the king, if it is kept in mind that the sale of the Jewish goods in the house of the prefect of Orleans alone brought in 337,000 francs.

How many of the refugees, reduced to beggary, fell victims to the hardships of their journey cannot be known. The bitter plaints of those oppressed by the heavy affliction sound mournful and touching even at this distance of time. Estori Parchi, then a youth of many accomplishments and noble heart, a relative of Jacob ben Machir, whose parents had emigrated from Spain to southern France, thus describes his sorrow: "From the house of study have they torn me; naked was I forced as a young man to leave my ancestral home, and wander from land to land, from people to people, whose tongues were strange to me." Parchi at length found a resting-place in Palestine. Another fugitive, the learned Aaron Cohen of Narbonne, poured forth this elegy: "Unhappy me, I saw the misery of the banishment of the sons of Jacob, like a herd of cattle driven asunder. From a position of honor I was thrown into a land of darkness." The sudden turn of fortune which changed rich men into beggars, and exposed the delicate and those used to the comforts of life to bitter privation, filled the bombastic poet Yedaya Bedaresi with gloomy reflections. In vivid colors he painted the trouble and pain of life, and man's helplessness and nothingness. His "Trial of the World" (Bechinath Olam), suggested by personal observation and bitter experience, consequently makes a depressing and mournful impression, and reflects faithfully the melancholy feelings of the ill-starred race.

The expulsion of the Jews from France by the stony-hearted Philip le Bel did not come off without martyred victims. Those who transgressed the time of grace, yet rejected solicitations to abjure their faith, were punished by death. A martyr of this time, Eleazar ben Joseph of Chinon, is specially famous. He was a learned, noble-minded man, a correspondent of Ben Adret, master of many distinguished disciples, among them the youthful Parchi, one of the last of the Tossafist school. He was condemned to the stake, although no crime could be laid at his door except that he was a Jew. With him died two brothers. The expatriated Jews dispersed in all parts of the world; many traveled to Palestine. But the majority remained as near as possible to the French borders, in Provence proper, at that time partly under German suzerainty, in the province of Roussillon, which belonged to the Aragonian king of Majorca, and in that island. Their intention was to wait for a favorable change of fortune, which would permit them to return to the land of their birth. They had not speculated falsely. King Philip himself was induced by avarice to unbend from his severity.

The vehement struggle in Montpellier about permitting Jewish youth to engage in the study of the sciences, remarkable to relate, continued after the banishment from France (September, 1306), and the mutual hatred of the two parties was in no way abated by suffering. A portion of the Tibbonide party had settled in Perpignan, which belonged to the king of Majorca, who was no favorer of the Jews. At his command copies of the Talmud were once more delivered up to the *auto-da-fé;* but as he hoped to gain some advantage by the settlement of intelligent, industrious Jews, he suffered them. Abba-Mari and another portion of the congregation of Montpellier at first took up their abode in the town of Arles, but as he could not stay there, he, too, emigrated to Perpignan (January, 1307).

But the opposing party, which had influence with the king or governor, endeavored to hinder his settlement in that place. Abba-Mari's partisans, by making representations to the king, succeeded in obtaining permission for him to live in Perpignan. Here the controversy raged anew. Solomon ben Adret and Asheri, particularly the latter, whose decision of character had acquired for him the chief authority, again interfered. Asheri declared that he had given his signature in a half-hearted manner to the decree prohibiting young men from occupying themselves with profane studies; for, according to his opinion, it was too great a concession to permit it at the age of twenty-five. Science ought to be prohibited altogether, for it inevitably lures on to unbelief. The defenders of science were to be condemned without mercy, since the afflictions of exile had made no impression on them, suffering had not broken their spirit of defiance, and had not chastened their hardness of heart.

This view, that qualities prejudicial to Judaism were inherent in science, gained supremacy after Ben Adret's death (1310), when Asheri was acknowledged in Spain and in the neighboring countries as the only authority in religious matters. Asheri, his sons and companions who had migrated with him from Germany, transplanted from the Rhine to vivacious Toledo that spirit of honest, but tormenting, narrow-minded and intolerant piety; that gloomy disposition which regards even harmless joy as a sin; that feeling of abjectness, which characterized the German Jews of the Middle Ages, and they inoculated the Spanish Jews with it. The free activity of the mind was checked. Asheri concentrated all his mental power on the Talmud and its exposition. His chief work was a compilation of the Talmud for practical use (1307–1314). On all occasions he endeavored to enforce a difficult, painful, and severe discipline. If any one desired to express his thoughts on any department of knowledge whatsoever, he had to array his subject in the garments of contrite orthodoxy. When the erudite Isaac ben Joseph Israeli II, of Toledo, published an astronomical work (1310), he had to adjust it to Talmudical standards, and introduce it by a confession of faith, for only in this manner could he find grace in Asheri's eyes.

At about this time, during Asheri's rabbinate in Toledo, prominent Jews once more obtained influence at court. King Ferdinand IV (1295–1312) had a Jewish treasurer named Samuel, whose counsels he followed in political matters too. The dowager queen, Maria de Molina, who had held the reins of government during her son's minority, with feminine passionateness hated the favorite Samuel, who is said to have nourished the enmity between mother and son. One day, when Samuel was in Badajos, and was preparing to accompany the king to Seville, he was attacked by an assassin, and so severely wounded that he was left for dead. It is not known who instigated the deed. The king had such care and attention devoted to Samuel, that he recovered from his wounds.

Don Ferdinand's death brought in its train a time of unquiet, of civil war, and social anarchy for Spain. As the Infante Alfonso was still a child in the cradle, several persons, the clever Maria de Molina, the young queen-mother Constantia, and the uncles of the young king contended for the guardianship and the regency, and provoked faction feuds in the country (1312–1326). Donna Maria de Molina, who conducted the government, did not extend her hate against her son's Jewish counselor to the community to which he belonged. As in the lifetime of her husband she had had a Jewish favorite, Todros Abulafia, so during her regency she had a Jewish treasurer, Don Moses. When the council of Zamora (1313) renewed canonical laws hostile to the Jews, the cortes of Burgos demanded the exclusion of Jews from all honors and offices, and the pope issued a bull that Christians were to be absolved from their debts to Jews on account of usury, the wise regent submitted only in part. She ordered that Jews should not bear high-sounding Christian names, nor enter into close intercourse with Christians; but she most emphatically declared herself against the unjust abolition of debts, and published a law that no debtor could make himself free of his obligation to professors of the Jewish faith by appealing to a papal bull.

The regency of Don Juan Emanuel inaugurated an improvement in the condition of the Castilian Jews (1319–1325). The regent was a friend of learning, himself an author and poet, and was consequently held in esteem by educated Jews. A Jew of Cordova, Jehuda ben Isaac Ibn-Wakar,

found high favor in his eyes, and probably acted as his treasurer. At his solicitation Juan Emanuel once more invested the rabbinate with penal jurisdiction, which the Jews had partly lost during the regency of Maria de Molina, and had practiced only privately.

Jehuda Ibn-Wakar, however, was an admirer of Asheri, and, like the latter, of excessive piety, desiring to have every religious transgression punished with the utmost severity. When a Cordovan uttered a blasphemy in Arabic, Ibn-Wakar asked Asheri what was to be done with him, and the latter replied that his tongue should be cut out. A beautiful Jewess having had intercourse with a Christian, Don Juan Manuel resigned her to the punishment of the Jewish court, and Jehuda Ibn-Wakar condemned her to have her face disfigured by the removal of her nose, and Asheri confirmed the sentence.

The southern Spanish and Castilian congregations still lived in peace, and in the undisturbed possession of their goods; on the other hand, the northern Spanish, and still more the southern French congregations were exposed to bloody attacks by fanatical hordes, which the church had unfettered, and then could not restrain. Jews once more lived in France. Louis X had recalled them nine years after their banishment (1315). This king, himself seized by a desire to abrogate the ordinances of his father and indict his counselors, had been solicited by the people and the nobility, who could not do without the Jews, to re-admit them into France. He accordingly entered into negotiations with them in reference to their return. But the Jews did not accept his proposal without deliberation, for they well knew the inconstancy of the French kings, and the fanatical hatred of the clergy against them. They hesitated at first, and then submitted their conditions. These were, that they be allowed to reside in the same places as before; that they should not be indictable for former transgressions; that their synagogues, churchyards, and books be restored to them, or sites be granted for new places of worship. They were to have the right of collecting the money owing to them, of which two-thirds should belong to the king. Their former privileges, as far as they were still in force, were to be again extended to them, or new ones conceded. King Louis accepted all these conditions, and granted them also the right of emigration under certain restrictions. In order to conciliate the clergy, he, on his side, imposed the conditions that they wear a badge of a certain size and color, and hold neither public nor private disputations on religion. Two high officials (prud'hommes, auditeurs des Juifs) were appointed to superintend the re-settlement of the Jews. Their residence in France was fixed for twelve years; if the king should resolve to expel them again after the expiration of that period, he put himself under the obligation to give them a year's warning that they might have time to make their preparations. The king published this decree, declaring that his father had been ill-advised to banish the Jews. As the voice of the people solicited their return, as the church desired a tolerant policy, and as the sainted Louis had set him the precedent of first banishing and then readmitting them, he had, after due consultation with the prelates, the barons, and his high council, permitted the return of the Jews. The French Jews streamed back in masses to their former dwelling-places, regarding this event as a miraculous redemption. When Louis X died a year after, and his brother Philip V, the Long, ascended the throne, he extended their privileges, and protected them especially from the enmity of the clergy; so that they and their books could be seized only by royal officers. But they were not free from vexation by the degenerate clergy, who insisted that the Jews of Montpellier, who thought they could venture on certain liberties, should re-affix the Jew-badge on their dress. At one time they accused the Jews of Lünel with having publicly outraged the image of Christ on the Purim festival; at another time they ordered that two wagonfuls of copies of the Talmud be publicly burned in Toulouse. Such occurrences, however, were mere child's play compared with what they had to endure from the bigoted multitude.

Philip V had the idea, repugnant to the spirit of the time, of undertaking a crusade to wrest the Holy Land, after so many vain attempts, from the hands of the infidels. This enterprise appeared so foolish to the discerning, that even Pope John XXII, the second of the popes that resided in Avignon instead of at Rome, dissuaded him from it. Nevertheless, the fancy, as soon as it was known, inflamed

the minds of the rude populace. A young man of excited imagination gave out that a dove had settled at one time on his head, at another, on his shoulder, and when he had sought to seize it, it had transformed itself into a beautiful woman, who urged him to gather a troop of crusaders, assuring him of victory. His utterances found credulous hearers, and the lower people, children, and swine-herds attached themselves to him. A wicked priest and an unfrocked Benedictine monk used the opportunity to force their way to the front, and thus arose in northern France (1320) a numerous horde of forty thousand shepherds (Pastoureaux, Pastorelli, Roïm), who moved in procession from town to town carrying banners, and announced their intention of journeying across the sea to deliver the so-called holy sepulcher. Their attention was immediately turned to the Jews, possibly because they wanted to raise money for the purchase of weapons by robbing the Jews of their possessions, or a Jew, as is related, had made sport of their childish heroism. The massacre of the Jews by the shepherds (Gesereth-ha-Roïm) is another bloody page in Jewish history.

Nearly all the crusading enterprises had commenced with the murder of Jews; so this time. The shepherd-gangs which had collected near the town of Agen (on the Garonne) cut down all the Jews they met on their march from this place to Toulouse, if they refused to be baptized. About five hundred Jews had found refuge in the fortress of Verdun (on the Garonne), the commandant having placed a strong tower at their disposal. The shepherds took it by storm, and a desperate battle took place. As the Jews had no hopes of rescue, they had recourse in their despair to self-destruction. The unhappy people selected the oldest and most respected man of their number to slay them one after the other. The old man picked out a muscular young assistant in this ghastly business, and both went to work to rid their fellow-sufferers of their miserable lives. When at last the young man, after slaying his aged partner, was left alone, the desire of life came strong upon him; he declared to the besieging shepherds that he was ready to go over to them, and asked to be baptized. The latter were just or cruel enough to refuse the request, and tore the renegade to pieces. The Jewish children found in the tower were baptized by force. The governor of Toulouse zealously espoused the cause of the Jews, and summoned the knights to take the approaching shepherds prisoners. Thus many of them were brought in chains to the capital, and thrown into prison. But the mob, which sympathized with them, banded together, and set them at liberty, the result being that the greater part of the congregation of Toulouse was destroyed. A few seceded to Christianity. On the capture of the shepherds near Toulouse, the Jews in the neighborhood, who had been granted shelter in Castel-Narbonnais, thought that they were now free of all danger, and left their place of refuge. They were surprised by the rabble, and annihilated. Thus perished almost all the Jews in the neighborhood of Bordeaux, Gascogne, Toulouse, Albi, and other towns of southern France. Altogether, more than 120 Jewish congregations in France and northern Spain were blotted out through the rising of the Shepherds, and the survivors were so impoverished by spoliation that they were dependent upon the succor of their brethren in other parts, which flowed to them in abundance even from Germany.

The following year, too, was very unfortunate for the Jews, the trouble again beginning in France. This persecution was occasioned by lepers, from whom it has its name (Gesereth Mezoraim). The unhappy people afflicted by leprosy in the Middle Ages were banished from society, declared dead as citizens, shut up in unhealthy quarters, and there tended after a fashion. Once, when certain lepers in the province of Guienne had been badly provided with food, they conceived and carried into effect the plan of poisoning the wells and rivers, through which many people perished (1321). When the matter was traced back to the lepers, and they were examined under torture, one of them invented, or somebody suggested to him, the lying accusation that the Jews had inspired them with the plan of poisoning the waters. The charge was generally believed; even King Philip V had no doubt about it. Sometimes it was asserted that the Jews wanted to take revenge for the sufferings experienced at the hands of the Shepherds the year before; again, that they had been persuaded by the Mahometan king of Granada to cause the Christians to be poisoned; or it was suggested that they had done it in league with the Mahometan ruler of Palestine, to frustrate the intended crusade of King Philip.

In several places Jews were arrested on this accusation, unmercifully tortured, and some of them burnt (Tammuz – July, 1321). In Chinon a deep pit was dug, fire kindled in it, and eight Jewish men and women thrown in, who sang whilst dying. The mothers had previously cast in their children, to save them from forcible baptism. Altogether five thousand are said to have suffered death by fire in that year. Many were banished from France, and robbed by the heartless populace. Philip was convinced later on of the untruth of the accusation; but as the Jews had been accused, he seemed to think that the opportunity might be used to swell the treasury. Accordingly, the congregations were condemned by Parliament to a penalty of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds (Parisian); they were to apportion the contributions among themselves. Deputies (procureurs) from northern France (de la langue française) and from Languedoc, met and enacted that the southern French Jews, decimated and impoverished by the previous year's massacre, were to contribute forty-seven thousand pounds, and the remainder was to be borne by the northern French Jews. The wealthiest Jews were put under arrest as security for the payment of the fine, and their goods and debts distrained.

In the same year a great danger threatened the oldest of the European communities. Misfortune came upon it the more unexpectedly as till then it had tasted but little of the cup of misery which the Jews of England, France and Spain so often had to drink to the dregs. It was because Rome did not belong to the pope, but to the families of Orsini and Colonna, to the Ghibellines and Guelphs – the great and minor lords, who fought out their party feuds in that city – that the Jews were left untouched by papal tyranny. It was well for them that they were little considered.

At about this time the Roman Jews had made an advance in material welfare and intellectual culture. There were some who possessed houses like palaces, furnished with all the comforts of life. Since the time when, through the concurrence of favorable circumstances, they had tasted of the tree of knowledge, learning and poetry were cherished by the Italian Jews. The seeds which Hillel of Verona, Serachya ben Shaltiel and others had scattered, commenced to bear fruit. When the flower of intellectual glory in southern France began to decay through the severity of Talmudical rigorists and the bloody persecutions, it unfolded itself in Italy, especially in Rome. At that time the first rays of a new cultural development, breaking through the gloom of priestcraft and the rude violence of the Middle Ages, appeared in Italy. A fresh current of air swept the heavens in Italy in the beginning of the fourteenth century, the epoch of Dante, thawing the icy coat of the church and of knightdom, the two pillars of the Middle Ages. A sense of citizenship, the impulse towards liberty, enthusiastic love for science, were the striking symptoms of a new spirit, of a striving for rejuvenescence, which only the emperor, the embodiment of rude, ungainly knighthood, and the pope, the incarnation of the stern, unbending church, failed to perceive. Every greater or lesser Italian lord made it a point of honor to encourage art and science, and patronize poets, artists and learned men at his court. Nor were the Jews overlooked at this juncture. One of the most powerful Italian princes, Robert of Anjou, king of Naples, count of Provence (Arelat), vicar-general of the Papal States and for some time titular lieutenant of the Holy Roman empire, was a friend of science, a warm admirer also of Jewish literature, and consequently a protector of the Jews. Several Jewish littérateurs were his teachers, or at his instance undertook scientific and theological works.

Either in imitation of the current practice or from sincere interest in Jewish literature, rich Jews, who played the part of small princes, invited Jewish authors into their circle, lightened their material cares by liberal support, and stimulated their activity by encouragement. Thus it came to pass that three Jewish Italian men of letters had the courage to compete with the Spaniards and Provençals. These were Leo Romano, Judah Siciliano, and above all the poet Immanuel Romi, who once more ennobled neo-Hebrew poetry, and raised it to a higher level. The Roman congregation at that time displayed exceptional interest in Jewish writings. Of Maimuni, the embodiment of science for them as for the rest of the Jewish world, they possessed the copious Religious Codex, and the translation of his "Guide;" but of his luminous Mishna commentary, composed originally in Arabic, only those parts which Charisi and Samuel Ibn-Tibbon had done into Hebrew. The representatives of the Roman

congregations, to whom probably the poet Immanuel also belonged, wished to have a complete edition of the work, and sent a messenger to Barcelona to Ben Adret expressly for the purpose of procuring the remaining parts. The affair was not so simple as the Roman Jews had imagined. The greater portion of the anxiously desired commentary of Maimuni on the Mishna, on account of peculiar difficulties, was not yet rendered into Hebrew. The greatest obstacle was the circumstance that the Spanish Jews, except those in Toledo and in the neighborhood of the kingdom of Granada, had forgotten Arabic. Ben Adret, who wished to oblige the Roman congregation, endeavored to get the required portions translated into Hebrew. He encouraged scholars, learned both in Arabic and the Talmud, to undertake this difficult task, and Joseph Ibn-Alfual and Jacob Abbassi of Huesca, Solomon ben Jacob and Nathaniel Ibn-Almali, the last two physicians of Saragossa, and others divided the labor among themselves. Jewish literature is indebted for the possession of this most valuable work of Maimuni to the zeal of the Roman congregation, of Ben Adret, and these translators.

The Roman community was roused from its peaceful occupations and undisturbed quiet by a rough hand, and awakened to the consciousness that it existed under the scourge of priestcraft and the caprice of its rulers.

It is related that a sister of the pope (John XXII), named Sangisa, had repeatedly exhorted her brother to expel the Jews from the holy city of Christendom. Her solicitations had always been fruitless; she therefore instigated several priests to give testimony that the Jews had ridiculed by words and actions a crucifix which was carried through the streets in a procession. The pope thereupon issued the command to banish all the Jews from Roman territory. All that is certain is that the Jews of Rome were in great danger during that year, for they instituted an extraordinary fast, and directed fervent prayers to heaven (21 Sivan–18 June, 1321), nor did they fail to employ worldly means. They sent an astute messenger to Avignon to the papal court and to King Robert of Naples, the patron of the Jews, who happened to be in that city on state affairs. The messenger succeeded, through the mediation of King Robert, in proving the innocence of the Roman Jews in regard to the alleged insulting of the cross and the other transgressions laid to their charge. The twenty thousand ducats, which the Roman community is said to have presented to the sister of the pope, silenced the last objections. The Jews of Rome entered their school of trouble later than the Jews of other countries. For that reason it lasted the longer.

Whilst King Robert was residing in southern France, he seems to have made the acquaintance of a learned, genial Jewish satirist, Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, and to have taken him into his service. This talented man (born 1287, died before 1337) possessed solid knowledge, was familiar with the Arabic language and literature (which was very remarkable in a Provençal), and in his youth (1307–1317) translated medical, astronomical, and philosophical writings from that language into Hebrew. Kalonymos ben Kalonymos was not merely a hewer of wood and drawer of water, an interpreter in the realm of science; he had intellect enough to make independent observations. Disregarding the province of metaphysical speculation, he was more interested in pure ethics, which he especially wished to inculcate in his co-religionists, "because neglect and ignorance of it leads men to all kinds of perversities and mutual harm." He did not treat the subject in a dry, uninteresting style, but sought to clothe it in attractive garments. With this end in view, Kalonymos adapted a part of the Arabic encyclopedia of science (which was in circulation under the name of "Treatises of the Righteous Brethren") for a dialogue between man and beasts, giving the theme a Jewish coloring.

In another work, "Touchstone" (composed at the end of 1322), Kalonymos ben Kalonymos held up a mirror for his Jewish contemporaries, in which they could recognize their perversities, follies, and sins. To avoid giving himself the appearance of an irreproachable censor of morals, he enumerated his own sins, more in satire than as a confession. Kalonymos whimsically satirized even Judaism. He wished he had been born a woman, for then he would not have had to bear the burden of six hundred and thirteen religious laws, besides so many Talmudical restrictions and rigorous ordinances, which could not possibly be fulfilled, even when a man tried with the most exacting conscientiousness. As a

woman, he would not have to trouble himself with so much reading, to study the Bible, the Talmud, and the subjects belonging to it, nor torment himself with logic, mathematics, physics, astronomy, and philosophy. By and by Kalonymos' satire grew deeply serious. The degradation of his Jewish co-religionists, and the bloody persecutions occasioned by the Shepherds and the lepers, dispelled his mocking humor, and satire was changed into lamentation. In Rome, which King Robert assigned to him as a place of residence, Kalonymos, having been furnished with letters of recommendation, obtained entry into a joyous, vivacious, imaginative circle of men, by whom he was stimulated to write a peculiar parody. He composed a treatise for the Jewish carnival (Purim), in which he imitated the tenor and spirit of the Talmud, its method, controversies, and digressions, with considerable wit. It is a fine parody, exciting laughter at every step, and one can not tell whether it was intended as a harmless carnival joke or as a satire on the Talmud. Kalonymos occupied a position of importance in the Roman congregation. Handsome in form, of abundant accomplishments, solid character, all his excellencies enhanced by the good opinion of King Robert of Naples, he was everyone's favorite. The Italian Jews were proud of him. But Kalonymos was not a true poet, still less an artist.

Much more gifted, profound, and imaginative was his older friend and admirer, Immanuel ben Solomon Romi (born about 1265, died about 1330). He was an anomaly in the Jewish society of the Middle Ages. He belonged to that species of authors whose writings are all the more attractive because not very decent. Of overflowing wit, extravagant humor, and caustic satire, he is always able to enchain his readers, and continually to provoke their merriment. Immanuel may be called the Heine of the Jewish Middle Ages. Immanuel had an inexhaustible, ready supply of brilliant ideas. And all this in the holy language of the Prophets and Psalmists. Granted that the neo-Hebrew poets and thinkers, the grammarians and Talmudists, had lent flexibility to the language, but none of Immanuel's predecessors had his power of striking from it showers of sparkling wit. But if, on the one side, he developed the Hebrew language almost into a vehicle for brilliant repartee, on the other side, he robbed it of its sacred character. Immanuel transformed the chaste, closely-veiled maiden muse of Hebrew poetry into a lightly-clad dancer, who attracts the attention of passers-by. He allows his muse to deal with the most frivolous and indelicate topics without the slightest concealment or shame. His collection of songs and novels tends to exert a very pernicious and poisonous effect upon hot-blooded youth. But Immanuel was not the hardened sinner, as he describes himself, who thought of nothing but to carry on amours, seduce the fair, and deride the ugly. He sinned only with the tongue and the pen, scarcely with the heart and the senses.

Though he often indulges in unmeasured self-laudation, this simple description of his moral conduct must still be credited: "I never bear my enemies malice, I remain steadfast and true to my friends, cherish gratitude towards my benefactors, have a sympathetic heart, am not ostentatious with my knowledge, and absorb myself in science and poetry, whilst my companions riot in sensual enjoyments." Immanuel belonged to those who are dominated by their wit, and cannot refrain from telling some pointed witticism, even if their dearest friends are its victims, and the holiest things are dragged in the mire by it. He allowed himself to be influenced by the vivacity of the Italians and the Europeanized Jews, and put no curb upon his tongue. What is remarkable in this satirist is that his life, his position, and occupation seem to have been in contradiction with his poetical craft. In the Roman community he filled an honorable position, was something like a president, at all events a man of distinction. He appears to have belonged to the medical profession, although he made sport of the quackery of physicians. In short, he led the domestic life of his time, a life permeated by morality and religion, giving no opportunity for excess. But his honorable life did not prevent him from singing riotous songs, and from writing as though he were unconscious of the seriousness of religion, of responsibility and learning. Immanuel was acquainted, if not on intimate terms, with the greatest poet of the Middle Ages, the first to open the gates of a new epoch, and to prognosticate the unity of Italy in poetic phrase. Probably they came to know each other on one of Dante's frequent visits to Rome, either as ambassador or exile. Although their poetic styles are as opposite as the poles

– Dante's ethereal, grave, and elevated; Immanuel's forcible, gay, and light – they, nevertheless, have some points of contact. Each had absorbed the culture of the past; Dante the catholic, scholastic, and romantic elements; Immanuel the biblical, Talmudical, Maimunist, philosophical, and neo-Hebraic products. Both elaborated this many-hued material, and molded it into a new kind of poetry. The Italians at that time were full of the impulse of life, and Immanuel's muse is inspired by the witchery of spring. He wrote ably in Italian, too, of which a beautiful poem, still extant, gives evidence. Immanuel was the first to adapt Italian numbers to the neo-Hebraic lyre. He introduced the rhyme in alternate lines (Terza rima in sonnet form), by which he produced a musical cadence. His poems are not equally successful. They are wanting not in imagination, but in tenderness and grace. His power lies in poetical prose (Meliza), where he can indulge in free and witty allusions. In this style he composed a host of short novels, riddles, letters, panegyrics, and epithalamia, which, by clever turns and comic situations, extort laughter from the most serious-minded readers.

In one of his novels he introduces a quarrelsome grammarian of the Hebrew language, a verbal critic who takes the field in grammatical campaigns, and is accompanied by a marvelously beautiful woman. Immanuel enters into a hair-splitting disputation that he may have the opportunity of coquetting with the lovely lady. He suffers defeat in grammar, but makes a conquest in love. Immanuel's description of hell and paradise, in which he imitated his friend Dante, is full of fine satire. Whilst the Christian romantic poet shows gravity and elevation in his poetical creation, represents sinners and criminals, political opponents and enemies of Italy, cardinals and popes, as being tortured in hell, metes out, as it were, the severe sentences of judgment day; his Jewish friend, Immanuel, invents scenes in heaven and hell for the purpose of giving play to his humorous fancy. Dante wrote a divine, Immanuel a human, comedy. He introduces his pilgrimage to heaven and hell by relating that he once felt greatly oppressed by the burden of his sins, and experienced compunction; at this juncture his young friend Daniel, by whose untimely death he had lately been deeply affected, appeared to him, and offered to guide him through the dismal portals of hell and the elysian fields of the blessed. In the chambers of hell Immanuel observes all the wicked and godless of the Bible. Aristotle, too, is there, "because he taught the eternity of the world," and Plato, "because he asserted the reality of species" (Realism). Most of all he scourges his contemporaries in this poem. He inflicts the torment of the damned upon the deriders of science; upon a Talmudist who secretly led a most immoral life; upon men who committed intellectual thefts, and upon those who sought to usurp all the honors of the synagogue, the one to have his seat by the Ark of the Covenant, the other to read the prayers on the Day of Atonement. Quack doctors are also precipitated into hell, because they take advantage of the stupidity and credulity of the multitude, and bring trusting patients to a premature grave. His young, beatified guide goes with him through the gates of Paradise. How the departed spirits rejoice at the poet's approach! They call out, "Now is the time to laugh, for Immanuel has arrived." In the description of paradise and its inhabitants, Immanuel affects to treat his theme very seriously; but he titters softly within the very gates of heaven. Of course, he notices the holy men, the patriarchs, the pious kings and heroes of the Jewish past, the prophets and the great teachers, the poets, Jehuda Halevi and Charisi, the Jewish philosopher Maimuni. But next to King David, who fingers the harp and sings psalms, he observes the harlot Rahab who concealed the spies in Jericho, and Tamar who sat at the cross-roads waiting. Dante excludes the heathen world from paradise, because it did not acknowledge Christ, and had no share in the grace of salvation. Immanuel sees a troop of the blessed, whom he does not recognize, and asks their leader who they are. "These are," answers the latter, "righteous and moral heathens, who attained the height of wisdom, and recognized the only God as the creator of the world and the bestower of grace." The pious authors, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, on seeing Immanuel, darted forward to meet him; each one thanks him for having expounded his writings so well, and here older and contemporary exegetists come in for their share of Immanuel's sly satire.

Neo-Hebraic poetry, which began with José ben José, and reached its zenith in Ibn-Gebirol and Jehuda Halevi, attains its final stage of development in Immanuel. The gamut had now been run. After Immanuel, the Hebrew muse became silent for a long time, and it required a fresh and powerful stimulus to awaken it from slumber to new energy. Verses were, of course, written after his days, and rhymes polished, but they are as far removed from poetry as a street-song from a soul-stirring melody. The fate of Hebrew poetry is illustrated in Immanuel's career. For a long period he was popular, every one sought his friendship, but in old age he fell into neglect and poverty. His own statement is that his generosity dissipated his means. He was as much derided as he had formerly been praised. He left Rome with his family, traveled about, and found repose at length at the house of a wealthy, influential friend of art (Benjamin?) in Fermo, who interested himself in him, and encouraged him to arrange the verses and poems written at different periods of his life into a symmetrical whole.

The praises which Immanuel bestows on his own productions, and his boast that he casts the old poets into the shade, certainly tend to produce a bad impression. Nevertheless, like every expert in his profession, he was far removed from that repulsive vanity which perceives its own depreciation in the recognition of another. To true merit Immanuel gave the tribute of his warmest praise, and modestly conceded precedence to it. Not only did he extol the highly honored Kalonymos, basking in the sunshine of the king's favor, with the most extravagant figures of speech, but he praised almost more heartily the poet Jehuda Siciliano, who lived in straitened circumstances. He gave him the palm for poetical verse, maintaining his own superiority in poetical prose. But for Immanuel, nothing would have been known of this poet. Poor Siciliano had to waste his power in occasional poems for his subsistence, and was thus unable to produce any lasting work. With glowing enthusiasm Immanuel eulogizes his cousin, the young and learned Leone Romano, Jehuda ben Moses ben Daniel (born about 1292), whom he calls the "Crown of Thought." In paradise he allots to him the highest place of honor. Leone Romano was the teacher of King Robert of Naples, and instructed him in the original language of the Bible. He knew the language of learned Christendom, and was probably the first Jew to pay attention to scholastic philosophy. He translated for Jewish readers the philosophical compositions of Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and others. Leone Romano composed original works of exegesis, set forth in philosophical method. Greatly as his contemporaries admired his learning and intellect, which had achieved so much when he had scarcely arrived at man's estate, he exercised no influence whatever on posterity.

The Roman society which promoted science and poetry may be said to have included also the grandson of a Roman emigrant who took up his abode in Greece, Shemarya Ikriti (Cretan) of Negroponte (flourished 1290–1320). He stood in close relation with the Roman community and King Robert. Familiar with Talmudical literature, as he probably was rabbi in Negroponte, he devoted himself to philosophical speculations, and was, perhaps, well read in the Greek philosophical literature in its original language. In his youth, Ikriti, like many of his contemporaries, occupied himself with translations of philosophical works. Later on he conceived a plan of practical utility, in which he thought he could turn his knowledge to account. He sought to smooth over the difference between the Rabbanites and the Karaites, and lastingly to reconcile the sects at enmity with each other for centuries, "that all Israel may once more be united in one fraternal bond." Shemarya of Negroponte was the first, perhaps the only Rabbanite, who, if he did not extend the hand of reconciliation to Karaism, at least showed a friendly disposition towards it. He recognized that both parties were in error; Karaism was wrong in rejecting Talmudical traditions unconditionally; but the Rabbanites sinned against truth in placing the Talmud in the forefront, and overlooking the Bible. In Greece there may have been Karaites at that time who had come from Constantinople. To these Shemarya Ikriti addressed himself to incline their minds towards union with the mother community.

For the difficult task of bringing discordant faiths into harmony, much intelligence and energy were required, and Shemarya could furnish only good will. He was not deficient in knowledge, but his mental grasp was not sufficiently powerful. At the instance of King Robert, who interested himself

in Jewish literature, he wrote a commentary on the Bible, and forwarded to him, with a dedication, the books first completed (1328). It read as follows: "To our noble king Robert, adorned like King Solomon with the crown of wisdom and the diadem of royalty, I send this exposition of the cosmogony and the Song of Songs." His Biblical commentaries were set forth with great diffuseness, covered a great range, and were not calculated to appeal to the Karaites, and draw them over to the side of rabbinical Judaism. His attempt at reconciliation miscarried, perhaps was not made in the proper spirit; for there was a disposition on the part of some Karaites to treat his overtures favorably, and his efforts would not have failed, if they had been conducted with skill. Nevertheless, Ikriti was held in such esteem in his time that the Roman congregation took an interest in his labors, entered into correspondence with him, while the Karaites assiduously read his works, and in later times considered him a member of their own party.

Karaism was still dragging itself along in its decaying, stiffening form. Internal schisms remained unaccommodated. Different Karaite congregations celebrated the festivals at different times: the Palestinians, according to the observation of the new moon, and the extra-Palestinian congregations, in common with the Rabbanites. Their extremely severe marriage laws were not finally settled even at this epoch. Karaism at that time had three centers – Cairo in Egypt, Constantinople in the Byzantine Empire, and Sulchat (Eski-Crim) in the Crimean peninsula. Some importance was possessed by Aaron ben Joseph the Elder, physician in Constantinople (flourished about 1270–1300). He came originally from the Crimea, made extensive voyages, and acquired a knowledge of medicine and philosophy. Aaron I also made himself intimate with Rabbanite literature to a degree that few of his sect attained. He made use of Nachmani's commentary on the Pentateuch, and from this circumstance arose the mistake of later Karaites, that Aaron had sat at Nachmani's feet. His familiarity with Rabbanite literature had a beneficial effect on his style; he wrote much more clearly and intelligibly than most of the Karaite authors. He was even disposed to accept the tradition of the Talmud.

He completely fixed the Karaite prayer book (Siddur Tefila), hitherto in an unsettled condition, incorporating into it hymns written by Gebirol, Jehuda Halevi, Ibn-Ezra, and other Rabbanite liturgical poets. Aaron himself possessed very little poetical genius, and his metrical prayers, with which he enriched the prayer book of the Karaites, have no great poetical merit, but by the admission of hymns written by Rabbanites into his compilation, he showed that he knew how to appreciate the devout sublimity in the prayers of the Spanish Jews, and that he was not altogether devoid of taste. If Shemarya, of Negroponte, had undertaken to effect a reconciliation between the Rabbanites and the Karaites in a more intelligent and energetic manner, there can be no doubt that Aaron would willingly have offered his assistance, provided, of course, that he had known of Shemarya's attempt. There was not wanting among Karaites a strong inclination for union. Owing to the activity of Abraham Maimuni II, a great-grandson of the renowned Maimuni, who had succeeded to the post of Chief (Nagid) of the Rabbanite communities in Egypt after the death of his father David, an important Karaite congregation in Egypt on one day openly acknowledged the teachings of the Rabbanites. In Palestine, too, frequent conversions of Karaites to Talmudical Judaism took place. On this account the rabbis of the time were more favorably disposed towards them. On the one hand, the strict Talmudist Samson of Sens denounced the Karaites as heathens, whose wine was not to be partaken of by orthodox Jews; on the other hand, Estori Parchi, who had been banished from Provence, and who, emigrating to Palestine, had settled in Bethshan, recognized them as co-religionists, led astray by erroneous notions, but not to be rejected.

CHAPTER III.
THE AGE OF THE ASHERIDES AND OF GERSONIDES

Condition of Palestine – Pilgrims and Immigrants – Shem Tob Ibn-Gaon – Favorable Position of the Jews in Castile under Alfonso XI – Persecution in Navarre – Joseph de Ecija and Samuel Ibn-Wakar – Increase of Anti-Jewish Feelings – Abner – Alfonso of Burgos, Convert to Christianity, and Persecutor of the Jews – Gonzalo Martinez – Fall of Martinez and Deliverance of the Jews – Decline of the Study of Science – The Study of the Talmud prosecuted with Renewed Vigor – Jacob and Judah Asheri – Isaac Pulgar, David Ibn-Albilla – The Provençal Philosophers Ibn-Kaspi, Leon de Bagnols, and Vidal Narboni – Decline of the Study of the Talmud in Germany – Emperor Louis of Bavaria and the Jews – Persecution by the "Leather-Arms."

1328–135 °C.E

The Holy Land was once more accessible to its children. The Egyptian sultans, into whose power it passed after the fall of Accho and the expulsion of the Christians, were more tolerant than the Christian Byzantine emperors and the Frankish crusading kings. They did not hinder the coming of Jewish pilgrims who desired to lighten their over-burdened hearts by praying and weeping over the ruins of the past, so rich in recollections, or at the graves of their great men there interred; nor did they oppose the settlement of European exiles, who again cultivated the soil of the land of their fathers. The long, firm, yet mild, reign of the Mameluke sultan, Nassir Mahomet (1299–1341), was a happy time for the Jews who visited Palestine. Whilst under the rule of the Christian governors of the country no Jew was permitted to approach the former capital, at this time Jewish pilgrims from Egypt and Syria regularly came to Jerusalem, to celebrate the festivals, as in the time when the Temple shone in all its splendor. The Karaites established special forms of prayer for those who went on pilgrimages to Jerusalem: at their departure, the whole congregation assembled to give utterance in prayer to the bitter-sweet emotions connected with Zion. The immigrants who settled in Palestine engaged in agriculture. They came to feel so thoroughly at home there that the question was mooted whether the laws of tithes, of the year of release, and others ought not to be again carried into effect. In consequence of the freedom and tolerance which the Jews were enjoying, many enthusiastic spirits were again seized by the ardent desire to kiss the dust of the Holy Land. Emigration to Palestine, especially from the extreme west, became very common at this time.

A pupil of Meïr of Rothenburg, named Abraham, a painstaking copyist of holy writings, considered his dwelling in the Holy Land a mark of divine grace. Two young Kabbalists, Chananel Ibn-Askara and Shem Tob Ibn-Gaon from Spain, also traveled thither, probably to be nearer the source of the mystic doctrines, which fancy assigned to this country, and took up their residence in Safet. But instead of obtaining fresh information upon the doctrines of the Kabbala, one of them – Ibn-Askara died in his youth – introduced new features of the science. Shem Tob ben Abraham Ibn-Gaon, from Segovia (born 1283, died after 1330), whose teacher in the Talmud had been Ben Adret, and in the Kabbala Isaac ben Todros, was a zealous adherent of the secret science, and described even Maimuni as a Kabbalist.

The congregation of Jerusalem was at this time very numerous. A large portion of the Rabbanite community led a contemplative life, studied the Talmud day and night, and became engrossed with the secret lore of the Kabbala. There were also handicraftsmen, merchants, and several acquainted

with the science of medicine, with mathematics and astronomy. The artistic work of the famous calligraphers of Jerusalem was in great demand, far and near. Hebron, too, possessed a vigorous community, whose members engaged chiefly in the weaving and dyeing of cotton-stuffs, and in the manufacture of glass wares, exported in large quantities. In the south of Palestine, in company with Mahometans, Jewish shepherds again pastured their flocks after the manner of the patriarchs. Their rabbi was also a shepherd, and delivered discourses upon the Talmud in the pasture fields for such as desired to obtain instruction.

Although the Holy Land was the goal of ardent, longing hearts, yet it was no more a center for the dispersed of the Jewish race than it had been for a long time previous. It could not produce an original leader of any sort, and lived upon the crumbs of culture dropped by the Jews in Europe. The Kabbala, studied in Palestine since the time of Nachmani, was an exotic plant which could never flourish very well there, and degenerated into rankest superstition. The Holy Land did not even produce a Talmudical authority of widespread renown; also for earnest rabbinical studies it had become dependent upon Europe. The leadership of Judaism in the days after the death of Ben Adret and Asheri remained with Spain, not as formerly Aragon, but Castile, where the family of Asheri and their views prevailed. Here lived Talmudical authorities whose decisions were considered final. Here was still to be found, if not a flourishing state of science, at least appreciation of scientific research. In Castile, under the rule of the powerful and intelligent Alfonso XI, the Jews were in so prosperous a condition that, compared with other countries in Europe, this period may be called a Golden Age. Several clever Jews in succession, under the modest title of ministers of finance (Almoxarif), exercised an influence upon the course of politics. Not only the court, but also the great nobles, surrounded themselves with Jewish counselors and officers. In place of the humble, servile bearing, and the degrading badge which the church decreed for the Jews, the Jewish Spaniards still bore their heads erect, and clothed themselves in gold and silk. Dazzled by the glitter of this favorable state of affairs, some recognized the fulfillment of the old prophecy, "the scepter shall not depart from Judah," which Christians had so often employed in their attacks on Judaism.

It is scarcely to be wondered at, if the Spanish Jews were unduly elated because of the promotion of a few from their midst to state offices. Such prominent public men were for the most part a protecting shield for the communities against the avaricious and turbulent lower orders of the nobility, against the stupid credulity and envy of the mob, and the serpent-like cunning of the clergy, lying concealed but ready to attack the Jews. Jewish ministers and counselors in the service and the retinue of the king, clothed in the costume of the court, and wearing at their sides the knightly sword, by these very circumstances, without special intercession, disarmed the enemies of their brethren in faith and race. The impoverished nobles, who possessed nothing more than their swords, were filled with envy of the rich and wise court Jews; but they were compelled to stifle their feelings. The masses, guided by appearances, did not venture, as was done in Germany, to ill-treat or slay any Jew they chanced across, as an outlaw and a pariah, because they knew that the Jews were held in high favor at court. They often overrated their influence, believing that the Jews at court could obtain a hearing with the king at any time. Even the haughty clergy were obliged to restrain themselves so long as Joseph of Ecija, Samuel Ibn-Wakar, and others, were in a position to counteract their influence.

If the Castilian Jews compared the condition of their brethren in neighboring countries with their own, they must certainly have felt exalted, and entitled to be proud of their lot. In Aragon, at this time united into one kingdom with the islands of Majorca and Sicily, the persecuting spirit of the church, which Raymond de Penyaforte had stirred up, and Jayme I had perpetuated by means of oppressive laws, was rampant. In Navarre, which for half a century had belonged to the crown of France, the hatred against the Jews burned with a frenzy hitherto to be met with only in Germany. The last of the Capets, Charles IV, was dead, and with the accession of Philip VI to the French throne the House of Valois began. It is noteworthy that even Christians believed that the extinction of the lineal successors of Philip le Bel was retribution for his merciless expulsion of the Jews from

France. The people of Navarre strove to separate themselves from the rule of France, and form an independent state. It is not known in how far the Jews stood in the way of their project. Anyhow it is certain that suddenly, throughout the whole country, a bloodthirsty enmity arose against the Jews, prompted by envy of their riches, and fostered by the monks. A Franciscan, named Pedro Olligoyen, made himself most prominent in goading on the deluded mob against the innocent Jews. In the large congregation of Estella a most horrible massacre began on a Sabbath (23d Adar–5th March, 1328). The infuriated mob raised the cry, "Death to the Jews, or their conversion."

In vain did the Jews attempt to defend themselves in their streets; the inhabitants of the city, strengthened by troops from other places, besieged them, and took by storm the walls which surrounded the Jewish quarter, breaking them down and slaying almost all the Jews of the city. They also set fire to the Jewish houses, and reduced them to ashes. The description by an eye-witness of his own sufferings gives only a feeble idea of the horrors of this savage massacre in Estella. The murderers had slain the parents and the four younger brothers of Menachem ben Zerach, then barely twenty years old, afterwards a scholar of commanding influence. He himself was wounded by the murderers and knocked down, lying on the ground unconscious, from evening till midnight, beneath a number of corpses. A compassionate knight, a friend of Menachem's father, searched for him beneath the pile of corpses, took him to his house, and had him carefully tended till he recovered from his wounds. Similar scenes of barbarity were enacted in other parts of the country, especially in Tudela, the largest community in Navarre, and in the smaller ones of Falcos, Funes, Moncilla, Viana and others, but nowhere to so frightful an extent as in Estella. Over six thousand Jews perished in these massacres. Only the Jews of the capital, Pampeluna, appear to have escaped these savage attacks. The people of Navarre at length succeeded in their desire; their country was separated from France, and obtained a king of its own, Philip III, Count of Evreux and Angoulême. As soon as he was crowned, the relatives of the murdered entreated him to mete out justice. At first, Philip prosecuted the guilty persons in real earnest; he ordered the ringleaders, the Franciscan Pedro Olligoyen and others to be cast into prison, and laid a fine upon the cities in which these crimes had been committed. But, in course of time, he liberated all the imprisoned, and remitted the fine as an act of grace. He took good care, too, not to let the stolen property and the possessions of persons without heirs escape him; they had to be surrendered to him, just as in Germany. There was no objection to the Jews' being slaughtered, but the royal treasury was not to suffer loss on that account. This king and his successors imposed new burdens upon the wretched people. The Jews of Navarre now began to sink into degradation like those of Germany.

The sun that was shining upon them in Castile at this time was, strictly speaking, only a false sun, but its glimmer, compared with the gloom wherein the congregations of other countries were steeped, gives at least momentary pleasure. Alfonso XI, as soon as he came of age, and obtained the sovereignty (1325–1380), had two Jewish favorites, Don Joseph of Ecija and Samuel Ibn-Wakar. The former, whose full name was Joseph ben Ephraim Ibn-Benveniste Halevi, had a pleasing exterior, understood music, and knew how to ingratiate himself with those in power. At the recommendation of his uncle, the king had made him not only minister of finance (Almoxarif), but also his confidential counselor (privado), whose opinion he highly valued. Joseph of Ecija possessed a state carriage, knights accompanied him as an escort on his journeys, and hidalgos dined at his table. On one occasion the king dispatched him on a very important and honorable mission which almost cost him his life. He was besieged by the citizens of Valladolid in the palace of the Infanta, and they demanded his surrender with tumultuous clamor. Some of Joseph's retinue succeeded in escaping from the city, and they hastened at full speed to the king, to whom they related what had taken place. Alfonso rightly considered this a revolt against his sovereignty. He marched rapidly against Valladolid, and summoned the knights of Old Castile to join him. For the sake of his Jewish favorite, he besieged the former capital of his kingdom, burnt many houses, and would have destroyed the place entirely, had not more moderate persons intervened, and explained to the king that the people were not so

much embittered against Don Joseph as against Don Alvar Nuñez, whose influence was most hateful to them. Don Alfonso thereupon condescended to remove Alvar from his public offices, whilst Don Joseph continued in favor with the king.

The other favorite of King Alfonso was his physician, Don Samuel Ibn-Wakar (Abenhuacar). This man had a scientific education, was an astronomer, and perhaps the astrologer of his master. Although he occupied no public office, and took no part in state affairs, yet, through the favor of the king, he possessed very great influence. There existed between Don Joseph of Ecija and Ibn-Wakar the jealousy which is common among courtiers who bask in the rays of the same sun. On account of their rivalry, these two favorites sought to injure each other, and thus they and their co-religionists incurred the hatred of the people.

Some wealthy Jews, probably relying upon the favorable position of their friends at court, carried on money transactions in an unscrupulous manner. They extorted a high rate of interest, and mercilessly persecuted their dilatory Christian debtors. The king himself encouraged the usury of the Jews and Moors, because he gained advantage therefrom. The complaints of the people against the Jewish and Mahometan usurers grew very numerous. The cortes of Madrid, Valladolid and other cities made this point the subject of petitions presented to the king, demanding the abolition of these abuses, and the king was compelled to yield to their entreaty.

The minds of the people, however, remained embittered against the Jews. The cortes of Madrid thereupon called for several restrictive laws against the Jews, such as, that they should not be allowed to acquire landed property, and that Jewish ministers of finance and farmers of taxes should not be appointed (1329). Alfonso replied, that, in the main, things should continue as they had been before. Don Samuel Ibn-Wakar rose even higher in the royal favor. Don Alfonso intrusted him with the farming of the revenues derived from the importation of goods from the kingdom of Granada. He, moreover, obtained the privilege empowering him to issue the coinage of the realm at a lower standard. Joseph of Ecija now became jealous and offered a higher sum for the right of farming the import-taxes from Granada. When he thought he had supplanted his rival, the latter dealt him a severe blow. Ibn-Wakar succeeded in persuading the king that it would be more advantageous to the people of Castile to carry the protective system to its uttermost limits, and prohibit all imports from the neighboring Moorish kingdom (1330–1331).

Whilst the two Jewish courtiers were striving to injure each other, the enemies of the Jews were busily at work to imperil their reputation and the existence of all the Castilian congregations. They inflamed the minds of the people by representing to them that, owing to the depreciation in the value of money, brought about by the farmer of the coinage, Ibn-Wakar, the price of the necessaries of life had risen, these articles being exported to the neighboring countries, where they were bartered for silver, which had a higher value in their own land. The enemies of the Jews also brought the influence of the church to bear to arouse the prejudices of the king against all the Jews. Their champion was a Jew, who no sooner had embraced Christianity, than he became a fanatical persecutor of his brethren. This was the infamous Abner, the forerunner of the baptized and unbaptized Jew-haters, who prepared, and at length accomplished, the humiliation and banishment of the Spanish Jews.

Abner of Burgos, or as he was afterwards called, Alfonso Burgensis de Valladolid (born about 1270, died about 1346), was well acquainted with biblical and Talmudical writings, occupied himself with science, and practiced medicine. His knowledge had destroyed his religious belief, and turned him not only against Judaism, but against all faiths. Troubled by cares for his subsistence, Abner did not obtain the desired support from his kinsmen in race. He was too little of a philosopher to accept his modest lot. His desires were extravagant, and he was unable to find the means to satisfy them. In order to be able to live in ease and splendor, Abner determined, when nearly sixty years of age, to adopt Christianity, although this religion was as little able to give him inward contentment as that which he forsook. As a Christian, he assumed the name of Alfonso. The infidel disciple of Aristotle and Averroes accepted an ecclesiastical office; he became sacristan at a large church in Valladolid,

to which a rich benefice was attached, enabling him to gratify his worldly desires. He attempted to excuse his hypocritical behavior and his apostasy by means of sophistical arguments.

Alfonso carried his want of conscientiousness so far that not long after his conversion to Christianity he attacked his former brethren in faith and race with bitter hate, and showed the intention of persecuting them. Owing to his knowledge of Jewish literature, it was easy for him to discover its weak points, employ them as charges against Judaism, and draw the most hateful inferences. Alfonso was indefatigable in his accusations against the Jews and Judaism, and composed a long series of works, in which he introduced arguments partly aggressive, partly defensive of his new faith against the attacks upon it by the Jews. In his abuse of Judaism, the Hebrew language, in which he composed with much greater ease than in Spanish, was made to do service.

Alfonso had the brazen impudence to send one of his hateful writings to his former friend, Isaac Pulgar. The latter replied in a sharply satirical poem, and pressed him close in his polemical writings. The Jews of Spain had not yet become so disheartened as to suffer such insolent attacks in silence. Another less renowned writer also answered Alfonso, and thus a violent literary warfare broke out.

Alfonso of Valladolid, however, did not content himself with polemical writings; he boldly presented himself before King Alfonso XI, and laid his accusations against the Jews before him. He raked up anew the remark of the Church Father Jerome and others, that the Jews had introduced into their book of prayer a formula of imprecation against the God of the Christians and his adherents. The representatives of the Jewish community in Valladolid, probably summoned by the king to justify themselves, emphatically denied that the imprecation originally leveled against the Minim (Nazarenes) referred to Jesus and his present followers. Alfonso, however, would not admit the validity of this exculpation, and pledged himself to prove his charges against the Jews in a disputation. The king of Castile thereupon commanded the representatives of the Valladolid community to enter upon a religious discussion with the sacristan. It took place in the presence of public officials and Dominicans. Here Alfonso Burgensis repeated his accusations, and was victorious, inasmuch as, in consequence of this disputation, King Alfonso issued an edict (25th February, 1336) forbidding the Castilian communities, under penalty of a fine, to use the condemned prayer or formula of imprecation. Thus the enemies of the Jews succeeded in winning over the king, who was really well-disposed towards the Jews. More ominous events were to happen.

King Alfonso was not very constant; he transferred his favor from one person to another. He took into his confidence a man unworthy of the distinction, named Gonzalo Martinez (Nuñez) de Oviedo, originally a poor knight, who had been promoted through the patronage of the Jewish favorite, Don Joseph of Ecija. Far from being grateful to his benefactor, he bore deep hatred against him who had thus raised him, and his hostile feeling extended to all Jews. When he had risen to the post of minister of the royal palace, and later to that of Grand Master of the Order of Alcantara (1337), he revealed his plan of annihilating the Jews. He lodged a formal charge against Don Joseph and Don Samuel Ibn-Wakar, to the effect that they had enriched themselves in the service of the king. He obtained the permission of the king to deal with them as he chose, so as to extort money from them. Thereupon Gonzalo ordered both of them, together with two brothers of Ibn-Wakar, and eight relatives with their families, to be thrown into prison, and confiscated their property. Don Joseph of Ecija died in prison, and Don Samuel died under the torture to which he was subjected. This did not satisfy the enemy of the Jews. He now sought to destroy two other Jews, who held high positions at court – Moses Abudiel and (Sulaiman?) Ibn-Yaish. He implicated them in a charge, pretending all the while to be friendly towards them. Through their downfall Gonzalo Martinez thought to carry into effect his wicked plan against the Castilian Jews without difficulty.

The Moorish king of Morocco, Abulhassan (Alboacin), whose help was implored by his oppressed co-religionists in Granada, had sent a very large army under the command of his son, Abumelik, over the straits to undertake a vigorous campaign against Castile. On the reception of this news, terror spread throughout Christian Spain. King Alfonso forthwith appointed Gonzalo

Martinez, Master of the Order of Alcantara, as general in charge of this war, and invested him with plenary power. But funds were wanting; at the deliberation on ways and means of procuring them, Gonzalo propounded his plan for depriving the Jews of their wealth, and then expelling them from Castile. By this means, large supplies of money would flow into the royal treasury; for all the Christians who were dunned by the Jews would willingly pay large sums of money to rid themselves of their enemies. Fortunately this proposal met with opposition in the royal council, and even from the most prominent clergyman in Castile, the archbishop of Toledo. The latter urged that the Jews were an inexhaustible treasure for the king, of which the state should not deprive itself, and that the rulers of Castile had guaranteed them protection and toleration. Don Moses Abudiel, who obtained information concerning the council held to decide on the weal or woe of the Jews, advised the congregations to institute public fasts, and to supplicate the God of their fathers to frustrate the wickedness of Gonzalo. The latter marched to the frontier against the Moorish army, and secured an easy victory. It happened, fortunately for the Spaniard, that the Moorish general, Abumelik, fell pierced by an arrow, and his army, filled with dismay at this event, was defeated and put to rout. The vainglory of the Grand Master of Alcantara now attained a high pitch. He thought to obtain such great importance in Spanish affairs that the king would be compelled to approve of all measures proposed by him. He was, indeed, filled with that pride which precedes a fall.

The feeble hand of a woman was the cause of his downfall. The beautiful and sprightly Leonora de Guzman, who had so enthralled the king with her charms that he was more faithful to her than to his wife, hated the favorite Gonzalo Martinez, and succeeded in making the king believe that he spoke ill of him. Alfonso desiring to learn the real truth of the matter sent a command to Gonzalo to present himself before him in Madrid; he, however, disobeyed the royal command. To be able to defy the anger of the king, he stirred up the knights of the Order of Alcantara and the citizens of the towns assigned to his government, to rebel against his sovereign, entered into traitorous negotiations with the king of Portugal and with the enemy of the Christians, the king of Granada. Alfonso was forced to lead his nobles against him, and besiege him in Valencia de Alcantara. In mad defiance, Gonzalo directed arrows and missiles to be aimed at the king, which mortally wounded a man in the vicinity of Alfonso. But some of the knights of the Order of Alcantara forsook their Grand Master, and surrendered the stronghold to the king. There remained nothing for Gonzalo except to yield. He was condemned to death as a traitor, and was burnt at the stake (1336), and thus ended the man who had sworn to annihilate the Jews. The Castilian congregations thereupon celebrated a new festival of deliverance, in the same month in which the evil plans of Haman against the Jews had recoiled on his own head. Alfonso again received the Jews into his favor, and raised Moses Abudiel to a high position at his court. From this time till the day of his death, Alfonso XI acted justly towards his Jewish subjects.

It may be thought that, under these on the whole favorable circumstances, the Jews occupied themselves with their intellectual culture, which had already developed its full blossom; but it was not so. Castile in particular, and all Spain, at this epoch, were very deficient in men who cultivated Jewish science. The Talmud constituted the only branch of study which intellectual men attended to, and even here there was no particular fertility. Decrease in strength manifested itself even in the study of the Talmud. The most famous rabbis of this period had so great a mistrust of their own powers that they no longer dared take an independent view of anything, and relied more and more upon the conclusions of older authorities. They made it very convenient for themselves by slavishly following Maimuni's Code in practical decisions, deviating from it only in such particulars as Asheri had objected to. The latter had pretty well succeeded, if not in altogether destroying the inclination of the Spanish Jews to engage in scientific inquiry, at least in bringing science into disrepute, and thus weakening its study. The distinguished supporters of philosophy henceforth no more came from Spain; the few that came into prominence were from southern France. These were Ibn-Kaspi, Gersonides and Narboni. Asheri and his sons, who inherited his hostility to science, in causing the view to become general throughout

Spain, that a man should not engage in higher questions concerning Judaism and its connection with philosophy, did not consider that by this means the spirit of the Spanish Jews would become enfeebled and incapacitated for Talmudical investigations, too. The Jewish sons of Spain were not so well suited for the study of narrow Talmudism as the German Jews. Prevented from occupying themselves with science, they lost their buoyancy of spirit, and became unfit for the studies permitted. Even their pleasure in song and their poetical talents died away. Occasionally a poem was still produced, but it consisted merely of rude and unimaginative rhymes. In time they were no better than the German Jews, whom they had before so greatly despised. Even their prose style, on which the Spanish Jews had formerly bestowed so much care, degenerated for the most part into spiritless verbosity. The charming writer, Santob de Carrion, who as early as the time of Alfonso XI had clothed his thoughts in beautiful Spanish verse, was a solitary poet, whose song awoke no echo.

The eight sons of Asheri, his relatives, who had emigrated with him from Germany to Toledo, together with his numerous grandsons, dominated Spanish Judaism from this time onwards. They introduced a one-sided Talmudical method of instruction deeply tinged with a gloomy, ascetic view of religion. The most famous of the sons of Asheri were Jacob (Baal ha-Turim) and Jehuda, both intensely religious, and of unselfish, self-sacrificing dispositions; they were, however, limited to a very narrow range of ideas. Both were as learned in the Talmud as they were ignorant in other subjects, and possessed every quality calculated to bring the decay of religion into accord with the increasing sufferings of the Jews in this third home of their race.

Jacob ben Asheri (born about 1280, died 1340) was visited by bitter misfortunes. His life was one chain of sufferings and privations; but he bore all with patience, without murmur or complaint. Although his father, Asheri, had brought much wealth with him to Spain, and had always been in good circumstances, yet his son, Jacob, had to suffer the bitterest pangs of poverty. Nevertheless, he received no salary as a rabbi: in fact, he does not appear to have filled that post at any time. As with all the family of Asheri, both sons and grandsons, the Talmud constituted his exclusive interest in life; but he displayed more erudition than originality. His sole merit consists in the fact that he brought the chaos of Talmudical learning into definite order, and satisfied the need of the time for a complete code of laws for religious practice.

Owing to his German origin and to his residence in Spain, Jacob Asheri became familiar with the productions of the different schools and authorities in their minutest details. He was thus well suited to control this chaotic mass and reduce it to order. On the basis of the labors of all his predecessors in this field, especially of Maimuni, Jacob compiled a second religious code (in four parts, Turim, shortened to Tur, about 1340). This work treated solely of religious practice, that is, of the ritual, moral, marriage and civil laws. He omitted all such things as had fallen into disuse since the destruction of the Temple and because of altered circumstances. With the composition of this work, a new phase in the inner development of Judaism may be said to begin.

Jacob's code forms part of a graduated scale, by means of which it can be ascertained to how low a level official Judaism had sunk since the time of Maimuni. In Maimuni's compilation thought is paramount; every ritual practice, of whatever kind, whether good or bad, is brought into connection with the essence of religion. In Jacob's code, on the other hand, thought or reasoning is renounced. Religious scrupulousness, which had taken so firm a hold of the German Jewish congregations, inspires the laws, and imposes the utmost stringency and mortifications. Maimuni, in accepting religious precepts as obligatory, was guided entirely by the Talmud, and but seldom included the decisions of the Geonim as invested with authority. Asheri's son, on the contrary, admitted into his digest of religious laws everything that any pious or ultra-pious man had decided upon either out of scrupulosity or as a result of learned exposition. In his code, the precepts declared to be binding by rabbinical authorities far outnumbered those of Talmudic origin. One might almost say that in Jacob Asheri's hands, Talmudical Judaism was transformed into Rabbinism. He even included some of the follies of the Kabbala in his religious digest.

Jacob's code is essentially different from that of Maimuni, not only in contents, but also in form. The style and the language do not manifest the conciseness and lucidity of Maimuni's. Notwithstanding this, his code soon met with universal acceptance, because it corresponded to a want of the times, and presented, in a synoptical form, all the ordinances relating to the ritual, to marriage, and civil laws binding on the adherents of Judaism in exile under the rule of various nations. Rabbis and judges accepted it as the criterion for practical decisions, and even preferred it to Maimuni's work. A few of the rabbis of that age refused to forego their independence, and continued to pronounce decisions arrived at by original inquiry, and therefore paid little heed to the new religious code. The great majority of them, on the other hand, not only in Spain, but also in Germany, were delighted to possess a handy book of laws systematically presenting everything worth knowing, making deep, penetrative research superfluous, and taxing the memory more than the understanding. Thus Jacob's Tur became the indispensable manual for the knowledge of Judaism, as understood by the rabbis, for a period of four centuries, till a new one was accepted which far surpassed the old.

His brother, Jehuda Asheri, was on a par with Jacob in erudition and virtue, but did not possess similar power of reducing chaos to order. He was born about 1284, and died in 1349. After the death of his father, the community of Toledo elected him as Asheri's successor in the rabbinate of the Spanish capital. He performed the functions of his office with extraordinary scrupulousness, without respect of persons, and was able to call the whole community to witness that he had never been guilty of the slightest trespass. When Jehuda Asheri, on account of some small quarrel with his congregation, resolved to take up his abode in Seville, the entire community unanimously begged of him to remain in their midst, and doubled his salary. In spite of this show of affection, he did not feel comfortable in Spain, and in his will he is said to have advised his five sons to emigrate to Germany, the original home of his family. The persecution of the German Jews, during the year of the epidemic pestilence, probably taught them that it was preferable to dwell in Spain. By reason of his position in the most important of the congregations and of his comprehensive rabbinical learning, Jehuda Asheri was regarded as the highest authority of his age, and was preferred even to his brother Jacob.

Seeing that even the study of the Talmud, so zealously pursued in Spain, had fallen into this state of stagnation and lassitude, the other branches of science could not complain that they made no progress, or were not attentively cultivated. The study of the Bible, Hebrew grammar, and exegesis were entirely neglected; we can recall hardly a single writer who earnestly occupied himself with these subjects. Owing to the energetic zeal of Abba-Mari, the interdict of Ben Adret, and the pronounced aversion of Asheri, reasoning had fallen into disrepute and decay. The truly orthodox shunned contact with philosophy as the direct route to heresy and infidelity, and pseudo-pious people behaved in a yet more prudish fashion towards it. It required courage to engage in a study inviting contempt and accusations of heresy. The Kabbala, too, had done its work, in dimming the eyes of men by its illusions. There were but few representatives of a philosophical conception of Judaism in those days; these were Isaac Pulgar, of Avila, David Ibn-Albilla of Portugal, and Joseph Kaspi of Argentière, in southern France.

Levi ben Gerson, or Leon de Bagnols, was more renowned and more talented than any of these. He was also called Leo the Hebrew, but more usually by his literary name Gersonides (born 1288, died about 1345). He belonged to a family of scholars, and among his ancestors he reckoned that Levi of Villefranche who had indirectly caused the prohibition of scientific study. In spite of the interdict of Ben Adret forbidding the instruction of youths in science, Gersonides was initiated into it at a very early age, and before he had reached his thirtieth year he was at work at a comprehensive and profound work upon philosophy. Gersonides was gifted with a versatile and profound intellect, and averse to all superficiality and incompleteness. In astronomy he corrected his predecessors, and made such accurate observations that specialists based their calculations upon them. He invented an instrument by means of which observations of the heavens could be made more certain. This discovery filled him with such ecstasy that he composed a Hebrew poem, a kind of riddle, upon it, though he was

an unpoetical man, and had his head filled with dry calculations and logical conclusions. He also wrote works upon the science of medicine, and discovered new remedies. At the same time he was held in very high repute by his contemporaries as a profound Talmudist, and inspired by his love for systematic arrangement, wrote a methodology of the Mishna.

Maestro Leon de Bagnols, as he was called as a physician, fortunately did not belong to the Jews of France proper: he successively lived in Orange, Perpignan, and in Avignon, at this time the home of popedom. Therefore, he had not been a sufferer in the expulsion of his co-religionists from this land; but his heart bled at the sight of the sufferings which the exiles were made to undergo. He moreover escaped from the effects of the rising of the Shepherds, and the subsequent bitter calamities. At about the same time, his fertile powers of production began to put forth fruit, and he began the series of writings which continued for more than twenty years (1321–1343). None of his writings created such a sensation as his work on the philosophy of religion (Milchamoth Adonaï). In this he set forth the boldest metaphysical thoughts with philosophical calmness and independence, as if paying no heed to the fact that by his departure from the hitherto received notions upon these questions, he was laying himself open to the charges of heresy and heterodoxy. "If my observations are correct," he remarked, "then all blame leveled against me, I regard as praise." Leon de Bagnols belonged to a class of thinkers seldom met with, who, with majestic brow, seek truth for its own intrinsic value, without reference to other ends and results which might cause conflict. Levi ben Gerson thus expressed his opinion upon this subject: Truth must be brought out and placed beneath the glare of open daylight, even if it should contradict the Torah in the strongest possible manner. The Torah is no tyrannical law, which desires to force one to accept untruth as truth, on the contrary, it seeks to lead man to a true understanding of things. If the truth arrived at by investigation is in harmony with the utterances of the Bible, then so much the better. In his independence of thought, the only parallel to Gersonides among Jewish inquirers is Spinoza. Unlike many of his predecessors, he would not look upon science as a body of occult doctrines designed for an inner circle of the initiated. He moreover refused to follow slavishly the authorities in philosophy regarded as infallible. He propounded independent views in opposition not only to Maimuni and Averroes, but also to Aristotle. Leon de Bagnols did not establish a perfect and thoroughly organized system of the philosophy of religion, but treated of the difficulties which interested the thinkers of the age more incisively than any of his predecessors.

In spite of his great ability, Gersonides exercised very little influence upon Judaism. By the pious, he was denounced as a heretic, because of his independent research, and his ambiguous attitude towards the doctrine of the creation. They took the title of his chief work, "The Battles of the Lord," to mean "Battles against the Lord." So much the warmer was his reception by Christian inquirers after truth. Pope Clement VI, during the lifetime of the author, commanded his treatise upon astronomy and the newly-invented instrument to be translated into Latin (1342).

Of a similar nature was another representative of philosophical Judaism of this age, Moses ben Joshua Narboni, also called Maestro Vidal (born about 1300, died 1362). His father Joshua, who belonged to a family in Narbonne, but resided in Perpignan, was so warmly interested in Jewish, that is to say Maimunistic, philosophy, that in spite of the interdict hurled against all who studied the subject, he instructed his son therein when he was thirteen years old. Vidal Narboni became an enthusiastic student. He divided his admiration between Maimuni and Averroes, his writings consisting chiefly of commentaries upon their works. His travels from the foot of the Pyrenees to Toledo and back again to Soria (1345–1362) enriched and amended his knowledge. He was interested in anything worth knowing, and made observations with great accuracy. No calamities or troubles succeeded in damping his zeal in the inquiry after truth. In consequence of the Black Death, an infuriated mob fell upon the community at Cervera. Vidal Narboni was compelled to take to flight with the rest of the congregation; he lost his possessions, and, what was more painful to him, his precious books. These misfortunes did not disturb him; he took up the thread of his work where it had been interrupted. He accomplished no entirely independent or original work; he was a true Aristotelian of Averroist

complexion. Narboni conceived Judaism as a guide to the highest degree of theoretical and moral truth: the Torah has a double meaning – the one simple, direct, for the thoughtless mob, and the other of a deeper, metaphysical nature for the class of thinkers – a common opinion in those times, Gersonides alone demurring. Narboni, too, gave expression to heretical views, that is, such as are contrary to the ordinarily accepted understanding of Judaism, but not with the freedom and openness of Levi ben Gerson. He rejected the belief in miracles, and attempted to explain them away altogether, but defended man's freedom of will by philosophical arguments. Death overtook him in the very midst of his labors when, advanced in years, he was on the point of returning to his native land from Soria, on the other side of the Pyrenees, where he had spent several years.

Though the Karaite, Aaron ben Elia Nicomedi, may be reckoned among the philosophers of this time, he can scarcely be admitted into the company of Levi ben Gerson and the other Provençal thinkers. His small stock of philosophical knowledge was a matter of erudition, not the result of independent thought. Aaron II, of Nicomedia (in Asia Minor, born about 1300, died 1369), who probably lived in Cairo, was indeed superior to his ignorant brother Karaites, but several centuries behind the Rabbanite philosophers. His thoughts sound like a voice from the grave, or as of one who has slumbered for many years, and speaks the language of antiquity, not understood by the men of his own day.

Aaron ben Elia was not even able to indicate the end aimed at by his work, "The Tree of Life." Without being himself fully conscious of his motives, he was guided in its composition by jealous rivalry of Maimuni and the Rabbanites. It vexed him sorely that Maimuni's religious philosophical work, "The Guide," was perused and admired not only by Jews, but also by Christians and Mahometans, whilst the Karaites had nothing like it. Aaron desired to save the honor of the Karaites by his "Tree of Life." He sought to detract from the merits of the work of Maimuni, and remarked that some of the statements to be found in the book had been made by Karaite philosophers of religion. Notwithstanding this, he followed Maimuni most minutely, and treated only of those questions which the latter had raised; but he sought to solve them not by the aid of philosophy, but by the authority of the Bible.

The history of this period, when dealing with events in Germany, has nothing but calamities to record: bloody assaults, massacres, and the consequent intellectual poverty. Asheri and his sons were either deluded or unjust when they preferred bigoted Germany to Spain, at that time still tolerable, and cast longing looks thitherwards from Toledo. From the time of Asheri's departure till the middle of the century, misfortune followed upon misfortune, till nearly all the congregations were exterminated. On account of this state of affairs, even the study of the Talmud, the only branch of learning pursued in Germany with ardor and thoroughness, fell into decay. How could the Germans gather intellectual strength, when they were not certain about one moment of their lives, or their means of sustenance? Their state in a most literal way realized the prophetical threat of punishment: "Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear." Emperor Louis, the Bavarian, is reported to have been favorably inclined towards the Jews, which is said to have made them proud. But this is idle calumny both against the emperor and the Jews. No German ruler before him had treated his "servi cameræ" so badly, pawned them and sold them, as Louis the Bavarian. He also imposed a new tax upon the Jews, the so-called golden gift-pence. As the emperors had gradually pawned all the revenues derived from their "servi cameræ" to enable them to satisfy their immediate necessity for money, Louis the Bavarian was driven to cogitate upon some new means of obtaining supplies from them. He promulgated a decree (about 1342), which commanded that every Jew and Jewess in the German Empire above the age of twelve, and possessed of at least more than twenty florins, should pay annually to the king or the emperor a poll-tax of a florin. He probably derived his right, if, indeed, the question of right was considered in reference to the treatment of Jews, from the fact that the German emperors were in possession of

all the prerogatives once claimed by those of Rome. As the Jews, since the days of Vespasian and Titus, had been compelled to pay a yearly tax to the Roman emperors, the German rulers declared themselves the direct heirs to this golden gift-pence.

Hitherto the massacres of Jews in Germany had taken place only at intervals, and in a few places; but now, under the reign of Louis, owing to riots and civil wars, they became much more frequent. During two consecutive years (1336–1337), a regularly organized band of peasants and rabble, who called themselves "the beaters of the Jews," made fierce attacks upon them with unbridled fury and heartless cruelty. Two dissolute noblemen were at the head of this troop; they gave themselves the name of Kings Leather-arm (Armleder) from a piece of leather which they wore wound round the arm. In this persecution, as in that of Rindfleisch, the fanaticism and blind superstition inculcated by the church played an important part. One of the Leather-arms announced that he had received a divine revelation which directed him to visit upon the Jews the martyrdom and the wounds which Jesus had suffered, and to avenge his crucifixion by their blood. Such a summons to arms seldom remained unanswered in Germany. Five thousand peasants, armed with pitchforks, axes, flails, pikes, and whatever other weapons they could lay hands upon, gathered around the Leather-arms, and inflicted a bloody slaughter upon the Jewish inhabitants of Alsace and the Rhineland as far as Suabia. As frequently happened during such barbarous persecutions, numbers of Jews, on this occasion also, put an end to their own lives, after having slain their children to prevent their falling into the hands of the Church. Emperor Louis the Bavarian did indeed issue commands to protect the heretic Jews (April, 1337), but his help came too late, or was of little effect. At length the emperor succeeded in capturing one of the Leather-arms, whom he ordered to be executed.

At about the same time a bloody persecution, prompted by the frenzy of avarice, was set on foot in Bavaria. The councilors of the city of Deckendorf (or Deggendorf) desired to free themselves and all the citizens from their debts to the Jews, and enrich themselves besides. To carry out this plan, the fable of the desecration of the host by the Jews, with the accompaniment of the usual miracles, was spread abroad. When the populace had been incited to a state of fanatical frenzy, the council proceeded to execute the project which it had secretly matured outside the town, so as not to arouse any suspicion among the Jews. On the appointed day (30th September, 1337), at a signal from the church bell, the knight Hartmann von Deggenburg, who had been initiated in the conspiracy, rode with his band of horsemen through the open gates into Deckendorf, and was received with loud rejoicing. The knight and the citizens thereupon fell upon the defenseless Jews, put them to death by sword and fire, and possessed themselves of their property. In honor of the miracles performed by the host that had been pierced by the knives of the Jews, a church of the Holy Sepulcher was erected, and appointed as a shrine for pilgrims; and the puncheons which the Jews had used, together with the insulted host, were placed beneath a glass case, and guarded as relics. For many centuries they were displayed for the edification of the faithful, – perhaps are still displayed. The lust for slaughter spread abroad into Bavaria, Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria. Thousands of Jews perished by different forms of torture and death. Only the citizens of Vienna and Ratisbon protected their Jewish inhabitants against the infuriated mob. The friendly efforts of Pope Benedictus XII were of little avail against the brutal spirit of the then Christian world.

CHAPTER IV.
THE BLACK DEATH

Rise of the False Accusation against Jews of Poisoning the Wells – Massacres in Southern France and Catalonia – The Friendly Bull of Pope Clement VI – Terrible Massacres in all Parts of Germany – Confessions wrung from the Jews on the Rack – The Flagellants as a Scourge for the Jews – King Casimir of Poland – Persecution in Brussels – The Black Death in Spain – Don Pedro the Cruel and the Jews – Santob de Carrion and Samuel Abulafia – Fall of Don Pedro and its Consequences for the Jews – Return of the Jews to France and Germany – The "Golden Bull" – Manessier de Vesoul – Matathiah Meïr Halevi – Synod at Mayence.

1348–138 °C.E

The assistance of the pope was of very little use to the Jews, and the protection of the German emperor was like the support of a broken reed. Within ten years they learned this comfortless experience; for soon came most mournful days for the Jewish communities in most parts of Europe where the cross held sway, to which the slaughter by the Leather-arms and the brutal atrocities of Deckendorf were but a weak prelude.

The glimpse of good fortune which the Spanish Jews enjoyed under Alfonso XI served only to bring down upon their brethren in the other Christian countries a widespread, intense, indescribably cruel persecution with which none of the massacres that had hitherto taken place can be compared. The destroying angel called the Black Death, which carried on its ravages for over three years, made its way from China across lands and seas into the heart of Europe, heralded by premonitory earthquakes and other terrifying natural phenomena. Sparing neither rank nor age, it left a devastated track behind, sweeping away a fourth part of all mankind (nearly 25,000,000) as with a poison-laden breath and stifling every noble impulse. In Europe the invisible Death with its horrors turned the Christians into veritable destroying angels for the Jews. Those whom the epidemic had spared were handed over to torture, the sword, or the stake. Whilst neither Mahometans nor Mongols who suffered from the plague attacked the Jews, Christian peoples charged the unhappy race with being the originators of the pestilence, and slaughtered them *en masse*. The church had so often and impressively preached that infidels were to be destroyed; that Jews were worse than heretics, even worse than unbelieving heathens; that they were the murderers of Christians and the slayers of children, that at last its true sons believed what was said, and carried its doctrines into effect. Owing to the prevailing misery, discipline and order, obedience and submissiveness were at an end, and each man was thrown upon his own resources. Under these circumstances, the effects of the education of the church appeared in a most hideous form. The Black Death had indeed made itself felt among Jews also; but the plague had visited them in a comparatively milder form than the Christians, probably on account of their greater moderation, and the very careful attention paid their sick. Thus the suspicion arose that the Jews had poisoned the brooks and wells, and even the air, in order to annihilate the Christians of every country at one blow.

It was charged that the Spanish Jews, supposed to be in possession of great power and influence over the congregations of Europe, had hit upon this diabolical scheme; that they had dispatched messengers far and wide with boxes containing poison, and by threats of excommunication had coerced the other Jews to aid in carrying out their plans, and that these directions issued from Toledo, which might be viewed as the Jewish capital. The infatuated populace went so far as to name the

man who had delivered these orders and the poison. It was Jacob Pascate, said they, from Toledo, who had settled in Chambery (in Savoy), from which as a center he had sent out a troop of Jewish poisoners into all countries and cities. This Jacob, together with a Rabbi Peyret, of Chambery, and a rich Jew, Aboget, was said to have dealt largely in the manufacture and sale of poisons. The poison, prepared by the Jewish doctors of the black art in Spain, was reported to be concocted from the flesh of a basilisk, or from spiders, frogs and lizards, or from the hearts of Christians and the dough of the consecrated wafers. These and similar silly stories invented by ignorant, or, perhaps, malicious people, and distorted and exaggerated by the heated imagination, were credited not alone by the ignorant mob, but even by the higher classes. The courts of justice earnestly strove to learn the real truth of these rumors, and employed the means for confirming a suspicion used by the Christians of the Middle Ages with especial skill – torture in every possible form.

As far as can be ascertained, these tales concerning the poisoning of the brooks and wells by Jews first found credence in southern France, where the Black Death as early as the beginning of the year 1348 had obtained many victims. In a certain town of southern France, on one day (the middle of the month of May), the whole Jewish congregation, men, women, and children, together with their holy writings, were cast into the flames. From that place the slaughter spread to Catalonia and Aragon. In these provinces, in the same year, anarchy was rife, because the nobles and people had revolted against the king, Don Pedro, in order to secure certain of their privileges against the encroachments of the monarch. When the tales of the poisoning of the wells had taken firm root in the minds of the people of these countries also, the inhabitants of Barcelona gathered together on a Saturday (towards the end of June), slew about twenty persons, and pillaged the Jewish houses. The most distinguished men of the city received the persecuted people under their protection, and aided by a terrible storm, loud thunder and flashes of lightning, they made a successful attack upon the deluded or plunder-seeking assailants of the Jews.

A few days later the community at Cervera was attacked in a similar manner, eighteen of its members killed, and the rest compelled to flee. The Jewish philosopher, Vidal Narboni, happened to be in the town, and in the assault he lost his possessions and his books. All the congregations of northern Spain knew themselves in danger of being attacked; they instituted public fasts, implored mercy from heaven, and barricaded those of their quarters which were surrounded by walls. In Aragon, however, the higher classes came to the help of the Jews. Pope Clement VI, who had taken so much interest in the astronomical works of Gersonides, and who, terrified at the approach of death, had shut himself up in his room, still felt for the sufferings of an innocent, persecuted people. He issued a bull in which, under pain of excommunication, he prohibited anyone from killing the Jews without proper judicial sentence, or from dragging them by force to be baptized, or from despoiling them of their goods (the beginning of July). This bull was probably of some use in southern France, but in the other parts of the Christian world it produced no effect. One country followed the example of another. The ideally beautiful region surrounding Lake Geneva next became the scene of a most frightful persecution. At the command of Amadeus, duke of Savoy at that time, several Jews suspected of poisoning were arrested and imprisoned in two small towns, Chillon and Chatel, on Lake Geneva. A commission of judges was appointed to inquire into the charges brought against the prisoners, and, if convicted, they were to be severely punished. In this country, then, a prince and his tribunal believed the preposterous fable of the poisoning by Jews. On the Day of Atonement (15th September, 1348), three Jews and a Jewess in Chillon were made to undergo torture: the surgeon Valavigny, from Thonon, Bandito and Mamson, from Ville-Neuve, and, three weeks later, Bellieta and her son Aquet. In their pain and despair, they told the names of the persons from whom they had received the poison, and admitted that they had scattered it in different spots near wells and brooks. They denounced themselves, their co-religionists, their parents and their children as guilty. Ten days later the merciless judges again applied the torture to the enfeebled woman and her son, and they vied with each other in their revelations. In Chastelard five Jews were put to the torture, and they made equally

incredible confessions of guilt. Aquet made the wild statement that he had placed poison in Venice, in Apulia and Calabria, and in Toulouse, in France. The secretaries took down all these confessions in writing, and they were verified by the signatures of their authors. To remove all doubts concerning their trustworthiness, the crafty judges added that the victims were only very lightly tortured. In consequence of these disclosures, not only the accused who acknowledged their crime, but all the Jews in the region of Lake Geneva and in Savoy were burnt at the stake.

The report of the demonstrated guilt of the Jews rapidly made its way from Geneva into Switzerland, and here scenes of blood of the same horrible description were soon witnessed. The consuls of Berne sent for the account of the proceedings of the courts of justice at Chillon and Chastelard. They then put certain Jews to the torture, extracted confessions from them, and kindled the funeral pyre for all the Jews (September).

The annihilation of the Jews on the charge of poisoning was now systematically carried out, beginning with Berne and Zofingen (canton Aargau). The consuls of Berne addressed letters to Basle, Freiburg, Strasburg, Cologne, and many other places, with the announcement that the Jews had been found guilty of the crime imputed to them; and also sent a Jew, bound in chains, under convoy, to Cologne, that every one might be convinced of the diabolical plans of the Jews. In Zurich the charge of poisoning the wells was raised together with that of the murder of a Christian child. There, also, those who appeared to be guilty were burnt at the stake, the rest of the community expelled from the town, and a law passed forbidding them ever to return thither (21st September). The persecution of the Jews extended northwards with the pestilence. Like the communities around Lake Geneva, Jews in the cities surrounding Lake Constance, in St. Gall, Lindau, Ueberlingen, Schaffhausen, Constance (Costnitz), and others, were burnt at the stake, put to the wheel, or sentenced to expulsion or compulsory baptism. Once again Pope Clement VI took up the cause of the Jews; he published a bull to the whole of Catholic Christendom, in which he declared the innocence of the Jews regarding the charge leveled against them. He produced all possible reasons to show the absurdity of the accusation, stating that in districts where no Jew lived the people were visited by the pestilence, and that Jews also suffered from its terrible effects. It was of no avail that he admonished the clergy to take the Jews under their protection, and that he placed the false accusers and the murderers under the ban (September). The child had become more powerful than its parent, wild fancy stronger than the papacy.

Nowhere was the destruction of the Jews prosecuted with more thoroughness and more intense hatred than in the Holy Roman Empire. In vain the newly-elected emperor, Charles IV, of Luxemburg, issued letter after letter forbidding the persons of the Jews, his "servi cameræ," to be touched. Even had he possessed more power in Germany, he would not have found the German people willing to spare the Jews. The Germans did not commit their fearful outrages upon the Jews merely for the sake of plunder, although a straightforward historian of that epoch, Closener of Strasburg, remarks that "their goods were the poison which caused the death of the Jews." Sheer stupidity made them believe that Jews had poisoned the wells and rivers. The councils of various towns ordered that the springs and wells be walled in, so that the citizens be not poisoned, and they had to drink rain water or melted snow. Was it not just that the Jews, the cause of this evil, should suffer?

There were some too sensible to share the delusion that the Jews were the cause of the great mortality. These few men deserve a place in history, for, despite their danger, they could feel and act humanely. In the municipal council of Strasburg, the burgomaster Conrad (Kunze) of Wintertur, the sheriff, Gosse Sturm, and the master workman, Peter Swaber, took great trouble to prove the Jews innocent of the crimes laid at their door, and defended them against the fanatical attack of the mob and even against the bishop. The councilors of Basle and Freiburg likewise took the part of the unhappy people. The council of Cologne wrote to the representatives of Strasburg that it would follow the example of the latter town with regard to the Jews; for it was convinced that the pestilence was to be considered as a visitation from God. It would, therefore, not permit the Jews to be persecuted

on account of groundless reports, but would protect them with all its power, as in former times. In Basle, however, the guilds and a mob rose in rebellion against the council, repaired with their flags to the city hall, insisted that the patricians who had been banished on account of their action against the Jews, should be recalled, and the Jews banished from the city. The council was compelled to comply with the first demand; as to the second, it deferred its decision until a day of public meeting, when this matter was to be considered. In Benfelden (Alsace) a council was actually held to consider the course to be followed with regard to Jews. There were present Bishop Berthold of Strasburg, barons, lords, and representatives of the towns. The representatives of Strasburg bravely maintained the cause of the Jews, even against the bishop, who either from malice or stupidity was in favor of their complete destruction. Although they repeatedly demonstrated that the Jews could not be the cause of the pestilence, they were out-voted, and it was decided to banish the Jews from all the cities on the upper Rhine (towards the close of 1348).

The Jews of Alsace, through the decision of Benfelden, were declared outlaws, and were either expelled from the various places they visited, or burnt. A hard fate overtook the community of Basle. On an island of the Rhine, in a house especially built for the purpose, they were burnt to death (January 9th, 1349), and it was decided that within the next two hundred years no Jew should be permitted to settle in that city. A week later all the Jews of Freiburg were burnt at the stake with the exception of twelve of the richest men, who were permitted to live that they might disclose the names of their creditors, for the property of the victims fell to the community. The community of Speyer was the first sacrifice amongst the communities of the Rhineland. The mob rose up and killed several Jews, others burning themselves in their houses, and some going over to Christianity. The council of Speyer took the property of the Jews, and confiscated their estates in the neighborhood. The council of Strasburg remained firm in its protection of the Jews, sending out numerous letters to obtain proofs of their innocence. But from many sides came unfavorable testimony. The council of Zähringen said that it was in possession of the poison the Jews had scattered. When tried it proved fatal to animals. The council would not let it go out of its hands, but would show it to a messenger.

A castellan of Chillon had the confessions of the Jews tortured in the district of Lake Geneva copied, and sent them to the council of Strasburg. Only the council of Cologne encouraged Wintertur to support the cause of the Jews, and to take no notice of the demands of their enemies. At length the trade-guilds rose against Wintertur and his two colleagues, who were deposed from office. A new council was chosen that favored the persecutions of the Jews. In the end, the entire community of Strasburg – 2,000 souls – were imprisoned. The following day, on a Sabbath (14th February, 1349), they were all dragged to the burial ground. Stakes were erected, and they were burnt to death. Only those who in despair accepted the cross were spared. The new council decreed that for a period of a hundred years no Jew should be admitted into Strasburg. The treasures of the Jews were divided amongst the burghers, some of whom were loth to defile themselves with the money, and, by the advice of their confessors, devoted it to the church.

Next came the turn of Worms, the oldest Jewish community in Germany. The Jews of this town had the worst to fear from their Christian fellow-citizens, Emperor Charles IV having given them and their possessions to the town in return for services, so that "the city and the burghers of Worms might do unto the Jews and Judaism as they wished, might act as with their own property." When the council decreed that the Jews should be burnt, the unfortunates determined to anticipate the death which awaited them from the hangman. Twelve Jewish representatives are said to have repaired to the town hall and begged for mercy. When this was refused to them, they are said to have drawn forth the weapons concealed in their clothes, to have fallen on the councilors, and killed them. This story is legendary; but it is a fact that nearly all the Jews of Worms set fire to their houses, and that more than 400 persons were burned to death (10th Adar–1st March, 1349). The Jews of Oppenheim likewise burnt themselves to death to escape being tortured as poisoners (end of July). The community of Frankfort remained secure so long as the rival emperors, Charles IV and Gunther of Schwarzburg,

were fighting in that neighborhood; the latter holding his court in Frankfort. When he died, and the contest was ended, the turn of the Jews of Frankfort came to be killed. On being attacked they burned themselves in their houses, causing a great conflagration in the city. In Mayence, where the Jews had hitherto been spared, a thief, during a flagellation scene, stole his neighbor's purse. An altercation arose, and the mob seized the opportunity to attack the Jews. They had, no doubt, been prepared, and 300 of them took up arms, and killed 200 of the mob. This aroused the anger of the entire Christian community, which likewise took to arms. The Jews fought a considerable time; at length, overpowered by the enemy, they set fire to their houses (24th August). Nearly 6,000 Jews are said to have perished in Mayence. In Erfurt, out of a community of 3,000 souls, not one person survived, although the council, after their slaughter in the whole of Thuringia, including Eisenach and Gotha, had long protected them. In Breslau, where a considerable community dwelt, the Jews were completely destroyed. Emperor Charles gave orders to seize the murderers and give them their due punishment. But he had taken no steps to hinder the horrible slaughter enacted everywhere, although informed of the plots against the Jews. In Austria, also, the outcry was made that the Jews were poisoners, and terrible scenes ensued. In Vienna, on the advice of Rabbi Jonah, all the members of the congregation killed themselves in the synagogue. In Krems, where there was a large congregation, the populace of the town, assisted by that of a neighboring place named Stein and the villages, attacked the Jews, who set fire to their houses and died (September, 1349), only a few being saved.

In Bavaria and Suabia, persecution was also rife, and the communities of Augsburg, Würzburg, Munich, and many others succumbed. The Jews of Nuremberg, through its extensive commerce, possessed great riches and grand houses, and were the especial objects of dislike to the Christians. Their destruction was so imminent that Emperor Charles IV freed the council from responsibility if they should be injured against its wish.

At length their fate was fulfilled. On a spot afterwards called Judenbühl (Jews' hill), the followers of the religion of love erected a pile, and all those who had not emigrated were burnt or killed. The council of Ratisbon did its utmost to save the community, the oldest in the south of Germany. For here also the mob demanded the annihilation or banishment of the Jews. The dukes of Bavaria, the sons of Emperor Louis, who favored the persecution of the Jews, had given the people permission in writing to "treat the Jews as they liked, according to honor or necessity, and banish them with or without justice." Margrave Louis of Brandenburg, son of Emperor Louis, one of the partisans of the rival emperor, Gunther of Schwarzburg, showed his religious feeling by giving orders to burn all the Jews of Königsberg (in Neumark), and to confiscate their goods. So inhuman were people in those days that the executioner boasted of his deed, and gave documentary evidence that Margrave Louis had commanded the Jews to be burnt. In North Germany there lived but few Jews, except in Magdeburg, but there, too, they were burnt or banished. In Hanover (in 1349) the flagellants were rampant. Outside of Germany, amongst the nations still uncivilized, there were comparatively few persecutions. Louis, King of Hungary, an enthusiast for his faith, drove the Jews out of his land, not as poisoners, but as infidels, who opposed his scheme of conversion, although he had given them equal rights with the Christians and privileges besides. The Hungarian Jews who remained true to their faith emigrated to Austria and Bohemia. In Poland, where the pestilence also raged, the Jews suffered but slight persecution, for they were favored by King Casimir the Great. At the request of some Jews who had rendered services to him, the king, after his ascent upon the throne (October 9th, 1334) confirmed the laws enacted nearly a century before by Boleslav Pius, duke of Kalish, or rather by Frederick the Valiant, archduke of Austria, and accepted by the king of Hungary and various Polish princes. Holding good only in the dukedom of Kalish and Great Poland, they were extended by Casimir to the whole of the Polish empire. Thirteen years later, Casimir altered the laws by which the Jews were permitted to lend money at interest, but we must not deduce that he was inimical to the Jews, for he expressly states that he made this limitation only at the request of the nobility. In the years of the pestilence, too, Casimir appears to have protected the Jews against

the outbreaks of the misguided multitude, for the accusation of the poisoning of wells by the Jews had traveled from Germany across the Polish frontier, and had roused the populace against them. Massacres occurred in Kalish, Cracow, Glogau, and other cities, especially on the German frontier. If the number of Jews stated to have been killed in Poland (10,000) be correct, it bears no relation to the enormous multitudes who fell as victims in Germany. Later (1356) Casimir is said to have taken a beautiful Jewish mistress named Esther (Esterka), who bore him two sons (Niemerz and Pelka) and two daughters. The latter are said to have remained Jewesses. In consequence of his love to Esther, the king of Poland is supposed to have bestowed special favors and privileges on some Jews, probably Esther's relations. But the records, handed down by untrustworthy witnesses, cannot be implicitly believed.

At all events, the Jews of Poland fared better than those of Germany, seeing that they were placed on an equality, if not with the Roman Catholics, yet with the Ruthenians, Saracens, and Tartars. The Jews were permitted to wear the national costume and gold chains and swords, like the knights, and were eligible for military service.

As on the eastern frontier of Germany, the Jews on the western side, in Belgium, were also persecuted at the period of the Black Death. In Brussels a wealthy Jew stood in great favor with the duke of Brabant, John II. When the flagellants came, and the death of his co-religionists was imminent, this Jew entreated his patron to accord them his protection, which John willingly promised. But the enemies of the Jews had foreseen this, and ensured immunity from punishment through the duke's son. They attacked the Jews of Brussels, dragged them into the streets, and killed all – about 500.

In Spain, the congregations of Catalonia, which, after those of Provence, supplied the first victims, conceived a plan to prevent the outrages of fanaticism. They determined to establish a common fund in support of their people who should become destitute through a mob or persecution. They were to choose deputies to entreat the king (Don Pedro IV) to prevent the recurrence of such scenes of horror. Other concessions were to be sought, but the plan was never carried into effect, owing to delay on the part of the Jews of Aragon, and also probably because too much was expected of the king. The Jews under Aragonian rule were still behind those in the kingdom of Castile.

In Castile also the Black Death had held its gruesome revelries; but here the population, more intelligent than elsewhere, did not dream of holding the Jews responsible for its ravages. In Toledo and Seville the plague snatched away many respected members of the community, particularly from the families of Abulafia, Asheri, and Ibn-Shoshan. The grief of the survivors is vividly depicted in such of the tombstone inscriptions of the Toledo Jewish cemetery as have come down to us. King Alfonso XI was amongst the victims of the insidious plague, but not even a whisper charged the Jews with responsibility for his death. During the reign of Don Pedro (1350–1369), Alfonso's son and successor, the influence of the Castilian Jews reached a height never before attained. It was the last luster of their splendid career in Spain, soon to be shrouded in dark eventide shadows. The young king, only fifteen years of age when called to the throne, was early branded by his numerous enemies with the name of "Pedro the Cruel." His favors to the Jews had a share in procuring him this nickname, although he was not more cruel than many of his predecessors and successors. Don Pedro was a child of nature with all the good and the bad qualities implied; he would not submit to the restrictions of court etiquette, nor allow himself to be controlled by political considerations. Through the duplicity and faithlessness of his bastard brothers, sons of Alfonso's mistress, Leonora de Guzman – the same who had unconsciously saved the Jews from imminent destruction – the king was provoked to sanguinary retaliation. The instinct of self-preservation, the maintenance of his royal dignity, filial affection, and attachment to an early love, had more to do with his reckless, bloody deeds than inherent cruelty and vengeance. The young king, destined to come to so sad an end, involving the Castilian Jews in his fall, was from the beginning of his reign surrounded by tragic circumstances. His mother, the Portuguese Infanta Donna Maria, had been humiliated and deeply mortified by her

husband at the instigation of his mistress, Leonora de Guzman. Don Pedro himself had been neglected for his bastard brothers, and particularly for his elder half-brother, Henry de Trastamara. The first important duty of his reign, then, was to obtain justice for his humiliated mother, and degrade the rival who had caused her so much misery. That he tolerated his bastard brothers is a proof that he was not of a cruel disposition. His severity was felt more by the grandees and hidalgos, who trampled on justice and humanity, and ill-treated the people with cavalier arrogance. Only in these circles Don Pedro had bitter enemies, not amongst the lower orders, which, when not misled, remained faithful to him to death. The Jews also were attached to him. They risked property and life for their patriotism, because he protected them against injustice and oppression, and did not treat them as outcasts. The Jews certainly suffered much through him, not in the character of patient victims, as in Germany and France, but as zealous partisans and fellow combatants, who shared the overthrow of their leader with his Christian followers.

Shortly after Don Pedro had ascended the throne, when the grief caused by the death of King Alfonso XI was still fresh, a venerable Jewish poet ventured to address to the new monarch words of advice in well-balanced Spanish verses. This poet, Santob (Shem Tob) de Carrion, from the northern Spanish town of that name (about 1300–1350), a member of a large community, has been entirely neglected in Jewish literature. Christian writers have preserved his memory and his verses. Santob's (or as abbreviated, Santo's) poetical legacy deserves to be treasured. His verses flow soft and clear as the ripples of an unsullied spring, dancing with silvery brightness out of its rocky hollow. He had not only thoroughly mastered the sonorous periods of the Spanish language, at that time in a transition state between tenderness and vigor, but had enriched it. Santob embodied the practical wisdom of his time in beautiful strophes. His "Counsels and Lessons," addressed to Don Pedro, have the character of proverbs and apothegms. He drew upon the unfailing wealth of maxims of the Talmud and later Hebrew poets for his verse, and the sweetness of his poetry was derived from various sources.

Santob's verses are not always of this gentle, uncontroversial character. He did not hesitate to speak sternly to those of his co-religionists who had become wealthy by the king's bounty, and he denounced the prejudice with which Spanish Christians regarded whatever was of Jewish origin. Even to the young king he was in the habit of indulging in a certain amount of plain speaking; and in his stanzas, more than 600 in number, he often drew for his majesty's benefit suggestive pictures of virtue and vice. He reminded the king, too, of promises made to Santob by his father, and bade him fulfill them. From this it would appear that our Jewish troubadour, who wooed the muse so successfully, was not a favorite of fortune. Little, however, is known of him beyond his verses, and we have no knowledge of the reception which his representations met at the hands of Don Pedro.

To other prominent Jews the king's favor was unbounded. Don Juan Alfonso de Albuquerque, his tutor and all-powerful minister, recommended for the post of minister of finance a Jew who had rendered him great services, and the king appointed Don Samuel ben Meïr Allavi, a member of the leading family of Toledo, the Abulafia-Halevis, to a state situation of trust, in defiance of the decision of the cortes that Jews should no longer be eligible. Samuel Abulafia not only became treasurer-in-chief (Tesoreo mayor), but also the king's confidential adviser (privado), who had a voice in all important consultations and decisions. Two inscriptions referring to Don Samuel, one written during his lifetime, the other after his death, describe him as noble and handsome, instinct with religious feeling, a benevolent man, "who never swerved from the path of God, nor could he be reproached with a fault."

Another Jew who figured at Don Pedro's court was Abraham Ibn-Zarzal, the king's physician and astrologer. Don Pedro was, indeed, so surrounded by Jews, that his enemies reproached his court for its Jewish character. Whether the protection he extended to his Jewish subjects was due to the influence of these Jewish favorites or to his own impulses is unknown. On opening for the first time the cortes of Valladolid (May, 1351), he was presented with a petition, praying him to abolish the judicial autonomy enjoyed by the Jewish communities and their right to appoint their own Alcaldes; he

replied that the Jews, being numerically a feeble people, required special protection. From Christian judges they would not obtain justice, or their cases would be delayed.

Whilst the relatives of the young king were intriguing to arrange a marriage between him and Blanche, daughter of the French Duc de Bourbon, he fell in love with Maria de Padilla, a clever, beautiful lady of a noble Spanish family. It is said that he was formally married to her in the presence of witnesses. At any rate, he caused the marriage proposals to Blanche to be withdrawn; but the Bourbon princess, either of her own accord, or at the instance of her ambitious relatives, insisted on coming to Spain to assume the diadem. Her resolve brought only sorrow to herself and misfortune to the country. The nearest relatives of the king strained every nerve to procure the celebration of the marriage, and in this they succeeded; but Don Pedro remained with his bride only two days. The result of this state of things was that to the old parties in the state another was added, some grandees taking part with the deserted queen, others with Maria de Padilla. To the latter belonged Samuel Abulafia and the Jews of Spain. The reason assigned was that Blanche, having observed with displeasure the influence possessed by Samuel and other Jews at her husband's court, and the honors and distinctions enjoyed by them, had made the firm resolve, which she even commenced to put into execution, to compass the fall of the more prominent Jews, and obtain the banishment of the whole of the Jewish population from Spain. She made no secret of her aversion to the Jews, but, on the contrary, expressed it openly. For this reason, it is stated, the Jewish courtiers took up a position of antagonism to the queen, and, on their part, lost no opportunity of increasing Don Pedro's dislike for her. If Blanche de Bourbon really fostered such anti-Jewish feelings, and circumstances certainly seem to bear out this view, then the Jews were compelled in self-defense to prevent the queen from acquiring any ascendency, declare themselves for the Padilla party, and support it with all the means in their power. Dissension and civil war grew out of this unhappy relation of the king to his scarcely recognized consort. Albuquerque, who was first opposed to the queen, and then permitted himself to be won over to her side, fell into disgrace, and Samuel Abulafia succeeded him as the most trusted of the king's counselors. Whenever the court moved, Samuel, with other eminent grandees, was in attendance on the king.

One day Don Pedro's enemies, at their head his bastard brothers, succeeded in decoying him, with a few of his followers, into the fortress of Toro. His companions, among whom was Samuel Abulafia, were thrown into prison, and the king himself was placed under restraint (1354). Whilst a few of the loyal grandees and even the Grand Master of Calatrava were executed by the conspirators, the favorite Samuel was, strange to say, spared. Later on he succeeded in escaping with the king. Having shared his royal master's misfortune, he rose still higher in his favor, and the esteem in which he was held by the king was largely increased by his successful administration of the finances, which he had managed so as to accumulate a large reserve, of which few of Don Pedro's predecessors had been able to boast. The treacherous seizure of the king at Toro formed a turning point in his reign. Out of it grew a fierce civil war in Castile, which Don Pedro carried on with great cruelty. In this, however, the Jewish courtiers had no hand; even the enemies of the Jews do not charge the Jewish minister with any responsibility for Don Pedro's excesses. The bastard brothers and their adherents endeavored to seize the chief town, Toledo. Here Don Pedro had numerous partisans, amongst them the whole of the Jewish community, and they contested the entrance of the brothers. One of the gates was, however, secretly opened to them by their friends, and they immediately attacked the quarters in which the Jews lived in large numbers. In Alcana street they put to the sword nearly 12,000 people, men and women, old and young. But in the inner town they failed to make any impression, the Jews having barricaded the gates and manned the walls, together with several noblemen belonging to the king's party (May, 1355). A few days later Don Pedro entered Toledo. By his adherents in the city he was received with enthusiasm, but he dealt out severe retribution to all who had assisted his brothers.

Samuel Abulafia, by the wisdom of his counsels, his able financial administration, and his zeal for the cause of Maria de Padilla, continued to rise in the favor of the king. His power was greater

than that of the grandees of the realm. His wealth was princely, and eighty black slaves served in his palace. He seems to have lacked the generosity which would have suggested employing some portion of his power and prosperity for the permanent benefit of his race and religion. He certainly "sought to promote the welfare of his people," as an inscription tells us; but he failed to understand in what this welfare consisted. Against injustice and animosity he protected his brethren, promoted a few to state employment, and gave them opportunities for enriching themselves, but he was far from being what Chasdaï Ibn-Shaprut and Samuel Ibn-Nagrela had been to their co-religionists. Samuel Abulafia appears to have had little sympathy with intellectual aspirations, or with the promotion of Jewish science and poetic literature. He built synagogues for several of the Castilian communities, and one of especial magnificence at Toledo, but not a single establishment for the promotion of Talmudic study.

The Abulafia synagogue at Toledo which, transformed into a church, is still one of the ornaments of the town, was, like most of the Spanish churches of that period, built partly in the Gothic, partly in the Moorish style. It consisted of several naves separated from each other by columns and arches. The upper part of the walls is decorated with delicately cut arabesques, within which, in white characters on a green ground, the eightieth Psalm may be read in Hebrew. On the north and south sides are inscriptions in bas-relief, reciting the merits of Prince Samuel Levi ben Meïr. The community offers up its thanks to God, "who has not withdrawn His favor from His people, and raised up men to rescue them from the hands of their enemies. Even though there be no longer a king in Israel, God has permitted one of His people to find favor in the eyes of the king, Don Pedro, who has raised him above the mighty, appointed him a councilor of his realm, and invested him with almost royal dignities." The name of Don Pedro appears in large and prominent letters, suggesting that this prince, in intimate relations with the Jews, belonged, one may say, to the synagogue. In conclusion, the wish is expressed that Samuel may survive the rebuilding of the Temple, and officiate there with his sons as chiefs of the people.

This large and splendid synagogue was completed in the year 1357. For the following year the beginning of the Messianic period had been predicted, a century before, by the astronomer Abraham ben Chiya and the rabbi and Kabbalist Nachmani, and, a few decades before, by the philosopher Leon de Bagnols. As this prophecy was not literally fulfilled, many Jews began to regard the eminence attained by Samuel and other leading Jews as a suggestion of the scepter of Judah. It was a dangerous aberration, whose pitfalls were fully appreciated by Nissim Gerundi ben Reuben (about 1340–1380), rabbi of Barcelona, the most important rabbinical authority of his day. Justly fearing that the belief in the coming of a Messiah would suffer discredit by the non-fulfillment of such prophecies, he preached against the calculation of the end of the world from expressions in the book of Daniel.

Don Samuel exercised too decided an influence over the king to avoid making enemies. Even had he been a Christian, the court party would have devised schemes to bring about his fall. Attempts were made to stir up the Castilian population against the Jews, particularly against the Jewish minister, not only by Don Pedro's bastard brother, Don Henry, and Queen Blanche, but by all formerly in the king's service. Don Pedro Lopez de Ayala, poet, chronicler, and the king's standard-bearer, has given us, in one of his poems, a picture of the feelings of the courtiers for favored Jews: "They suck the blood of the afflicted people; they lap up their possessions with their tax-farming. Don Abraham and Don Samuel, with lips as sweet as honey, obtain from the king whatever they ask." Samuel's fall was desired by many. It is even said that some Toledo Jews, envious of his good fortune, charged him with having accumulated his enormous wealth at his royal master's expense. Don Pedro confiscated Samuel's entire fortune and that of his relatives, 170,900 doubloons, 4,000 silver marks, 125 chests of cloth of gold and silver and 80 slaves from the minister, and 60,000 doubloons from his relatives. According to some writers, an extraordinary quantity of gold and silver was found buried under Samuel's house. Don Pedro ordered his former favorite to be imprisoned at Toledo and placed upon the rack at Seville, in order to force him to disclose further treasures. He, however, remained firm, revealed nothing, and succumbed under the torture (October or November, 1360). His gravestone

recites in simple phrase how high his position had been, and how his soul, purified by torture, had risen to God. Concerning Don Pedro, the inscription has not a single condemnatory expression.

Samuel Abulafia's death did not change the friendly relations between the king and the Jews. They remained faithful to him, and he continued to confer important distinctions on members of their body. They consequently came in for a share of the hatred with which the enemies of the king regarded him. The king resolved to put to death his detested consort (1361). Whatever the character of the queen, whether she was a saint or the reverse, whether or not she had deserved her fate, the method of her death must ever remain a stain on Don Pedro's memory. In spite of the animosity with which De Ayala regarded the Jews, there is no intimation in his chronicle that any of Don Pedro's Jewish favorites were concerned in this crime. It was reserved for a later period to invent fables identifying them with the king's guilt. A story was forged to the effect that a Jew had administered poison to the queen on the king's order, because she had insisted on the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. A French romance, in which an endeavor is made to varnish the deeds and misdeeds of the French adventurers who fought against Don Pedro and the Jews, attributes the queen's death to a Jewish hand.

Don Pedro announced publicly, before the assembled cortes at Seville, that his marriage with Blanche of Bourbon had been illegal, inasmuch as he had been previously married to Maria de Padilla. He called witnesses, among them a few of the clergy, and these confirmed his statement on oath. Through the murder of Blanche, and its consequences, an opportunity offered itself to Don Henry de Trastamara to obtain allies for the dethronement of the king, and of this he was not slow to avail himself. The Bourbons in France and the king promised him aid, and allowed him to enlist the wild lances of the so-called great or white company, who, at the conclusion of the war with England, were rendering France insecure. The pope, displeased at the favors shown by Don Pedro to the Jews, also supported Don Henry, and placed the king of Spain under the ban.

To invest his rebellion with a tinge of legality and win the feelings of the people, Don Henry blackened his brother's character, picturing him as an outcast who had forfeited the crown because he had allowed his states to be governed by Jews, and had himself become attached to them and their religion. Don Henry carried his calumnies so far as to state that not only his mistress, Maria de Padilla, was a Jewess, but that Don Pedro himself was of Jewish extraction.

With the mercenaries of the "white company," graceless banditti, Henry crossed the Pyrenees to make war on and, if possible, depose his brother. At the head of these French and English outlaws stood the foremost warrior of his time, the hero and knight-errant, Bertrand du Guesclin (Claquin), celebrated for his deeds of daring, his ugliness, and his eccentricity, who, like the Cid, has been glorified by legend. The Jews consistently cast in their fortunes with those of the Don Pedro party, and supported it with their money and their blood. They flocked to its standard in the field, and garrisoned the towns against the onslaughts of Don Henry and Du Guesclin. The wild mercenaries to whom they were opposed avenged themselves not only on the Jewish soldiers, but also on those who had not borne arms.

The approach of the enemy compelled Don Pedro to abandon Burgos, the capital of Old Castile, and at an assembly of the inhabitants it was prudently resolved not to contest Don Henry's entrance. On taking possession of the town, where he was first proclaimed king (March, 1360), Henry levied a fine of 50,000 doubloons on the Jewish community, and canceled all outstanding debts due from Christians to Jews. The Jews of Burgos, unable to pay this large contribution, were compelled to sell their goods and chattels, even the ornaments on the scrolls of the Law. Those who could not make up their share of the contribution were sold into slavery. The whole of Spain fell to the conqueror in consequence of Don Pedro's neglect to concentrate round himself that portion of the population on which he could rely, or to buy over the free lances of the "white company," as he had been advised. The gates of Toledo, the capital, were opened to the victor, although Don Pedro's party, to which the Jews belonged, strongly counseled defense. Upon the Toledo community Don Henry also levied a heavy fine for its fidelity to the legitimate king. Don Pedro's last refuge was Seville, which he also lost.

Once again fortune smiled on Don Pedro, after he was compelled to cross the Pyrenees as a fugitive, and leave the whole of his country in the hands of the enemy. The heroic Prince of Wales, called the Black Prince from the color of his armor, being in the south of France, undertook to come to the aid of the deposed monarch both for the sake of a legitimate cause, and in expectation of rich rewards in money and land. Henry de Trastamara was compelled to leave Spain (1367). The whole of the peninsula hailed the victor Don Pedro and his ally, the Black Prince, with enthusiasm, as it had previously rejoiced at the triumph of his brother and the wild Constable of France, Bertrand du Guesclin. Soon, however, the scene changed. The Black Prince left Don Pedro, and Don Henry returned with new levies from France. The northern towns of Spain again fell before his arms. The citizens of Burgos opened their gates to the conqueror, but the Jews remained true to the unfortunate Don Pedro. Assisted by a few loyal noblemen, they bravely defended the Jewry of Burgos, and were subdued only by the superior strength of the enemy. They obtained a favorable capitulation, providing for their undisputed continuance in the town, but they were forced to pay a war indemnity of one million maravedis.

This time the Christian population was desirous of profiting by the revolt against Don Pedro. The cortes of Burgos represented to Henry that the Jews, having been favorites and officials under the former king, were largely responsible for the civil war, and that he should sanction a law to exclude them in future from all state employment, including the post of physician to the king or queen, and also from the right of farming taxes. To this Don Henry replied that such a practice had not been countenanced by any former king of Castile. He would, however, not consult with the Jews at his court, nor permit them the exercise of functions which might prove detrimental to the country. From this it is evident that Henry had no particular aversion to the Jews. Possibly, he feared that by oppressing them he might drive them to acts of desperation.

Don Pedro still counted many adherents in the country. Most of the Jewish communities remained true to him, and Jews served in his army, and fought against the usurper for the king, who to the last treated them with special favor. Even when in despair he was obliged to call to his assistance the Mahometan king of Granada, he impressed upon that monarch the duty of protecting the Jews. Notwithstanding this, the Jews endured indescribable sufferings at the hands of both friend and foe. Don Pedro being entirely dependent on the auxiliaries of the Black Prince and on those of the Mahometan king, his wishes with respect to the Jews were not regarded. The community of Villadiego, celebrated for its benevolence and the promotion of learning, was utterly destroyed by the English. The same evil fortune befell Aguilar and other communities. The inhabitants of Valladolid, who paid allegiance to Don Henry, plundered the Jews, demolished their eight synagogues, despoiled them of their treasures, and tore up the sacred writings. A period of shocking degeneracy followed. Wherever Don Henry came, he laid the Jews under heavy contributions, precipitating them into poverty, and leaving them nothing but their lives. The Mahometan king, Don Pedro's ally, carried three hundred Jewish families as prisoners from Jaen to Granada. Still worse was the treatment of the violent Du Guesclin. A prey to French Jew-hatred, he could not look upon Jews as his equals in party strife and war, but only as slaves who had dared draw the sword against their masters. The misery was so great at this time that many Jews became converts to Christianity.

The community of Toledo suffered most severely. In emulation of Don Pedro's Christian adherents, they made the greatest sacrifices for the defense of the town, and endured a long and frightful siege. The famine during the investment was so great that the unfortunates consumed, not only the parchment of the Law, but even the flesh of their own children. Through hunger and war the greater portion of the Toledo community perished – according to some 8,000 persons, according to others more than 10,000. At last, at Montiel, Don Henry defeated his brother, who had been abandoned by all his partisans (14th March, 1369). Don Pedro's end was tragic. When the brothers met, Henry is said to have hurled these insulting words in his face: "Where is the Jew, the son of a harlot, who calls himself king of Castile?" They then closed in a struggle. Don Pedro was overcome,

and beheaded by his brother's general, Du Guesclin. Pope Urban V could not contain his delight on hearing the news of Don Pedro's death. "The church must rejoice," he wrote, "at the death of such a tyrant, a rebel against the church, and a favorer of the Jews and Saracens. The righteous exult in retribution." The humiliation and abasement of the Spanish Jews, which the papacy had so long failed to accomplish, was obtained unexpectedly by the civil war in Castile. At Montiel they suffered a defeat pregnant with consequences fatal to their future.

Had a traveler, like Benjamin of Tudela, journeyed through Europe in the latter half of the fourteenth century, with the object of visiting, enumerating, and describing the various Jewish communities, he would have had a dismal picture to give us. From the Pillars of Hercules and the Atlantic Ocean to the banks of the Oder or the Vistula, he would have found in many districts no Jews at all, and elsewhere only very small, poverty-stricken, wretched communities, still bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the plague-maddened populace. According to human calculation, the destruction of the Jews in western and central Europe was imminent. Those who had survived the pitiless massacre, or been spared a desperate suicide, had lost courage. Communal ties were for the most part rent asunder. The recollection of the scenes of horror through which they had passed long agitated the small number of surviving Jews, and left them no hope of better times. Lord Byron's elegiac lines —

"The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country – Israel but the grave,"

are applicable to the whole of the mediæval history of the Jews, but to no period more than to this. Western and central Europe had become for the descendants of the patriarchs and the prophets one vast grave, which insatiably demanded new victims.

It is remarkable that the Jews had become indispensable to the Christian population, in spite of the venomous hatred with which the latter regarded them. Not only princes, but cities, and even the clergy, had a mania for "possessing Jews." A few years after the terrible frenzy which followed the Black Death, German citizens and their magistrates hastened to re-admit the Jews; they soon forgot their vow, that for a hundred or two hundred years no Jew should dwell within their walls. The bishop of Augsburg applied to Emperor Charles IV for the privilege "to receive and harbor Jews." The electors, ecclesiastical as well as secular, were bent upon curtailing the exclusive right of the German emperor to possess serfs of the chamber (servi cameræ), and upon acquiring the same right for themselves. Gerlach, archbishop of Mayence, especially exerted himself to wrest this privilege from Emperor Charles IV, his success being to no small extent due to the desire of the emperor to retain his popularity amongst the electors. At an imperial Diet held at Nuremberg in November, 1355, where a kind of German constitution, known as the "Golden Bull," was promulgated, the emperor conferred on the electors, in addition to the right of discovery of metal and salt mines, the privilege to hold Jews; that is to say, he yielded to them this source of revenue in addition to such sources as deposits of metal and salt. But it was only to the electors that the emperor conceded this right; he retained his rights over the "servi cameræ" living under the rule of the minor princes and in cities. The archiepiscopal elector of Mayence lost no time in utilizing the new privilege, and immediately employed a Jew to obtain others for him. Thus the Jews were at once repelled and attracted, shunned and courted, outlawed and flattered. They were well aware that it was not for their own sake that they were tolerated, but solely on account of the advantages they afforded the authorities and the population. How, then, could they be expected not to devote themselves to money-making, the sole means by which they were enabled to drag out a miserable existence?

In France, as in Germany, financial considerations induced the rulers to consent to the re-admission of the Jews. The embarrassments resulting from frequent wars with England, particularly felt after the captivity of King John (September, 1356), threatened to reduce this chivalrous land to

the condition of a province of the English crown. Money especially was wanting. Even to ransom the imprisoned king the assembled States-General did not vote supplies, or they burdened their grant with heavy conditions. The third estate rose in rebellion, and encouraged the peasants to throw off the yoke of the nobles. Anarchy reigned throughout the country. At this juncture the Jews, with their financial skill, appeared to the dauphin Charles, who acted as regent during the captivity of the king, as providential deliverers of the state. A clever Jew, Manessier (Manecier) de Vesoul, actively negotiated the return of the Jews to France, whence they had been so frequently banished. The dauphin-regent had granted permission to a few Jews to return, but if the impoverished state or court was to reap any real benefit from such return, it was necessary that it should take place on a large scale. Hence, the plan which Manessier submitted to the prince was approved in every detail, and the return of the Jews for twenty years was authorized under the most favorable conditions. Neither the Jews nor their representative, Manessier, cared to take advantage of so important an offer without the consent of the imprisoned king. The plan was accordingly submitted to him for confirmation. At the instance of Manessier de Vesoul, the Jews at the same time laid before the king a memorial setting forth that they had been unjustly expelled from France, and that they could not forget the land of their birth. The imprisoned monarch then issued a decree (March, 1360), by which, with the consent of the higher and lower clergy, the higher and lower nobility, and the third estate, permission was granted to all Jews to enter France and reside there for twenty years. They were allowed to take up their abode in any part of the country, in large and small towns, villages and hamlets, and to possess, not only houses, but also lands.

The head of every Jewish family was, however, compelled, on entering the country, to pay a sum of fourteen florins (florins de Florence) for himself, and one florin for each child or other member of his family; besides this, he became liable to an annual Jew tax of seven florins, and one for each individual of his household. On the other hand, the emigrants were to enjoy extensive privileges. They were not amenable to the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts or officials, but had a special justiciary in the person of Count d'Etampes, a prince of the blood royal, who acted as their protector (gardien, conservateur), and whose duty it was to appoint investigating judges and commissioners, and to safeguard the interests of the community when endangered. Cases of misdemeanor and crime amongst themselves were to be tried by two rabbis and four assessors. From the decisions of this tribunal there was no appeal. The property of the convicted Jewish criminal, however, became forfeited to the king, to whom, in addition, the rabbis had to pay the sum of one hundred florins. For past misdemeanors and crimes the king granted them a complete amnesty. They were protected against the violence of the nobles and the petty annoyances of the clergy. They could not be forced to attend Christian services or discourses. Their furniture, cattle, and stores of grain and wine, as well as their sacred books, not merely the Bible, but copies of the Talmud also, were to be guaranteed against confiscation, so that the public burning of the Talmud at Paris could not be repeated. The amplest protection was given their trade. They were allowed to charge 80 per cent interest (4 deniers on the livre) on loans, and to take pledges, their rights upon which were safeguarded by a fence of laws. Manessier de Vesoul himself, the active and zealous negotiator of these privileges, was appointed to a high position at court. He became receiver general (procureur or receveur-general), and in this capacity was responsible for the punctual payment of the Jew taxes, his commission being nearly 14 per cent. The result of the granting of these privileges was that the Jews entered France in large numbers, even foreigners being permitted to settle there, or take up a more or less protracted residence.

The extensive privileges granted to the Jews excited envy. The Christian physicians, exposed to the competition of Jewish doctors, complained that the latter had not passed a public examination, and denounced them as charlatans. The judges and officials, without power over the Jews and having no opportunity for extorting money from them, complained that they abused their privileges. The clergy, indignant at the favored position of the Jews, but having no real grievance, complained that

they no longer wore the prescribed badge. The feeble king allowed an order to be extorted from him, to some extent in contradiction of his own decree, by which only such Jews were to be permitted to practice medicine as had passed an examination, and all Jews, not excepting those even who enjoyed especial privileges (Manessier and his family), were to wear a red and white wheel-shaped badge (rouelle) of the size of the royal seal. Finally the Jews were re-committed to the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts, and the earlier arrangements annulled.

As soon as the politic dauphin ascended the throne, under the title of Charles V, and adopted a strict system of government, to deliver himself from dependence on the States-General (May, 1364), he proceeded to assure himself of the sources of revenue possessed by the Jews. He restored the privileges partly abolished by his father, lengthened the period of residence by six years, and secretly granted permission to Hebrew money dealers to exceed the charge of 80 per cent on loans. At the instance of Manessier de Vesoul, always zealous in the interests of his co-religionists, the Jews were again withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals, and committed to the care of their official protector, Count d'Etampes. The clergy, whose hatred of the Jews bordered on inhumanity, were rendered powerless. In the south of France, the heads of the church had threatened with excommunication any Christians who should trade with Jews, or provide them with fire, water, bread, or wine, and by this means, had so stirred up the fanaticism of the people, that the lives and property of the Jews were imperiled. To counteract this, the governor of Languedoc issued, in the name of the king, an ordinance informing the officials, both lay and ecclesiastical, that all who exhibited hostility toward the Jews would be unsparingly punished in person and substance.

During the reign of Charles V (1364–1380), then, the condition of the Jews was at least endurable. Manessier remained receiver general of the Jew taxes for the north of France (Langue d'Oyl), and the same functions were discharged by Denis Quinon in Languedoc. On the complaint of the latter that a few Jewish converts, in conjunction with the Christian clergy, had forced their former brethren to attend the churches to hear sermons, the king issued a rescript (March, 1368) severely prohibiting all such unseemly compulsion. Subsequently, Charles prolonged the period for remaining in the country by ten years, and later on by six more. All this was brought about by the indefatigable Manessier (1374). His zeal in the Jewish cause and the advantages the king derived from his exertions were rewarded by the exemption of himself and his family from every kind of tax, contribution and service to the crown (1375).

Although the German and French Jews appeared to revive after their dreadful sufferings, it was only a material revival; their spirit remained dead. Their intellectual powers had disappeared. In France, where, during more than two centuries, from Rashi to the last of the Tossafists, the study of the Talmud had been carried to its most flourishing point, and where remarkable acuteness and intellectual depth had been developed, the new emigrants exhibited so astonishing an ignorance that they were obliged to commence their studies anew. The indulgences of the kings, John and Charles, certainly spoke of rabbis who should be invested with authority to try Jewish criminals; but there was not a single profound Talmudist among them; indeed, according to the avowal of contemporary writers, not more than five of even mediocre attainments. The only devotee of Talmudical study, Matathiah ben Joseph Provenci, has left nothing in writing to testify to his ability. Held in such esteem by Charles V that he and his family were exempted from wearing the distinctive badges prescribed by law, and apparently related to the receiver general, Manessier de Vesoul, Matathiah was in the best position to deal with the prevailing ignorance. He re-established a college at Paris, assembled pupils, expounded the Talmud to them, ordained them to rabbinical offices, and caused copies of the Talmud to be written. In consequence of his energy and his comparatively great learning, he was chosen by the newly established French communities to the office of chief rabbi and chief justice in civil and penal cases, his appointment being confirmed by the king. His school had to supply the communities with rabbis, but his pupils enriched rabbinical literature by their contributions as little as he himself. Even Provence, once so fruitful of Jewish literature, had become intellectually impoverished.

In Germany, where the rabbis had once been so proud of their traditional knowledge, the Black Death, with its attendant persecutions and banishments, had so thinned the ranks of the Jews that extraordinary intellectual decay had set in. The illiterate and the superficial, in the absence of better men, were inducted into rabbinical offices. This mischievous practice was vigorously opposed by Meïr ben Baruch Halevi, a rabbi, who, in his time, passed for a great authority in Germany (1370–1390). Rabbi at Vienna, as his father had been before him, Meïr Halevi (Segal) ordered that no Talmudical student should exercise rabbinical functions unless authorized by a rabbi of standing. Until then it had been the practice for anyone who felt able and willing to assume the rabbinical office without further ceremony, or, if he perchance settled in the neighborhood of his teacher, to obtain permission from him. As from the time of Gershom of Mayence there had always been great Talmudists in Germany, public opinion counteracted the abuse of this liberty; for had an unqualified person arrogated to himself the exercise of rabbinical functions, he would have incurred general derision and contempt. After the Black Death, however, this deterrent lost much of its force through the scarcity of Talmudists. The order of Meïr of Vienna, that every rabbi should be ordained, that he should earn the title (Morenu), and that, without such preparation, he should be precluded from dealing with matrimonial matters, marriages and divorces, was dictated by the exigencies of the times, not the presumptuousness of its author. The insignificance of even the most respected of the German rabbis of this period is apparent from the fact that not one of them has left any important Talmudical work; that, on the contrary, they all pursued a course productive of mental stagnation. Meïr Halevi, his colleague Abraham Klausner, and Shalom, of Austria, rabbi at Neustadt, near Vienna, devoted themselves exclusively to writing down and perpetuating the customs of the communities (Minhagim), to which, formerly, but very little attention had been given. They and their disciples, Isaac Tyrnau of Hungary, and Jacob Mölin (Maharil) have left behind them nothing but such insipid compilations. If the Austrian school, which at this time preponderated, was so wanting in intellectuality, how much more the Rhenish, from which only names have come down to us.

Through the disasters that resulted from the Black Death, the memories of old times had become so obliterated that the Rhenish rabbis found themselves compelled, in consequence of differences of opinion on points of marriage law, to convene a synod, exclusively for the purpose of restoring old regulations. At the meeting at Mayence (15th Ab–5th August, 1381) a few of the rabbis, together with some of the communal leaders, renewed the old decisions of Speyer, Worms and Mayence (Tekanoth Shum); as, for instance, that the childless widow should be released, without extortion or delay, from the obligation of marrying her brother-in-law, and should receive a definite portion of the property left by her husband. Among the rabbis who took part in this synod there is not one name of note.

CHAPTER V.
THE AGE OF CHASDAÏ CRESCAS AND ISAAC BEN SHESHET

The Jews of Spain after the Civil War – Joseph Pichon and Samuel Abrabanel – The Apostates: John of Valladolid – Menachem ben Zerach, Chasdaï Crescas, and Isaac ben Sheshet – Chayim Gallipapa and his Innovations – Prevôt Aubriot and the Jews of Paris – The French Rabbinate – Revival of Jewish Influence in Spain – The Jews of Portugal – The Jewish Statesmen, David and Judah Negro – Rabbis and Clergy – Persecutions in Germany and Spain – The First Germs of the Inquisition – Second Expulsion of the Jews from France – The Convert, Pessach-Peter – Lipmann of Mühlhausen.

1369–138 °C.E

The heart of the Jewish race had become not less crippled and sickly than its members. In Spain disintegrating forces were at work on the firm nucleus of Judaism, which had so long defied the corroding influences of ecclesiastical and civil animosity. The prince, whom the Jews at the dictates of their loyalty had so sturdily resisted, against whom they had even taken up arms; the bastard, Don Henry de Trastamara; the rebel who had brought civil war upon his native land, and flooded it with a marauding soldiery; the fratricide, who had burst the bonds alike of nature and law, had, after the victory of Montiel, seized the scepter with his blood-stained hands, and placed the stolen crown of Castile on his guilty head. Of the large Jewish population, a considerable proportion had, during the protracted and embittered civil war, met death on the field of battle, in the beleaguered towns, and, armed and unarmed alike, at the swords of the mercenaries of the "white company."

The Jewish community of Toledo, the Castilian capital – the "Crown of Israel" of the Middle Ages, and, in a measure, the Jerusalem of the Occident – did not number, after the raising of the siege, as many hundreds of Jews as previously thousands. The remainder of the Jews of Castile had been reduced to beggary by the depredations and confiscations of friend and foe. Not a few, in their despair, had thrown themselves into the arms of Christianity. A striking picture of the unhappy condition of the Castilian communities at this period is furnished by a contemporary writer, Samuel Çarça: "In truth, plunderers followed on plunderers, money vanished from the purse, souls from the bodies; all the precursory sufferings of the Messianic period arrived – but the Redeemer came not!"

After Don Henry's victory, the Jews had good reason to tremble. One pretext for making war on his brother was the favor shown by Don Pedro to Jews. Now he had become the arbiter of their destinies. Would he not, like another Vespasian or Hadrian, place his foot on the necks of the vanquished? The gloomiest of their anticipations, however, were not realized. Don Henry II was as little able to dispense with the Jews as his predecessors, or the French and German princes. Jews were the only financiers able to keep the state exchequer in prosperity and order, and for this purpose Don Henry stood in need of them more than ever. During the war he had incurred debts for the payment of the troops with which Du Guesclin had assisted him, and for help received in other quarters he had made promises which had to be redeemed. The country had become impoverished by the protracted war. Who was to procure the necessary sums, and provide for the systematic collection of the taxes, if not the Jews? Henry was not blind to the merits of the Jews exemplified in their constancy to his brother. Instead of punishing the conquered, he appreciated their fidelity, saying: "Such subjects

a king must love and reward, because they maintained proper loyalty to their conquered king unto death, and did not surrender to the victor."

Don Henry, then, was guilty of the conduct which, in the case of his brother, he branded as a crime in the eyes of all Christendom; he employed able Jews in the service of the state, confiding to them the finances in particular. Two Jews from Seville, Don Joseph Pichon and Don Samuel Abrabanel, he appointed to important posts, the former as receiver general of taxes, and Almoxarif to the king, by whom he was held in high esteem. Other Jews, distinguished for their ability or their wealth, had access to Don Henry's court.

If the king bore the Jews no grudge for the part they had taken in the war against him, the general population was not so magnanimous. The nobility and the commonalty could not forgive their having confronted them as foes in the besieged towns and on the open battle-fields. A passion for vengeance, linked with the usual Jew-hatred, blinded them to the benefits which the Jews contributed to the welfare of the state, and their only thought was how to gratify their resentment. The Jews, being the vanquished, ought, as they thought, to be reduced to a kind of serfdom. The hostile feeling of the populace manifested itself on the assembling of the first cortes at Toro (1371). Here the enemies of the Jews opened the attack. The cortes expressed to the king their displeasure that this "evil, audacious race," these enemies of God and Christendom, were employed in "high offices" at court and by the grandees of the realm, and that the farming of the taxes was confided to them, by which means feeble Christians were held in subjection and fear. The cortes accordingly made explicit demands upon the crown with respect to the Jews. From that time forward they were not to be eligible for any kind of state employment; they were to live in Jewish quarters separated from the Christian population, be forced to wear Jew-badges, be prohibited from appearing in public in rich apparel, from riding on mules, and from bearing Christian names. To Don Henry these demands were very unwelcome, but he dared not refuse some concessions. The majority he dismissed with the remark that in his treatment of Jews he only followed the example of his ancestors, especially that of his father, Alfonso XI. The two restrictions conceded were, if not of material significance, yet calculated to have a sinister effect. These were that the Castilian Jews should don the degrading badges, and give up their Spanish names. The pride of the Jews, equal to that of the grandees and the hidalgos, was deeply wounded. A century and a half had elapsed since the canonical law concerning the Jew-badge, the outcome of papal intolerance and arrogance, had been promulgated. During the whole of that period the Jews of Castile had been able to prevent its application to themselves, but now they also were to be compelled to wear the stigma on their garments. They who had been accustomed to hold their heads high, and rejoice in sounding titles, were, like the German Jews, to slink along with downcast eyes, and be called by their Oriental names. They could not accustom themselves to this humiliating situation.

In consequence of an outcry made by some of his subjects, who had been ruined by loans from Jewish creditors, and complained of usurious interest, Don Henry made encroachments upon their private rights. He decided that if the Christian debtors discharged their obligations within a short space of time, they need refund only two-thirds of the principal borrowed.

The misery resulting from the civil war and the new restrictions exercised a depressing effect on the Castilian Jews. Their most prominent men, those who had access to court, and possessed wealth and influence, especially Samuel Abrabanel, exerted themselves to remedy the gloomy state of affairs. They particularly endeavored to restore the abased, impoverished, and disorganized community of Toledo; but it was beyond their power to revive the scholarly culture and intellectual distinction to which the Toledo community had been as much indebted for its leading position as to the prosperity of its members. The unhappy war, and the evils following in its trail, had stunted the Jewish mind, and diverted it from intellectual to material interests. Disorganization proceeded with great strides. Indifference to scientific work resulted in so general an ignorance, that what formerly every tyro was familiar with now passed for transcendent wisdom. We have an example of the mawkishness to which the new Hebrew poetry had fallen in the verses of the poetaster Zarak (Zerach) Barfat, who, in a

poetical paraphrase of the book of Job, completely marred the beauties of that work of art. Just at this period men of learning and ability were urgently required, for representatives of Christianity began to make earnest and energetic attacks on Judaism to obtain converts from amongst its adherents.

Don Henry had much to thank the clergy for; they had sanctified his usurpation, and acquiesced in his arrogated succession. From gratitude and a false conception of religiousness, he conceded much to them. At his command, Jews were again forced to take part in religious debates, in which there was much to lose and nothing to gain.

Two baptized Jews received from the king the privilege of holding religious discussions in every province and town of Castile, which they might compel Jews to attend.

One of these apostates was John of Valladolid. At Burgos the discussion took place before Archbishop Gomez of Toledo. At Avila the whole community was compelled to repair to the great church (1375), where the debate was carried on in the presence of many Christians and Mahometans. Moses Cohen de Tordesillas, who was as familiar with Christian as with Jewish theological authorities, appeared on behalf of the Jews. He entered upon his dangerous enterprise with trepidation, for he had had an opportunity to form an estimate of Christian charity. During the civil war, Christian marauders had robbed him of all his possessions, and had even personally ill-used him in order to force him to embrace Christianity. All these trials he had suffered with the courage of strong convictions, but he had become so poverty-stricken that he had to accept support from the community of Avila.

Moses de Tordesillas did not find his part in the discussion too difficult. The apostate John of Valladolid laid stress on the proposition that the dogmas of Christianity – the Messianic claim, the Divinity and Incarnation of Jesus, the Trinity, and the Virginity of the "Mother of God" – could be demonstrated from the Old Testament. It was consequently not difficult for his Jewish opponent to confute his arguments. After four debates John was obliged to abandon his task, vanquished. This, however, did not conclude the matter. A pupil of the apostate, Abner-Alfonso, appeared soon after, and challenged Moses de Tordesillas to a debate on the Talmud and Agadic texts. In case of refusal, he threatened publicly to impeach the Talmud as the source of anti-Christian sentiments. Moses was again forced to meet a series of silly assertions and charges, and to drag himself through the thorny length of another controversy. By the advice of the Avila community, he committed to writing the principal arguments used in these discussions under the title, "Ezer ha-Emuna," and sent them to his Toledan brethren for use under similar circumstances. Moses de Tordesillas' disputations, notwithstanding the difficulties of his position, were characterized by calmness and equanimity. Not a word of abuse or invective escaped him, and he counseled his Toledo brethren not to permit themselves to be tempted by their zeal to vexatious expressions, "for it is a fact," he said, "that the Christians possess the power and disposition to silence truth by force." Toledo, formerly recognized as the teacher of Jewry, was now obliged to play the part of pupil, and follow formularies in the disputations to which its members might be invited.

As if the more far-seeing Jews had anticipated the approach of the gloomiest era of Spanish Judaism, they provided their co-religionists for the coming struggle with casque and buckler, so that the inexorable foe might not surprise them unarmed. A Spanish Jew, contemporary with Moses de Tordesillas, compiled a polemical work, more exhaustive than its predecessor, defending Judaism and attacking Christianity. Shem-Tob ben Isaac Shaprut of Tudela had at an early age been forced into the position of a defender of his brethren against proselytizing attempts. Cardinal Don Pedro de Luna, who later on, as Pope Benedict XIII, brought so much confusion into the church and evil on the Jews, was possessed of a perfect mania for conversion and religious controversy. At Pampeluna he summoned Shem-Tob ben Shaprut to a debate on original sin and salvation, and the latter was compelled to sustain his part in the presence of bishops and learned prelates. The war between England and Castile, the scene of which was Navarre, obliged Shem-Tob ben Shaprut, with many other Jews, to quit the country (1378) and settle in the neighboring town of Tarazona, in Aragon. Observing here that Jews of the stamp of John de Valladolid were extremely zealous in

the promotion of religious discussions, the conversion of weaklings, and the maligning of Jewish literature, he published (1380) a comprehensive work ("Eben Bochan"), unmasking the speciousness of the arguments deduced by Christian controversialists from the Bible and the Talmud. The work is written in the form of a discussion between a believer in the unity of God and a Trinitarian. To enable the Jews to use weapons out of the Christian armory, Shem-Tob ben Shaprut translated into Hebrew extracts from the four Gospels, with incisive commentaries. Subsequently the anti-Jewish work of the apostate Abner-Alfonso fell into his hands, and he refuted it, argument by argument.

These polemical works did not prove of far-reaching importance; at any rate, their effect was not what their authors had expected. The Jews of Spain did not so much stand in need of writings as of men of force of character, commanding personality and dignity, able to raise, if not the masses, at least the half-educated classes, and imbue them with somewhat of their own spirit. The ban against scientific studies, pronounced by excessive fear and extreme religiousness, notably avenged itself. It dwarfed the intelligence of the people, and deprived them of that capacity for appreciating the signs of the times which only a liberal education can develop. Even faith suffered from this want of culture in the rising generation. Only one Jew of profound philosophic genius stands out prominently in the history of this period, and the influence he exerted over a rather small circle was due less to his superior intelligence than to his position and Talmudic knowledge. The majority of the Spanish rabbis, if not actually hostile, were indifferent to the sciences, especially to religious philosophy. Only laymen devoted themselves to such pursuits, and they were neither exhaustive in their inquiries nor creative in their speculations. It is characteristic of this period that Maimuni's philosophical "Guide of the Perplexed" was entirely neglected, the fashion being to read and discuss Ibn-Ezra. The fragmentary nature of the writings of this commentator, the ingenuity and acuteness, the disjointedness of thought, the variety of matter, which characterize his work, appealed to the shallowness of this retrograde generation. Shem-Tob ben Shaprut, Samuel Çarça, Joseph Tob-Elem, Ezra Gatiño, and others wrote super-commentaries on Ibn-Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch. The solution of riddles propounded by Ibn-Ezra, and the discovery of his secrets, and explanations of his obscurities, seriously exercised the minds of large circles of students.

The Talmud, with which the more thoughtful minds, prompted by a religious bias, continued to be engaged, fared no better than secular learning. Here, also, a state of stagnation, if nothing worse, had supervened. The rabbis of some large communities were not even able to discharge one of their chief duties, the explanation of the Talmud to their disciples. A French Talmudist, Solomon ben Abraham Zarfati, who had settled at Majorca, could venture to speak slightingly of the Spanish rabbis, not excepting the celebrated Nissim Gerundi, and compare them disparagingly with the French and German rabbis. A measure of the average intelligence of the rabbis of this period is yielded by the works of Menachem ben Zerach, chief rabbi of Toledo, even after its misfortunes a very important Jewish community.

Menachem ben Aaron ben Zerach (born 1310, died 1385) counted several martyrs in his family. His father, Aaron, was one of the unfortunates whom the cupidity and tyranny of a French king had banished. With the limited means spared by legalized robbery he had settled in Estella, a not inconsiderable Navarrese community. His father, mother, and four brothers perished in the massacre of Jews instigated by a Dominican friar. Young Menachem was severely wounded in this outbreak, and might have succumbed but for the assistance of a nobleman of his father's acquaintance. On his recovery he devoted himself daily to Talmudical study, and later on attended the celebrated school of the Asheride Judah of Toledo. After he had passed his fortieth year, Menachem ben Zerach became chief of an academy, the care of which was confided to him by the Alcala (de Henares) community. During the civil war in Castile he was wounded and plundered by the lawless soldiery, and of his entire fortune, only his house, field, and collection of books remained. Don Samuel Abrabanel assisted him in his distress, so that he was enabled to recover somewhat from his misfortunes. Through his interposition Menachem was called from Alcala to assume the rabbinate of

Toledo, where he opened an academy. As the disciple and successor of Jehuda Asheri, considerable Talmudical attainments were with justice expected of him. But he did not rise above the mediocrity of his times. To remedy the increasing ignorance of religious forms and duties, he wrote a compendium of theoretic and practical Judaism ("Zeda la-Derech," 1374), as comprehensible as it was short, for the use of prominent Jews, who, employed at court and by the grandees, had not sufficient leisure to search an extensive literature for instruction. His work is interspersed with scientific elements – psychological and religio-philosophical – but it is weak and commonplace, full of platitudes, and its several parts do not cohere. Even the Talmudical elements are neither profound nor original. The only redeeming feature is that it is conceived in a warm, sympathetic spirit, distinguishing it from the usually dry rabbinical disquisitions.

Only two men of this time are raised by their character and learning above the dead level of prevailing mediocrity: Chasdaï Crescas and Isaac ben Sheshet. They both lived in the kingdom of Aragon, where the Jews under Pedro IV and Juan I were neither so poor nor so oppressed as their brethren in Castile. Chasdaï Crescas and Isaac ben Sheshet were not sufficiently great to dominate their contemporaries, or prescribe their own views as rules of conduct; they were, however, the foci of large circles, and were frequently appealed to for final decisions on complicated and difficult questions. Both worked earnestly for the maintenance and furtherance of Judaism, for the preservation of peace in the communities at home and abroad, and for the consolation and re-animation of the broken in spirit, notwithstanding that their means were limited, and the times unpropitious.

Chasdaï ben Abraham Crescas (born 1340, died 1410), originally of Barcelona, and subsequently of Saragossa, where he ended his days, did not belong to the class of ordained rabbis, but he had been educated on Talmudical lines, and was an accomplished Talmudist. His wealth and his occupations seem to have indisposed him for this honorable position. Chasdaï Crescas was in close relation with the court of Juan I, of Aragon, was frequently consulted on important state questions, and also had much intercourse with the grandees of the kingdom. In the views of the various schools of philosophy he was well versed; the independence and depth of thought he evinced in dealing with them stamp him an original thinker. His ideas, of course, were largely based upon religious, or rather Jewish convictions, which, however, he presented in an original form. Chasdaï Crescas was the first to recognize the weak points of the prevailing Aristotelianism, and he attacked it with irresistible force. Of his youth nothing is known, and it is impossible to say under what influences those ripe powers of mind were developed which enabled him to question the authority not only of Maimonides and Gersonides, but of Aristotle himself. His ancestors were learned Talmudists, and his grandfather enjoyed a reputation equal to that of the famous Asheri family. In Talmudical studies he was a disciple of Nissim Gerundi, of Barcelona. Chasdaï Crescas was kind and gentle, a friend in need, and a faithful defender of the weak. During the unhappy days which broke upon the Jews of Spain in his lifetime, he devoted all his powers to the mitigation of the disasters which befell his brethren.

Similar in character, but fundamentally opposed to him in the disposition of his mind, was his friend and senior, Isaac ben Sheshet Barfat (Ribash, born 1310, died about 1409). A native of Barcelona, and having studied under Ben Adret's son and pupils, Isaac ben Sheshet may, in a measure, be considered a disciple of Ben Adret. He acquired his teacher's capacity for seizing the spirit of the Talmud and expounding it lucidly, and far surpassed him in hostility to secular studies. Ben Adret had permitted the circumstances of his times to extort from him the prohibition of such studies, as far as raw youths were concerned; Ben Sheshet, in his rigid orthodoxy, took the view that even mature men should hold aloof from them, although at that period there was but little fear of heresy. The physical sciences and philosophy, he held, should be completely avoided, as they were calculated to undermine the two essential supports of the Torah, the doctrines of the creation, and of a Providence; because they exalted reason over faith, and generated doubts of miracles. In Gersonides, and even Maimuni, Ben Sheshet found illustrations of the pernicious effects of philosophic speculation. He granted that

they were men of incomparable genius, but he insisted that they had been seduced by philosophy to adopt heterodox views, and explain certain miracles of the Bible rationalistically. Ben Sheshet was of high moral character; his disposition was kindly, and on several occasions he willingly sacrificed his personal interests to advance the common good and to promote peace. But when he suspected the violation of a Talmudical precept or the non-observance of even an unessential custom, his mildness was immediately transformed into most obdurate severity.

On account of his Talmudical learning, his clear, penetrating intellect, and his irreproachable character, he was much sought after. The important community of Saragossa elected him its rabbi. Immediately on taking office, Isaac ben Sheshet gave an illustration of the tenacity with which he clung to the letter of the Law, even when it conflicted with the spirit. He observed, with regret, that the practice obtained of reading the book of Esther on the feast of Purim in a Spanish translation, for the benefit of the women. This practice had been introduced into other Spanish communities, and was not only applauded by all men of common sense, but had even been authorized by a few rabbis, who considered it unobjectionable from a Talmudical point of view. Ben Sheshet raised a cry of alarm, as if Judaism had been threatened with ruin. He called to his assistance the authority of his teacher, Nissim Gerundi, and together they opposed the excellent custom with sophistical argument. They appear to have been successful in abolishing it.

Still more characteristic of Isaac ben Sheshet is his quarrel with Chayim ben Gallipapa, a rabbi, stricken in years, whose opinions differed from those of the rabbi of Saragossa. This man (born 1310, died 1380), rabbi of Huesca and Pampeluna, was a singular figure in the Middle Ages, whom it is difficult to classify. Whilst the rabbis of the time, particularly since the rise of the Asheride teaching, exceeded all bounds in the imposition of burdensome observances, and always, in cases of doubt, decided in favor of their most rigorous fulfillment, Gallipapa took the opposite view, and maintained that the aim of all Talmudical exegesis should be to disencumber life. The times, he considered, had improved, and neither the ignorance of the people nor the fear of defection was so great as to warrant such severity. This principle was no mere theory with Gallipapa, for he followed it practically. The freedom he suggested concerned matters of comparative insignificance, but at that time every trifle was regarded as important. On certain dogmas, also, Gallipapa held independent views. The Messianic belief which, since the time of Maimonides, had become an article of faith, to deny which was heresy, he boldly set aside. Gallipapa considered that the prophecies, in Isaiah and Daniel, of the great prosperity of Israel in the future, had been fulfilled in the days of the Maccabees, and wrote a work on the subject. Against this hardy innovator, a storm naturally arose. A neighboring rabbi, Chasdaï ben Solomon, of Tudela, a man of not over-fine sensibilities, denounced him to Isaac ben Sheshet, and the latter lectured the venerable Gallipapa, who had sent disciples into the world, as if he had been a mere schoolboy. He adjured Chayim Gallipapa to avoid scandal and give no opportunity for schism amongst his brethren. The modest attempt at reform went no further.

This severe tendency in matters of religion was the natural outcome of the prevailing spiritual needs; and it must be confessed that the more rigorous, the better it was adapted to them. Isaac ben Sheshet and his friend Chasdaï Crescas, who, although no enemy of secular learning, entertained the same view as his colleague, and defended his orthodoxy on philosophic grounds, were considered, after the death of Nissim Gerundi, the most eminent rabbinical authorities of their day, not in Spain only. From far and near, inquiries were addressed to them, principally to Isaac ben Sheshet, but also to Chasdaï Crescas. The proudest rabbis and the largest communities invoked their counsel, and were content to abide by their decisions. The court of Aragon also regarded them as the leaders of the Jewish communities, but this operated to their disadvantage. In consequence of the denunciation of some malevolent person, the ground of which is unknown, the king, Don Pedro IV, ordered Chasdaï Crescas, Isaac ben Sheshet, his brother, Crescas Barfat, the aged Nissim Gerundi of Barcelona, and two others, to be thrown into prison. After a long time, they were released on bail. We may believe Isaac ben Sheshet, when he assures us that he and his fellow-prisoners were all innocent of the offense

or crime laid to their charge. Their innocence must have come to light, for they afterwards remained unmolested.

The authority of Chasdaï Crescas and Isaac ben Sheshet was appealed to by the French communities to settle an important point in a dispute about the chief rabbinate of France. A change, largely the outcome of the political condition of the country, had come over the circumstances of these communities. Manessier de Vesoul, the zealous defender and protector of his co-religionists, was dead (about 1375–1378). Of his four sons – Solomon, Joseph, Abraham, and Haquinet – the eldest succeeded to his father's post of receiver general of the Jew taxes and political representative of the French Jews, and the second became a convert to Christianity. Solomon and his brothers enjoyed the same esteem at the royal court as their father. They were exempted from wearing the humiliating Jew badge, and they diligently cared for the interests of their brethren. Among Jews, however, they do not seem to have obtained the consideration that their father had enjoyed. On the death of the king, Charles V, their importance ceased altogether. The regent Louis, Duke of Anjou, confirmed, for a consideration, the privileges acquired by the French Jews (14th October, 1380), and prolonged their term of sufferance in the land by another five years. His protection, however, did not reach far, or rather it involved the Jews in his own unpopularity. The impoverished population of Paris, driven to despair by burdensome taxation, loudly and stormily demanded redress of the young king and the regent. Egged on by a nobility involved in debt, they included the Jews in their outcry, and demanded that the king should expel from the country "these shameful usurers who have ruined whole families." The people did not stop at words; at the instigation of the nobles, they attacked the houses of the Jews (November 16th, 1380), robbed the exchequer of the receiver general (of the Vesoul family), pillaged their dwelling-houses, destroyed the bonds of the debtors, appropriated the accumulated pledges, murdered a few Jews, and tore children from the arms of fleeing and weeping Jewish mothers to baptize them forthwith. A large number of Jews saved themselves by flight to the fort Châtelet. The regent was much irritated by this violent outbreak, but was unable to punish the offenders at once on account of the excited state of the people. He ordered that the Jews be reinstated in their homes, and the plunder restored to them. Few complied with the order. The prevôt of Paris, Hugues Aubriot – a man of considerable energy, who had beautified and enlarged the French capital – also interested himself in the Jews. In particular, he brought about the restitution of the stolen and baptized children. For this he was violently attacked by men whose learning should have taught them better. Aubriot, by his orderly administration, had made enemies of the university professors and students, who denounced as criminal his interference for the benefit of the Jews. He was accused before the bishop of Paris of having held intercourse with Jewish women, and even of being a secret adherent of Judaism. He was found guilty of heresy and infidelity, and made to pay with imprisonment for his humane conduct towards the Jews. Not only in Paris, but also in other towns where the people rose against heavy taxation, Jews fell victims to the popular excitement. Four months later, similar bloody scenes were enacted in Paris and the provinces when the rising of the Maillotins (so called from the mallets with which the insurgents were armed) took place. For three or four days in succession Jews were again plundered, ill-treated, and murdered (March 1st, 1381). The king, Charles VII, or rather the regent, attempted to protect the Jews and to obtain some indemnification of their losses. They were, however, unable to recover from the blow they had received. In these tumults the sons of Manessier de Vesoul appear either to have lost their lives, or, at any rate, their position of influence.

This change in the fortunes of the French Jews brought in its train a violent communal dispute, the excitement of which extended far and wide. The chief rabbi, Matathiah Provenci, had been gathered to his fathers. The communities had elected his eldest son, Jochanan, in his place, and the king had confirmed their choice. He had been in office five years, and was projecting the establishment of an academy, when a former pupil of his father, one Isaiah ben Abba-Mari, arrived in France from Savoy with the authorization of the German chief rabbi, Meïr ben Baruch Halevi, granting to him alone the right to maintain an academy and ordain pupils as rabbis. Whoever exercised

rabbinical functions without his authority and, especially, meddled with marriages and divorces, was threatened with excommunication. All unauthorized documents were declared null and void. By virtue of his authority, and in consequence of Jochanan's refusal to subordinate himself to him, Isaiah relieved him of his office (about 1380–1390). The Vesoul family being extinct or having lost prestige, Jochanan found himself without influential support. Many of the French Jews, however, were extremely wroth at this violent, imperious behavior of the immigrant rabbi. They condemned the presumptuousness of the German rabbi, Meïr Halevi, in treating France as though it were a German province, and protested against his dictating laws to the French communities, as it had always been the custom to regard each community, and certainly the Jews of each country, as independent. The result was a storm of indignation, which increased considerably when Isaiah proceeded to appoint his own relatives to the various rabbinates. It being impossible to settle the dispute by an appeal to the home-authorities, Jochanan turned with his grievance to the two foremost representatives of Spanish Judaism, Chasdaï Crescas and Isaac ben Sheshet. Both these "Catalonian grandees," as they were called, pronounced in favor of Jochanan. This decision, however, was not destined to bring about lasting peace, for the days of the Jews in France were numbered.

The storm on this occasion arose in Spain, and convulsed for a time the entire Jewish race. The golden age of the Spanish Jews had passed away; still they were more firmly established in the Peninsula than in any other country. It required a series of violent shocks, extending over an entire century, to completely uproot them, whilst in France they were swept away by a breath, like twigs planted in quicksand. For the sanguinary drama which commenced towards the end of the fourteenth century, and ended in the latter part of the fifteenth, the Spanish Jews were themselves largely to blame. It is true that the many had to suffer for the few, for when the enemies of the Jews complained of their obsequious attendance at court and on the grandees, of their wealth accumulated by usury, and their flaunting in silks and satins, blame was due only to a few of the most prominent, for whose follies and extravagances the masses were not responsible. Indeed, there were Jews who complained that their moral sense was deeply wounded by the selfishness and covetousness of their wealthy brethren. "For these troubles," says one, "the titled and wealthy Jews are greatly to be held responsible; their only consideration is for their position and money, whilst for their God they have no regard." In fact, the union that had previously been the chief source of strength among the Spanish Jews, was broken up. Jealousy and envy among the Jewish grandees had undermined fraternal feeling, which formerly had induced each to merge his interests in those of the community at large, and all to combine for the defense of each. Generosity and nobility of mind, once the brilliant qualities of the Spanish Jews, had now become almost extinct. A contemporary writer pictures their degeneracy in darkest hues, and if only one half of what he tells us is true, their decline must have been grave indeed.

"The majority of wealthy Jews," says Solomon Alami in his "Mirror of Morals," or "Letter of Warning," "who are admitted to royal courts, and to whom the keys of public exchequers are confided, pride themselves on their dignities and wealth, but give no thought to the poor. They build themselves palaces, drive about in splendid equipages, or ride on richly caparisoned mules, wear magnificent apparel, and deck their wives and daughters like princesses with gold, pearls, and precious stones. They are indifferent to their religion, disdain modesty, hate manual labor, and live in idleness. The wealthy love dancing and gaming, dress in the national costume, and go about with sleek beards. They fill themselves with dainties, whilst scholars starve on bread and water. Hence, the rabbis are despised, for all classes prefer to have their sons taught the lowest of handicrafts to bringing them up to the study of the Law. At sermon time, the great resign themselves to sweet slumber, or talk with one another, and the preacher is frequently disturbed by men and women at the back of the synagogue. On the other hand, how devout are the Christians in their houses of worship! In every town the noble live at variance with one another, and stir up discord on the most trivial questions. Still worse is the jealousy with which they regard each other; they slander one another before the king and the princes."

It is certainly true that at this period secret denunciations, once almost unknown among the Jews, were exceedingly rife, even rabbis being occasionally the victims. As the aged Nissim Gerundi, Isaac ben Sheshet, Chasdaï Crescas, and their friends were victimized by the conspiracy of some miserable calumniator, so an attempt was made to ruin the rabbi of Alkolea de Cinca, En-Zag Vidal de Tolosa, by representations to the queen of Aragon.

The rabbis, who, with one or two assessors, constituted courts of justice for criminal cases, dealt severely with such traitors, and even sentenced them to death. In the communities of Castile, Aragon, Valencia, and Catalonia, the privilege of passing death-sentences was of great antiquity. The Jewish courts required for the execution of such sentences special sanction from the king in a sealed letter (Albala, Chotham); but, if necessary, this could be obtained through the medium of Jewish courtiers, or by bribery. Such proceedings, however, only increased the evil they were designed to cure. The accused were made short work of without exhaustive inquiry, or sufficient testimony, and this naturally infuriated their relatives and friends. It did not unfrequently occur that utterances were construed as treasonable which had no such character. The ill-advised action of the Jewish court of Seville (or Burgos) on an unfounded charge of disloyalty to the community preferred against an eminent and beloved co-religionist was, if not the actual cause, at any rate the occasion of the first widespread and sanguinary persecution of the Jews in Spain, the final result being the total expulsion of the Jews from the Peninsula.

Joseph Pichon, of Seville, high in favor with the king of Castile, Don Henry II, whose receiver general of taxes he had been, was accused of embezzlement by some jealous Jewish courtiers. He was imprisoned by the king, condemned to pay a fine of 40,000 doubloons, and then set free. He afterwards retrieved his reputation, and became extraordinarily popular among the Christian population of Seville. To avenge his wrongs, or possibly with a view to his own vindication, he had entangled his enemies in a serious accusation, when Don Henry died. His son, Don Juan I, was crowned at Burgos, the capital of Old Castile (1379). During the coronation festivities, a Jewish court of justice (at Burgos or Seville) condemned Pichon as an enemy to the community and a traitor (Malshim, Malsin), without affording him an opportunity of being heard in defense. Some Jews, having access to the court, asked permission of the young king to execute a dangerous member of their own body without mentioning his name. Confidants of the king are said to have been bribed to obtain the royal signature to this decree. Provided with the king's warrant and the death sentence of the rabbinical college, Pichon's enemies repaired to the chief of police (Alguacil), Fernan Martin, and obtained his assistance at the execution. Early on the morning of the 21st August, two or three Jews, together with Martin, entered Pichon's house whilst he was yet asleep, and awoke him under the pretext that his mules were to be seized for debt. As soon as he appeared at the door of his dwelling, he was arrested by the Jews intrusted with the carrying out of the sentence, and, without a word, beheaded.

Whether Pichon had deserved death, even according to rabbinical law, or whether he fell a victim to the intrigues of his enemies, is not known. It is not difficult to understand that so cruel an act should have stirred up widespread indignation. The anger of the young king knew no bounds when he learnt that his coronation festivities had been stained with the murder of one who had rendered his father substantial services, and that his own sanction had been surreptitiously obtained. He immediately ordered the execution of the Jews who had carried out the sentence, and of a Jewish judge of Burgos. Even the chief of police, Fernan Martin, was ordered to be put to death for the assistance he had given; but at the intercession of some nobles, his life was spared, and his punishment commuted to the chopping off of one hand. This incident had other grave consequences. The king at once deprived the rabbis and Jewish courts of justice of jurisdiction in criminal cases, on the ground of their abuse of the privilege. At the first meeting of the cortes at Soria (1380), he made this restriction a permanent statute. By its terms the rabbis and communal leaders were thenceforth prohibited from decreeing punishments of death, dismemberment, or exile, and in criminal cases

were to choose Christian judges. One of the reasons assigned was that, according to the prophets, the Jews were to be deprived of all power and freedom after the advent of Jesus. The still exasperated king then arraigned the Jews on other charges. He accused them particularly of cursing Christians and the Christian church in their prayers, and with receiving Mahometans, Tartars, and other foreign persons into the pale of Judaism, and having them circumcised. These alleged practices were forbidden under heavy penalties. The feeling against the Jews was not limited to the king and the court circle. The entire population of Castile was roused by the apparently unjust execution of Joseph Pichon, and by the circumstance that his death was not the work of irresponsible individuals, but of the foremost leaders of the Jewish community. In Seville, where Pichon had been very popular, the fury against the Jews rose to such a height that, had the opportunity presented itself, summary vengeance would have been taken.

Accusations against the Jews and petitions for the restriction of their liberties became the order of the day at the meetings of the cortes, as formerly at the councils of the Visigothic kings. The infuriated Don Juan acquiesced in this agitation, in so far as it did not tend to the detriment of the royal finances. At the cortes of Valladolid (1385), he granted the petition for the legalization of the canonical restrictions, presented by the clergy, and accordingly prohibited the living together of Jews and Christians, and the suckling of Jewish infants by Christian nurses, under pain of public whipping. He also consented to the passing of a law excluding Jews (and Mahometans) from the post of treasurer to the king, queen, or any of the royal family.

Curiously, it was the quarrel over the chief rabbinate of Portugal that snatched the crown of that country, at the moment when it was within his grasp, from this monarch, who cannot be said to have been wholly hostile to the Jews. By a treaty with King Ferdinand of Portugal, it had been agreed that, male heirs to the crown failing, he, or rather his second wife, the Portuguese Infanta Beatrice (Brites), should have the first right to the succession. In Portugal the Jews had always been tolerated, and, up to the time of their expulsion from the country, suffered no persecution. During the reign of King Ferdinand (1367–1383), their position was exceptionally happy. Since the thirteenth century (1274), the government of the community had been more completely in its own hands than in any other European country. Some of their peculiar institutions dated even further back. At the head of the Portuguese Jews was a chief rabbi (Ar-Rabbi Mor), possessing almost princely privileges. On account of the importance of the office he was always appointed by the king, who conferred it as a reward for services rendered to the crown, or to add to the dignity of some particular favorite. The chief rabbi used a special signet, administered justice in all its branches, and issued decrees under his own sign-manual with the addendum: "By the grace of my lord, the king, Ar-Rabbi Mor of the communities of Portugal and Algarve." It was his duty to make an annual circuit of all the Portuguese communities, to investigate their affairs, invite individuals to lay before him their grievances, even against the rabbis, and remedy abuses wherever they existed. On these journeys he was accompanied by a Jewish judge (Ouvidor), a chancellor (Chanceller) with his staff, a secretary (Escrivão), and a sheriff (Porteiro jurado), to carry out the sentences of his court. The chief rabbi or Ar-Rabbi Mor, appointed in each of the seven provinces of the kingdom provincial rabbis (Ouvidores) subject to him. These rabbis were established in the seven principal provincial Jewish centers, Santarem, Vizeu, Cavilhão, Porto, Torre de Montcorvo, Evora and Faro. They governed the provincial communities, and were the judges of appeal for their several districts. The local rabbis were elected by the general body of contributing members of the community; but the confirmation of their election and their investiture proceeded from the chief rabbi, under a special deed issued in the name of the king. The judicial authority of the rabbis extended to criminal cases, and they retained this privilege much longer than their Spanish brethren. Public documents had to be written in the vernacular. The Jewish form of oath was very simple, even in litigation with Christians; it required nothing but the presence of a rabbi and the holding up of the Torah.

The king, Don Ferdinand, had two Jewish favorites, who supervised his monetary affairs: Don Judah, his chief treasurer (Tesoreiro Mor), and Don David Negro, of the highly-respected Ibn-Yachya family, his confidant and counselor (Almoxarif). When this frivolous and prodigal monarch died, and the regency was undertaken by the queen, Leonora – a princess whose beauty rendered her irresistible, but who was hated for her faithlessness and feared for her vindictiveness and craft – the municipal authorities of Lisbon approached her with an urgent prayer for the abolition of sundry unpopular measures of the late king. Among other things they asked that Jews and Moors should no longer be allowed to hold public offices. Leonora craftily replied that during the lifetime of the king she had exerted herself to procure the exclusion of Jews from public offices, but her representations had always been unheeded. Immediately after the king's death she had removed Judah and David Negro from the public service, and dismissed all the Jewish receivers of taxes. She nevertheless retained Judah in her immediate circle, anticipating that, on account of his wealth and experience, he might prove of use to her. Leonora's scheme to obtain absolute authority and share the government with her paramour was frustrated by the still craftier bastard Infante Don João, Grand Master of Avis. In the art of winning public favor and turning it to account, Don João was a master, and he soon brought things to such a pass that the queen regent was forced to leave the capital. Burning for revenge, Leonora invoked the aid of her son-in-law, King Don Juan of Castile, with the result that a sanguinary civil war was commenced. In opposition to the aristocratic faction, supporting the queen regent and the Castilians, there arose a popular party, which enthusiastically espoused the cause of Don João of Avis. Leonora was obliged to fly before the hatred of her people and take refuge in Santarem. Among her escort were the two Jewish grandees, Judah and David Negro, who had escaped from Lisbon in disguise. Hither came King Juan of Castile; and Leonora, in order to be enabled to take full vengeance on her enemies, renounced the regency in his favor, and placed at his disposal all her adherents, comprising the entire Portuguese nobility, together with a large number of fortresses. The idea of the Castilian king in undertaking this enterprise was to unite the crowns of Portugal and Castile; but for the realization of this project a thorough understanding between Leonora and her son-in-law and her ungrudging co-operation were indispensable. This important harmony was disturbed by a question as to the appointment of a chief rabbi, and owing to this dispute their agreement was transformed into bitter and disastrous enmity.

The rabbinate of Castile became vacant in 1384. Leonora, desiring to obtain the appointment for her favorite Judah, made application to the king on his behalf. At the instance of his wife Beatrice, he conferred the dignity upon David Negro. Leonora's anger at this rebuff was expressed with vehemence. She is reported to have said to her circle of adherents: "If the king refuses so trivial a favor, the first I have asked of him, to me, a woman, a queen, a mother, one who has done so much for him, what have I and what have you to expect? Even my enemy, the Grand Master of Avis, would not have treated me thus. You will do better to go over to him, your legitimate master." Leonora transferred to her son-in-law, King Juan, all the hatred with which she had formerly regarded the Grand Master of Avis. She organized a conspiracy to murder him, the details of which she confided to the former treasurer Judah. The plot was, however, discovered by the chief rabbi elect, David Negro, who saved the king's life. Don Juan immediately caused the queen dowager to be arrested and thrown into prison. Judah also was imprisoned, and ordered to be executed, but at the energetic intercession of his rival, David Negro, his life was spared. This quarrel with and imprisonment of his mother-in-law cost Don Juan all support in Portugal. Thenceforth he encountered resistance on every side, and was obliged to resort to forcible measures for the subjugation of the country. His plans, however, all failed, and in the end he found himself compelled to renounce his hope of a union of the two lands.

A few rabbis intrigued to obtain rabbinical office, and involved their several communities in much unseemly strife, as, for example, David Negro and Judah, Isaiah ben Abba-Mari and Jochanan in France, Solomon Zarfati and En-Vidal Ephraim Gerundi in the Island of Majorca, and Chasdaï ben Solomon and Amram Efrati in Valencia, but it must be acknowledged that such incidents were of rare

occurrence. To the majority, the rabbinate was as a holy priesthood, the duties of which they sought to discharge in all purity of heart and deed, with devotion and self-denial. They were generally examples to their communities, not only in learning and piety, but in high-mindedness, conscientiousness, and the purity of their morals. Even the less worthy cannot be charged with anything more serious than a desire for place, and a certain degree of irascibility. It would be a gross libel on their memory to compare them with the servants of the church during the same period. At no time in its history had Christianity more reason to be ashamed of its representatives than during the fourteenth and the succeeding century. Since the papacy had established itself at Avignon, it had become a perfect hot-bed of vice, the contagion of which spread over the clergy down to the lowliest friar. Besides, there arose passionate strife between pope and anti-pope, between one college of cardinals and another, dividing the whole of Christendom into two huge, bitterly hostile camps. It was only natural that the clergy should infect the lay world with their immeasurable dissoluteness and vice. Yet these degenerate, inhuman and degraded Christian communities presumed to treat the modest, virtuous, pious Jews as outcasts and accursed of God. Although superior in everything save wickedness and the virtues of a robber chivalry, they were denied the commonest rights of man. They were baited and slaughtered like beasts of the field. In Nördlingen the entire Jewish community, including women and children, was murdered (1384). All over Suabia they were persecuted, and in Augsburg they were imprisoned until a ransom of 20,000 florins was paid. A characteristic illustration is furnished by the following occurrence: The rabbis and communal leaders of central Germany had determined to hold a synod at Weissenfels, in Saxony, for the purpose of deliberating upon certain religious questions, and adopting resolutions of public utility (1386). They had provided themselves with safe-conduct passes from the Saxon princes, it being unsafe for Christians to travel on the public highroads, and, of course, much more so for Jews. Nevertheless, a party of German robber-nobles, anticipating rich booty, waylaid the travelers on their return journey, and, having plundered and ill-used them, threw them into prison, and liberated them only on the payment of a ransom of 5,000 groschen. The rabbis and their companions complained to the princes of this attack, and the latter, indignant at the disrespect with which their authority had been treated, summoned the noble marauders to answer the charges urged against them. The line of defense adopted by the spokesman of the accused was that they had no idea of disregarding the safe-conduct passes of the princes, but that they held the opinion that the Jews, the enemies of the church, did not deserve the protection of Christian authorities. The speaker continued that, for his own part, wherever he met the enemies of Christ, he would give them no quarter. A defense of this kind could not fail to obtain applause. Its spirit was that of the majority of the Christians of that day. The accused were absolved from blame, and the Jews dismissed without redress, "for the defense captivated the princes."

The art of poetry, which should beautify life, began to work like poison on the moral atmosphere of the Jews. For some centuries past romantic works had variously portrayed the character of a creditor, who, as equivalent for a debt, claimed a certain portion cut from the body of his creditor, either a liege lord from his vassal, or a nobleman from a burgher. At first this was harmless fiction, but afterwards it was turned against the Jews, as though only a Jewish Shylock could be capable of such hardness of heart as to insist on the payment of a pound of flesh from a Christian. Thus cannibal hatred of Christians was foisted on the Jews, and received credence. Romances took up the theme, and made it popular.

The depraved, dissolute clergy – a class of men who, in an age of public decency, would have been objects of universal contempt, or might have earned the corrections of a Bridewell – affected to feel insulted by contact with the Jews, and, under the pretext that their cloth was disgraced by them, caused new scenes of horror and cruelty. In Prague, since the time of Charles IV the chief city of Germany, a bloody persecution was set on foot by their agency. A local priest – perhaps one of those whom Emperor Wenceslaus had caused to be pilloried with their concubines – passed through the Jewish quarter on Easter Sunday (April 18th, 1389) with the host, to visit a dying person. Jewish

children playing in the street – it was one of the latter days of the Passover feast – were throwing sand at one another, and a few grains happened to fall upon the priest's robe. His attendants immediately turned upon the children, and cruelly beat them. Their cries quickly brought their parents to their rescue, whereupon the priest fled to the market-place, loudly proclaiming that his holy office had been profaned by Jews. To invest the incident with the necessary importance, he exaggerated it, and said that he was pelted with stones until forced to drop the host. The citizens and lower orders of Prague immediately banded themselves together, and, armed with murderous weapons of every description, made a violent attack upon the houses of the Jews. As usual, they offered their victims the choice between death and baptism, but they found them steadfast in their faith. Many thousands perished in the massacre, which lasted a whole day and night. Several of the Jews, among them their venerable rabbi, first took the lives of their wives and children, and then their own, to escape the cruelties of their enemies. The synagogue was laid in ashes, and the holy books and scrolls torn and trodden under foot. Not even the burial ground escaped the fury of these Christian zealots. The corpses in the streets were stripped of their clothing, left naked, and then burnt.

For the same offense – that is, for no offense at all – the communities in the vicinity of the Bohemian capital were "confined, oppressed, ill-treated and persecuted." The reigning pope issued a bull condemning the outrages (July 2d, 1389), and based his action upon the edict of Pope Innocent IV, which enacted that Jews should not be forcibly baptized, nor disturbed in the observance of their festivals; but he failed to produce an impression on the consciences of the faithful. It was in vain, too, that the Jews appealed to their liege lord, the German emperor Wenceslaus, in whose capital the persecution had originated. This prince – who, had he not been an emperor, would certainly have been a freebooter – was a man of sense only on the rare occasions when he was not intoxicated. His reply to the representations of his Jewish subjects was that they had deserved the attacks made upon them, as they had had no right to show themselves outside their houses on Easter Sunday. For the goods and chattels they had left behind them he exhibited more concern, promptly ordering them to be appropriated to his empty exchequer. This was the measure of his general attitude towards the Jews. During several years he attempted to possess himself of their monetary claims on his Christian subjects, and to carry out his design he convened (1385) a conference of representatives of the Suabian cities, which met at Ulm. Despite the impoverishment of the German communities, he exacted from every Jew, even from every Jewish youth and maiden, the so-called "golden penny" poll-tax, amounting to one gulden annually. He openly declared that the possessions of the Jews were his personal property, and forbade them to sell or mortgage anything. And still Emperor Wenceslaus was not the worst of rulers in the eyes of the Jews. The rabbi, Avigedor Kara, of Prague, boasted his friendship; and the Jews of Germany whispered significantly to one another that his allegiance to the teaching of Christ was very weak.

This storm of spoliation and persecution had no far-reaching consequences in the history of the German Jews. It could not affect their abject condition, for they had been too long accustomed to turn their cheeks submissively to the smiter. Quite different were the effects of a contemporary persecution in Spain. Here the very heart of the Jewish race was attacked, and the results made themselves felt in the history of the whole Jewish people. The Spanish Jews had until then been more hated than despised; the horrors of this persecution, however, so thoroughly cowed their spirits, so paralyzed their energies, and humbled their pride, that they, too, became the scorn of their oppressors. As in Prague, the outbreak was the work of an ecclesiastic and a mob, but here it assumed the vastest proportions, and developed permanent results, the operations of which were disastrous in the extreme. It arose in Seville through the agitation of a fanatical priest, Ferdinand (Ferrand) Martinez, who seemed to consider implacable hatred of the Jews as the essence of his religion. His discourses were devoted to stirring up the populace against them, and he thundered against their hardened infidelity, their pride, their heaped-up riches, their greed, and their usury. In Seville he found the people only too ready to listen to him, for there the Jews were hated with special intensity. The citizens could not forgive

them the important part they had played in the civil war between Don Pedro and Don Henry II, and particularly the suspicious circumstances of the death of Joseph Pichon, who had been so popular among them. As long as Don Juan I lived, Martinez took care to restrain the mob from open violence, for though the king regarded the Jews with but little affection, he was in the habit of punishing lawless outbreaks with the utmost severity. No sooner was he dead, however, than the bigoted cleric thought he might dare the utmost. The circumstances of the government were favorable to the development of his plans. The new monarch, Henry III, was a boy of only eleven years of age, and in the council of regency discord reigned, threatening to involve the country in another civil war.

One day (March 15, 1391) – a memorable day, not only for the Jews and for Spain, but for the history of the entire world, for on that day the first germ of the monstrous Inquisition was created – Martinez, preaching as usual against the Jews, deliberately incited the mob to riot in the expectation that many Jews would abjure their religion. The passions of the multitude became inflamed, and broke out in wild uproar. The authorities of the city, the Mayor (Alguacil mayor), Don Alvar Perez de Guzman, and two of the magistrates interposed to protect the Jews, arresting two of the ringleaders in the riot, and ordering them to be flogged. This proceeding excited the fanatical mob only the more. In their fury they put a large number of Jews to death, and threatened with a like fate the governor of the city, Don Juan Alfonso, and the officials who were attempting to shield the unfortunate Hebrews. A few of the leading Jews of Seville, perceiving that the local authorities were not strong enough to grapple with the rising, hurried to the court of the young king, and appealed to the council of regency to stop the slaughter of their brethren. Their representations were favorably received. Messengers were dispatched forthwith to Seville with instructions to tell the populace to abstain from further outrage. The local nobility seconded the action of the king, and, ranging themselves on the side of the Jews, succeeded in mastering the rioters. When the Christian inhabitants of the neighboring towns showed a disposition to imitate the scenes enacted in Seville, the council of regency also sent messengers thither armed with the same powers. Thus, for a brief moment, the threatened Jew-hunt was delayed, but by no means suppressed. It was soon renewed with greater violence, and on a far more extended scale. The young king and a few of the members of the council of regency were probably earnest in their desire not to permit the massacres, but, unfortunately, they were not sufficiently interested to take adequate precautions against them. One such precaution should have been to silence the outrage-monger, Ferdinand Martinez, or at least to prohibit his inflammatory harangues; but they did nothing of the kind. They left him perfectly free to level his poisonous eloquence at the Jews, and he was not slow to take advantage of their inaction. Encouraged by the dissensions in the government, and the disorder which consequently reigned throughout the entire land, he again set himself to stir up the rabble of Seville, and this time with greater success. Hardly three months after the last outbreak, the mob resumed (June 6th, 1391) its holy work of massacre by setting fire to the Jewish quarter (Juderia) and slaughtering its inhabitants. The result was that, of the important and wealthy community of Seville, which had numbered 7,000 families, or 30,000 souls, but few remained. Murder counted not more than 4,000 victims, but to escape death the majority permitted themselves to be baptized. Women and children were sold into Mahometan slavery by the bloody rioters. Of the three synagogues of Seville two were transformed into churches. Among the large number who sought refuge from fire and sword at the baptismal font was Samuel Abrabanel, the ancestor of the afterwards celebrated Abrabanel family, and an ornament of his community in the reign of Don Henry II, with whom he possessed great influence. He adopted the Christian name of Juan de Sevilla.

From Seville the persecution swept like a raging torrent over a large portion of Spain. Its progress was stimulated more by a craving for plunder than by fanatical eagerness to proselytize. Cordova, the parent community of the Peninsula, the mold in which the high character of Spanish Judaism had been cast, was the next scene of its activity. Here also many Jews were cruelly murdered, and a large number forced to embrace Christianity. On the fast day commemorating the fall of Jerusalem (Tammuz 17th–June 20th) the population of the capital, Toledo, rose against the largest

Jewish community in Spain. The blood of the believers in the unity of God, who steadfastly refused to change their faith, deluged the streets. Among the many martyrs who fell at Toledo were the descendants of the Asheri family. They met death with the same unflinching courage as their German brethren. Jehuda ben Asher II, one of Asheri's great-grandsons, who lived in Burgos, but happened to be at Toledo, took with his own hands the lives of his mother-in-law and wife, and then his own. Here also a large number went over to Christianity. About seventy communities were visited by this terrible persecution, among them those of Ecija, Huete, Logroño, Burgos, Carrion, and Ocaña. At Ascalona not a single Jew remained alive. The thoroughly maddened Christian population meditated a similar fate for the Moors, or Mahometans, living in the kingdom of Seville. The more prudent among them, however, pointed out the danger of such a step, reminding them that the Christians living in the Mahometan kingdom of Granada, or held as prisoners by the Moors on the other side of the straits of Gibraltar, might be sacrificed in retaliation. The massacre of the Moors was consequently abandoned. The Jews alone were made to drain the cup of bitterness to the dregs, because they were too weak to protect themselves. Nothing demonstrates more impressively that the clergy had succeeded in transforming the people into a race of cut-throats.

In the kingdom of Aragon, where both ruler and people were opposed to Castile, and, as a rule, held that to be wrong which in the latter state was considered right, the hatred and persecution of the Jews were promoted with the same zeal. Here the government was in the hands of the weak but well-meaning king, Juan I, who, absorbed by his love of music and the chase, wielded but little authority, and was the laughing-stock of his generally uncultured subjects. About three weeks after the outbreak at Toledo, the inhabitants of the province of Valencia rose against the Jews (Ab 7th–July 9th). Of the 5,000 souls that constituted the Jewish community in the city of Valencia, not one was left. Some 250 were murdered, a few saved themselves by flight, and the rest embraced Christianity. Throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom the defenseless Jews were attacked with fire and sword, the community of Murviedro alone being spared.

The sanguinary madness then crossed the sea, and alighted on the island of Majorca. In the capital, Palma, a crowd of roughs and sailors paraded the Monte-Zion street, in which the Jews resided, and holding aloft a cross, rudely formed by tying together two cudgels, shouted "Death to the Jews" (August 2d–Ellul 1st). One sturdy Jew, assaulted by the rabble, ventured to defend himself, and severely punished his assailants. Hereupon the mob broke out in uncontrollable violence, and 300 martyrs fell to its fury. Among the victims was the rabbi, En-Vidal Ephraim Gerundi, whose controversy with Solomon Zarfati has already been referred to. A large number of Jews here also sought safety in baptism.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.