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DAVID REUBENI: HIS LIFE AND ACTIVITY

by

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TO MY PARENTS

PREFACE

In the following chapters, the writer has attempted to present the life and work of David Reubeni and his disciple Solomon Molcho. An attempt has been made to discuss the conditions of the Marranos in Portugal during three periods, namely, before the advent of David, after his arrival, and finally, after his departure. A description of David's personality, his home, his travels and adventures from the time he left Arabia until his ship was blown ashore on the coast of Spain, is given. It is impossible for one to write about David without including his disciple, and later his companion, Solomon Molcho. A chapter has been devoted, therefore, to a sketch of the life of Solomon Molcho and his relation with David Reubeni.

This thesis is based primarily on a careful examination and study of David's diary as printed in volume II of A. Neubauer's "Medieval Jewish Chronicle", and in Abraham Kahana's 'דברי דוד רובינ' (1927). The writer has translated the complete diary into English but it was thought best not to include it in this presentation. The contemporary sources of the period including Abraham Farissol, Josel of Rosheim, and Joseph ben Joshua Meir Ha-kohen, were consulted, as were also the modern works dealing with David Reubeni, Solomon Molcho, and the period in which they lived.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my teacher and friend Dr. Jacob Mann, Professor of Jewish History and Literature at the Hebrew Union College, for suggesting the subject, and for his help and guidance which made this small work possible.

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CHAPTER I

CONDITIONS OF THE MARRANOS IN PORTUGAL FROM THE END OF
THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY UNTIL THE ADVENT OF DAVID
REUBENI.

In the chain of history, the sixteenth century is an important link, joining the medieval and modern period. With the invention of gunpowder, the wall of medievalism with its powerful support, feudalism, crumbled. The invention of printing in 1450 helped to further learning and science. The discoveries of the Spanish and Portugese explorers brought new possessions to these two countries, and the hope that other lands would soon be discovered. The revolution which was wrought in men's minds by the discovery of the new world, of whose existence the old world in general had been wholly unconscious, was, of course, enormous. With such discoveries being made in science and in geography, men came to feel that anything was possible. Possibly, the most important movement in the sixteenth century was the Protestant Reformation which had a marked change on the political conditions of Europe. Thus we see that at the close of the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church embraced central and western Europe; while at the end of the sixteenth century, nearly half of its former subjects, those throughout northern Europe, no longer recognized its authority or practiced its beliefs.

In these hectic days of the sixteenth century, there appeared in Europe a man who called himself David Reubeni. Stating that he was an ambassador sent by his brother King Joseph who ruled over three hundred thousand subjects, he came as a prophet to his co-religionists to liberate them.

The Marranos in Portugal were in a different position from those in Spain. In the beginning of King Manoel's reign, the Jews were treated very well. Isabella and Ferdinand were not pleased at his policy toward the Jews and were anxious for him to reverse it. They felt that through a marriage a change in his tolerant manner might be effected. Accordingly, they arranged for a marriage between their daughter Joanna and Manoel. Manoel, however, preferred her older sister, the Infanta Isabella. Ferdinand and Isabella promised him her hand on condition that he join with Spain against Charles VII, and exile all the Jews from Portugal. Though these conditions were very disagreeable to him, nevertheless he complied with them, because he loved the Infanta Isabella and wished to make her his wife. The Infanta Isabella, influenced by her parents, entertained fanatical hatred against the Jews. She believed that the misfortunes and unhappiness which had befallen King João in his last days had been occasioned by his having allowed the Jews to enter his Kingdom. She feared that her marriage to Manoel would be unsuccessful were the Jews permitted to remain in Portugal. She refused to come to Portugal until the Jews were driven out from his kingdom, with the result that the Jews were expelled. The marriage contract was sealed with the misery of the Jews and was signed on November 30, 1496.¹

On December 24, 1496, an order was issued stating that all the Jews and Moors of Portugal must receive baptism or leave the country by October 1497. After a few months, Manoel

1. H. Graetz: "Geschichte der Juden", 1890, vol.8, p.379

became greatly disappointed for very few Jews had accepted Christianity. He wanted them to become Christians in order that they might remain and enrich his country. In April 1497, he issued a secret command that all Jewish children up to the age of fourteen should be taken from their parents by force on Easter Sunday and be baptized. Some Jews learned about this order and were about to flee with their children. Manoel, hearing of this, ordered the forced baptism to take place at once. Many sad scenes took place between parents and children, the former trying to protect the latter from baptism. Many Jews of Portugal embraced Christianity in order to remain with their children. About twenty thousand Jews who tried to leave from the port of Lisbon were detained, so that the day on which they were to forfeit their life, or at least their liberty, if found upon Portugese soil, arrived. They were then given the choice to confess Christianity voluntarily in which case they should have honor and riches, or else be forced to baptism without mercy. After given three days in which to reflect, the majority still remained firm in their devotion to Judaism. Manoel now forced them to be converted. Many committed suicide rather than submit to this baptism. Many were converted.

Those Jews who had submitted to baptism felt that by appealing to Pope Alexander VI they might be able to return to their own faith. Accordingly, they sent a deputation of seven to Pope Alexander. With them they took money as a gift to the Pope. Despite the opposition of the Spanish ambassador, Garcilaso, the Portugese Jews were successful, and King Manoel decided to make

concessions. On May 30, 1497, he issued a decree granting amnesty to all forcibly baptized Jews, and a respite of twenty years, during which time they were not to be brought before the tribunal of the Inquisition. It was said that time was needed for the Jews to adapt themselves to their new faith. The decree further stated that on the expiration of the term, a regular examination should be made of those accused of Jewish practices, and if found guilty, their wealth should be confiscated. The decree likewise ordained that those baptized physicians and surgeons who were unacquainted with Latin might use Hebrew books. This meant that these forced Christians might live secretly as Jews and continue their study of Hebrew. This amnesty benefited the Portuguese Marranos, but not those who immigrated into Portugal, especially those from Spain, due to the sinister influence of the Spanish Infanta Isabella. Many Portuguese Jews became Christians, but resolved in their hearts to leave at the first opportunity, so that they might practice the faith of their ancestors without fear. ³

This decree was issued by Manuel I, King of Portugal, in 1497. See Graetz, Inquisition in Spain, p. 387.

The Portuguese Marranos, relying on the promise of Manuel freeing them from the jurisdiction of the Inquisition for twenty years, were thus enabled to carry on their Jewish practices with less secrecy than their co-religionists in Spain. They frequently assembled in their synagogue in Lisbon. Instruction in the Bible and Talmud was carried on, and the youths were instructed in all the branches of Judaism. The Portuguese Marranos had freedom to emigrate and many left for Barbary and Italy. To check this emigration an order was issued that a Christian could buy real estate from a Marrano only by royal permission. This law, however, was largely disregarded. Many Spanish Marranos sought to emigrate to Portugal,

but a law was passed due to the influence of the Spanish government, that no Spaniard could step on Portugese soil unless he could show a certificate that he was not guilty of heresy. The Christians hated the Portugese Marranos because the latter were active and industrious. Their dislike of them increased when the Marranos were given the permission to pursue trades, to collect tithes, and accept ecclesiastical offices. In the beginning they called them "Judaico Marrano Converso", meaning "cursed convert of a Jew", but this was prohibited by law. A Marrano, John Rodrigo Mascarenhas, a farmer of taxes, was greatly hated and through him all the Marranos incurred the ill-will of the Christians. The Dominicians were bitter enemies of the Marranos and incited the people against them. The Marranos were blamed for the plague that was then raging, and were considered the cause for a drought which threatened another bad harvest. On a Sunday following Easter, April 19, 1506, when the church was filled with Marranos who were forced to attend, a Dominican in a sermon charged the people to murder the Marranos because they were the king's favorites. Two other Dominicians, John Mocho and Fratre Bernardo, walked through the streets carrying crosses and shouting "Heresy! Heresy!" The people were aroused and began to murder and plunder the Marranos. Terrible scenes were enacted during the two days of its endurance. After this massacre the people hated the Marranos even more because the latter had gained the King's favor. In March 1507, Manoel issued a proclamation declaring that converts were to be treated as Christians, giving them the permission to emigrate. He issued another order declaring that for sixteen years more they could not be forced to give an account of their religious conduct before a tribunal.⁴

4. Graetz: G. der J., vol.9, p.218-223;(1891)

1521-1557

See Len, ibid
III, 2384.

Under João III (1522-1527), Manoel's successor, the condition of the Portugese Marranos changed. In the beginning of his reign he upheld the decree of his father, placing the Marranos on a par with the Christians, and allowing them freedom from subjection from a tribunal regarding their religious devotion. But Queen Catherine, a Spanish Infanta, admiring the Inquisition in Spain, implored the King to institute the Inquisition in Portugal. Acquiescing to her demands, João commissioned George Themudo to inquire into the lives of the Marranos. In July 1524, he reported to the King that some of the Marranos observed the Sabbath and Passover, and took as little part as possible in the observance of Catholic rites. Hearing of this, João subjected the Marranos to a spy system. Henrique Nunes, a convert, who afterwards received the title "Firme Fe" (Firm Believer), was commissioned by the King to spy on the Marranos. He went among the Marranos posing as their friend, but all the time spying on them. He communicated to the King that he found no Catholic prayer-books in their houses, and that they disregarded all Catholic rites. João, hearing of this, decided to introduce the Inquisition into his country, and sent Nunes to Charles V in Spain to learn the details concerning that diabolical Institution. The Marranos learning of his treachery, decided to punish Nunes. Diego Vaz, of Olivença, and Andre Dias, of Vianna, disguised themselves and near the Spanish frontier, near Badajoz, killed Nunes. On him they found letters dealing with the introduction of the Inquisition. They were later discovered and hanged on the gallows, and Nunes was regarded as a martyr.

One would expect that the King would have intro-

duced the Inquisition at once under these circumstances. Such, however, was not the case. We know of a certainty that it was the arrival of David Reubeni in Portugal which caused the King to change his mind, so that, at least for the present, the Inquisition was not introduced into Portugal.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSONALITY OF DAVID REUBENI .

Concerning the origin of David Reubeni as well as his travels up to his arrival in Rome, only his diary gives us information. He tells us little about himself except to say that he is a younger brother of King Joseph who rules in the wilderness Chabor over three hundred thousand descendants of the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Menasseh. He does not give the date of his birth, but it is likely that he was born about 1490.⁶ Rieger states that David was thirty-three years old when he visited Palestine.⁷ In David's diary we are told that the visit to Palestine took place in 1523, so we may conclude that David was born about 1490. He tells us nothing about his youth or his life until the time of his departure from the wilderness. Concerning the place whence he came we know very little. He tells us it is from the wilderness Chabor. It is very difficult to give the exact location of this place. Some authorities hold that the copyist has made a mistake, that instead of Chabor it should read Tabor, since a mistake has been made in reading a ך for a ך.⁸ Consequently, Kahana reads Tabor throughout his version of David's diary. Neubauer, in publishing his diary, reads ך¹² and does not comment on it.¹⁰ Graetz states that David came from the land of Chaibar, and locates it in Arabia.⁹ I myself prefer Chabor and do not understand how Graetz can read Chaibar, for there is no ' in that word. Farissol speaks

6. Jewish Encyclopedia, vol.10, p.388

7. Paul Rieger: Geschichte der Juden in Rom, Berlin 1895; vol.2, p.41

8. Abraham Kahana: ך¹² ; p.1

9. Heinrich Graetz: Geschichte der Juden, Leipzig 1891; vol.9, p.228

10. A. Neubauer: Medieval Jewish Chronicles, Oxford 1895; p. 133

of Chabor as being situated in Asia Minor.¹¹ Joseph ben Joshua Meir Ha-kohen speaks of David as a Jew who came from India.¹² Elkan Adler in the Jewish Quarterly Review states that in the Calendar State Papers (Venetian) 1520-6, page 810, "we read a letter of March 14, 1524 addressed from Rome by the Venetian legate, Marco Foscari, to the Signory that 'an ambassador has come to the Pope from the Jews in India offering him threehundred thousand combatants against the Turk, and asking for artillery.'¹³ Adler states that this ambassador was David Reubeni, and his principals were the black Jews of Cranganore who had for nine centuries enjoyed independence in the principality of Anjuvannam, under a grant from Bhaskara Ravi Varma, King of Malabar.¹⁴ Thus Adler considers Reubeni as coming from India. I myself am inclined to believe that David was from Arabia as he describes his travels from there to Ethiopia, and from Ethiopia to Egypt. David claimed to be a descendant of the tribe of Reuben and lived in the wilderness of Chabor northwest of Medina. In this district he tells us there lived also the tribes of Gad and half of Menasseh. These tribes were ruled by a king, who during David's time, was his brother Joseph. To the south of these tribes in Arabia, lived the remaining eight tribes, and they likewise had a king. These tribes trafficked in spices and pepper. Separating these two Jewish districts was a territory inhabited by the Mohammedans. The Mohammedans hindered the Jewish tribes from having mutual intercourse. The Jews fought many wars with the Mohammedans, but were

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11. Abraham Kahana: Sifrut Mahistoria Hayisreelit, Warsaw 1923; vol.2.
 12. Joseph ben Joshua Meir Ha-kohen [ספר דברי יוסף בן יושעא מר"ק] 55
 13. Elkan Adler: Jewish Quarterly Review; O.S. vol.15, p.418
 14. Elkan Adler: Auto-da-Fe and Jew, London, 1908; p. 30

always beaten. David Reubeni as he himself states was sent to acquire ammunition and fire-arms from the European powers to fight these Mohammedans.¹⁵

It is this view that I am inclined to take, namely, that David came from Arabia for the purpose of securing arms to fight the Mohammedans in his own district. He was aware that all Europe hated the Turk at that time and felt that it was an opportune moment to secure aid from the European powers to fight their common enemy.¹⁶

There are some authorities who, like Bartolocci and Basnage, deny the historicity of David Reubeni and his companion Solomon Molcho, and who brand it a fable. But the figure of David Reubeni cannot be suppressed for he is an actuality who can be accounted for.

David is described by Abraham Farissol as small in stature and very thin, who, through excessive fasting, became like a skeleton. He had black hair and dark skin. There was something outlandish and mysterious about his whole being. Farissol tells us that he behaved haughtily with the Jews and by no means humbly with the gentiles. David remained ever true to his role of an ambassador.¹⁷

15. Graetz: Solomon Molcho und David Reubeni; Monatschrift fur Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums; vol.5, p.211
16. This will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.
17. A.Kahana: Sifrut Hahistoria Hayisreelit; vol.2, p.56

CHAPTER III

DAVID REUBENI'S MISSION

Concerning David Reubeni's travels in Arabia, Nubia, Africa, and Palestine until his arrival in Italy, his diary alone furnishes information. Leaving Chabor, he reached Dschidda ^{Jidda} after a ten days' journey, where he became very sick. Though sick, ^{Jidda} he decided to leave and left by boat via the Red Sea and reached Suakin, in Abyssinia, after a trip of three days and three nights. Here his sickness persisted, which seemed to be a lung disease, for he states that he continually spat blood. ¹⁸ He remained in Suakin and left with a caravan of merchants going to Assa in Sheba. ¹⁹ The leader of the caravan was Omar Abukamil, a descendant of Mohammed. After a two months journey through the desert, they reached the kingdom of Sheba. David stayed in the city Lamoule on the Nile River with the King whose name was Amarah. This king was black and ruled over whites and colored. David remained here ten months and was greatly honored, especially by Abukamil. During his entire stay in Abyssinia, he fasted daily and prayed continually. He writes: "I was God-fearing and did not stand in the seat of scoffers nor in the midst of frivolity, but I would follow the right path leading to the king's ²⁰ palace to my home." This king had many servants and was very wealthy. Most of the servants went around almost naked. Their food was indeed peculiar, for they ate elephants, wolves, leopards, dogs, camels, rats, frogs, and snakes, and in addition were cannibals. This diet did not appeal to David Reubeni who observed the Mosaic dietary laws

18. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 132

19. The location of this place is not known. Kahana states that he is unable to locate it.

20. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 134

at all times. The king wanted to give David whatever he desired, but the latter wished nothing. David told the king that he wanted to give him a silk garment and seven hundred ducats, in addition to the blessing of Mohammed, and forgiveness, so that he, his family and household might receive a share in paradise.²¹

The king was very pleased with him, so he sent him four maidens and four man-servants as a gift. When David saw that they were naked he gave them clothes to cover their nakedness. During the night David was tempted to commit a sin with one of these virgins, and was about to do the sinful act when his good inclination overpowered him. The good inclination told him that were he to sin, his mission would be unsuccessful. David turned aside from this evil act and prayed all night that God might forgive him. In the morning David took the servants and gave them to the queen as a gift. This incident illustrates the fine, upright character of David.²²

The king and all his servants loved and honored David, for they considered him a messenger of God. David feared that he might suffer evil consequences were he and his mission known. He thus played the role of a Mohammedan, which role he was able to play for a long time successfully. He traveled with an old faithful deaf and dumb slave who ministered to his wants at all times. David was soon exposed by a Mohammedan from Mecca, who first used David to acquire money from the king. David was beloved by the king and the Mohammedan knew that were David to vouch for him, the king would grant him anything he desired. The Mohammedan had brought a book along with him which he wished to present to the king, promising

21. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 134

22. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 135

him an inheritance in the garden of Eden were he to possess it. David told the king that if he accepted this book, he would prosper, so the king took it and gave the Mohammedan thirty camels and a horse. Later, that Mohammedan went in secret to the king and denounced David, and told him that he was not a Mohammedan, but a Jew from the wilderness of Chabor.²³ The queen summoned David and told him that the king was angry and that he should leave the country at once. David then appeared before the king and testified to his upright character. The queen interceded in his behalf so the king granted him permission to leave his country. The king wanted to give David servants, camels, and horses, but he wished nothing except permission to leave, for he knew that he had enemies who were plotting against him. In addition, David asked the king for one of his servants to accompany him, and so the next morning David, his servant, -the old man, -and the king's servant departed.²⁴

They crossed many rivers, and finally reached a place called Sannar where Abadyah, the keeper of a shrine, lived. Abadyah sent one of his servants with David, who led him to Sheba. After a journey of five days, they reached Sheba. David was well received by a man there named Abukamil and stayed at his home. That night David had a dream in which the spirit of his father appeared to him and told him to leave at once or his mission would fail. The next morning David left accompanied by the brother of Abukamil. After ten days, they reached Galla,²⁵ in the kingdom of Sheba, under the rule of Amram. They journeyed on and reached Tukaki, where he

23. Neubauer, op. cit, p. 136

24. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 137

25. Kahana is in doubt as to the location of this place and states that it may be Galla, Galin, or Djalín.

met the Sheik Abad Aloohav with whom David stayed six days. Then David journeyed on with this sheik and reached Dongola. David was anxious to leave the land of Sheba, as he feared for his life, and therefore asked the sheik to lead him to Masmas, the border city of Sheba. David was very anxious to get to Egypt. In the city of Alchabir David was befriended by a Mohammedan named Osman, who advised him regarding the best and safest road to Egypt. Osman learned that a caravan was leaving for Egypt on the seventeenth of Kislev. David made preparations to go with them, but on the day they were to leave, his servant fled and David was unable to carry out his plan. David appealed to the king for aid in finding his servant. The king was happy to serve David in this manner and the servant was found. David's departure was delayed but he finally succeeded in leaving. During his journey to Egypt David ate only every third day. He prayed continually that God might bless his mission with success. After forty-five days, he reached Rif on the Nile River. David remained here for ten days and then took a boat on the Nile River bound for Egypt. ²⁶ *Leino*

Leino On Rosh Chodesh Adar 1523 at twilight, David entered Egypt and was befriended there by a certain Mohammedan who took him into his home. He was given bread and cheese to eat, but refused to eat the cheese and ate only eggs. The next morning David went with a Mohammedan to a store kept by a Jew. In this store he met a group of Jewish jewelers and asked them in Hebrew, so that the Mohammedan would not understand, the name of the leading Jew. They complied with his request, and he was taken to the house

of Rabbi Abraham. David asked Rabbi Abraham for permission to remain with him for about three or four days. He likewise told him that he was a Jew and that he had a secret to tell him. He also asked Rabbi Abraham to direct him to Jerusalem. Abraham refused, and said: "I am unable to permit you to enter my house, for you have come as an impostor, as a Mohammedan, and if you remain in my house you will cause me trouble." Abraham accordingly did not welcome him into his home.²⁷

This Rabbi Abraham referred to by David, was Abraham de Castro, a Jew of Spanish origin. Political changes in Egypt had placed the Spaniards at the head of the Jewish communities. Egypt together with Syria and Palestine, which was so difficult for the Sultans of Constantinople to conquer, was finally conquered by Selim I, who defeated the Mameluke Sultan in a decisive battle not far from Aleppo in 1517. After his victory, Selim made Egypt a dependancy of Turkey. Abraham de Castro was appointed by Selim Comptroller of the Mint, and through his wealth he acquired a great deal of influence and prestige among the Turkish officials and Egyptian Jews. Abraham was very charitable and gave three thousand gold florins annually to charity, and likewise took an interest in Jewish affairs.²⁸ It is small wonder then that Abraham refused to take David into his home; being a high official, he feared that trouble would arise were it discovered that he was harboring a Jew who had disguised himself as a Mohammedan. He thus refused to have anything to do with David.

Refused hospitality by the Jews, David took up his residence at the home of a Mohammedan named Sarpadin, reputed to

²⁷. Neubauer, op. cit., p.141

²⁸. Graetz, Geschichte der Juden; vol.9, p.18

be very pious. David entrusted to his care some precious pearls and a thousand pieces of gold, when he left to call on Rabbi Abraham a second time. While away, Sarpadin stole the boxes containing these precious things, and when David asked him to return them, he answered that if David would marry his daughter, he would restore them. David, of course, who naturally opposed intermarriage, was unwilling, and left with his Abyssinian servant, for his old faithful deaf and dumb servant had died a few days before his master had suffered his loss. ²⁹ David then found a place in the house of another Mohammedan merchant called Zechariah in Hebrew, and in Arabic Yechiyoh, who tried to recover his loss from Sarpadin. Yechiyoh found, however, that this would be impossible, so advised David to drop the entire matter, which he did. ³⁰

David sold his Abyssinian servant to this Mohammedan merchant, and then left Egypt with a group of merchants. Arriving in Gaza, he shared a room with a Jewish merchant of Beirut named Abraham Dunatz. For two days David remained in the room with him, but never spoke a word with him. On the third day David astonished this Jewish merchant by asking him whether he recites $\text{לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ or $\text{לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$, at this time. The Jew told David that he had met many Mohammedans, but that none were as wise as he. David answered that he had lived near Jews, and had many friends among them, and in that way had become acquainted with their religion. Abraham answered that in his country Jews are not permitted to speak to Mohammedans, for they are hated by them. David then said to this Jew: "Do not fear, and be not afraid, for the end (of Golus) is near at

29. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 141-142

30. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 143

at hand, and God will bring low the wicked to the ground, and exalt the lowly till on high, for the time is near at hand when you will see great things, great confusions, and great quarrels between kings."³¹

David's Diary (Bruit out - Hands)
David asked Abraham to find merchants for him to lead him to the Temple, and he gladly carried out his request. David did not wish to tell him that he was a Jew, but finally intimated to him his secret. The Jews of Gaza, when they learned that David was a Jew, unlike the Jews in Egypt, were anxious to honor him. Through Abraham they secretly sent David bread and meat. David remained in Gaza five days, and on the nineteenth of Adar 1523, he left. On the twenty-third of Adar he reached the Caves of Machpelah near Hebron. The guards here treated him kindly, for they thought that he was a descendant of Mohammed. They showed him the graves of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Leah. David gives a good description of these graves in his diary, and he tells us that he prayed before each of them.³²

On the twenty-fourth of Adar, David left Hebron for Jerusalem, and arrived there on the twenty-fifth of Adar 1523, and went directly to the Temple. The Mohammedan guards of the Temple honored him and showed him the place of Elijah, David, Solomon, Abraham, Isaac, the Prophets, and Mohammed. David says that he knew that their words were not true. David wanted to spend the night there, but the guards found him hiding and forced him to leave the premises. The next morning David protested against his ejection and the guards apologized and asked his forgiveness. They told him

31. Neubauer, op. cit., p.143-144
32. Neubauer, op. cit., p.144-145

that as long as he wished to remain, they would serve him. David then tells us that he remained in the Temple, i.e. the Mosque,³³ where he continually fasted and prayed.³⁴

On the top of the cupola of the Mohammedan mosque, was a crescent pointing towards the west. On the first day of Shabuoth 1523, it pointed toward the east and the Mohammedans regarded this as an evil omen, and became afraid. The Elders of the Wilderness had told David that when he would see this sign, he should leave for Rome immediately. Accordingly, David went below the Temple and did as the Elders had commanded him, and the sign returned to its former position.³⁵

David then visited the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion, and likewise a mosque and a church. In Jerusalem David visited a Jew named Abraham, and astonished him by asking whether *שמע ישראל* or *שמואל* is being recited. David did not tell Abraham that he was a Jew until he visited him a third time, but even then refused to tell him about his mission, saying: "I am going for a good cause, but it is a secret and I am unable to reveal it." David asked Abraham to draw him a map of Venice, Rome, and Portugal, which he did.³⁶

On the twenty-fourth of Sivan 1523, David left Jerusalem and arrived in Gaza again on the fifth of Tammuz.³⁷ Four elders visited David, and he confided to them that he was a Jew, and that his older brother King Joseph ruled over three hundred thousand

33. David allowed himself to be locked in the Mosque of Omar.

34. Neubauer, op. cit., p.145-6

35. Neubauer, op. cit., p.147. David does not describe in detail what he did, except to say that he carried out the Elders' command.

36. Neubauer, op. cit., p.147

37. Neubauer, op. cit., p.147

subjects in the wilderness Chabor. That night they ate and drank wine, which David tells us was the first he had tasted since he left Chabor. ³⁸ In Gaza David was treated well by the Jews there, especially by Rabbi Ishmael, and Rabbi Daniel, a rich, honorable, and pious Jew. David was anxious, however, to leave for Rome, and asked his friends in Gaza to procure a boat for him going to Alexandria. They learned that a boat was leaving for Damiette that week, and told this to David who made preparations to leave. ³⁹ On the fifteenth of Tammuz 1523, David left Gaza, and after a two days trip arrived in Damiette. ⁴⁰ Here he met Rabbi Mordecai, with whom he spent the Sabbath. The next day David left for Alexandria, and arrived there on the twenty-fourth of Tammuz.

In Alexandria David met the Cabbalist, Rabbi Mordecai, to whom he confided his identity and his desire to go to Rome. Mordecai advised him to visit the consul. David did so, and told the consul the following: "I am the brother of the king of the wilderness of Chabor, and I have come at the command of my brother King Joseph and the seventy elders, and my desire is to go to the Pope and after that to the King of Portugal. Therefore, advise me ⁴¹ what I should do, and procure me a ship in which I may leave." The consul advised him to wait for a boat going to Venice. David hired a man by the name of Joseph, a Neapolitan, to act as his interpreter, but the Mohammedans objected since he was a Jew; David reassured them that Joseph, though a Jew, was trustworthy. David spent Rosh Hashanah and the other holidays there and then left on a boat going

38. David obeyed the injunction prohibiting the drinking of wine served by a non-Jew for fear that it had been used for idolatrous purposes.

39. Neubauer, op. cit., p.148

40. ibid.

41. ibid.

to Venice. During the entire journey, David prayed and fasted.

Arriving in Venice, David went to the captain's house, and spent six days there fasting and praying. Joseph, David's servant, told the Jews of Venice that David was a Jew and in their city. When the Jews heard this, they sent a Jew by the name of Elkanan, and another by the name of Rabbi Moses Kashtiletz, to visit him. David asked Moses for money for Joseph who was poor and sick. Moses told David to come with him to the ghetto, where he would meet the Parnassim who would decide whether he should receive the money. In the ghetto David met Rabbi Matzliah and Rabbi Chayyah, to whom he told that he was a Jew from the wilderness of Chabor, and that the seventy elders had sent him on a mission. David tells us that when they heard this they looked upon him as being a fool. David asked the Jews to send him some wine, but they refused. The Jews in Venice were not very hospitable to David, and though he finally abandoned his disguise as a Mohammedan, and made himself known as a Jewish ambassador, yet he did not enjoy the warm reception which he had anticipated.⁴²

Another Jew named Rabbi Simon visited David, and said to him: "I have heard that you have been sent on a mission to Rome by seventy elders. Tell me for what purpose they sent you, and I will send two Jews along with you, and will pay all the expenses."⁴³ David answered: "I am going to the Pope, but I am unable to tell anything except to say that I am going for the good of all Israel. If you wish to do me a favor for the sake of the love of God, the elders, and all Israel, then send two men to accompany me to Rome,

42. Neubauer, op.cit., p.150

43. ibid.

and you shall merit the mitzvah, and they will bring you good news." ⁴⁴

The resident Jews in Venice were all excited. New discoveries had rendered the populace of Venice somewhat credulous to tales of adventure. The Christians hoped to discover the domain of Prester John, and the Kings of Portugal had sent spies to Asia and Africa to search for this kingdom. The Jews had always hoped to find the ten lost tribes in some remote corner of Asia along the mythological River Sambatian, so when David arrived in Europe, they became interested in him and wanted to know the details of his mission. But he refused, and only intimated his purpose to the Venetian Jews, and then proceeded to Rome. ⁴⁵

Paul Paul Rieger states that the first report of David Reubeni's appearance in Europe was received by Hungarian Jews in letters from Damascus. ⁴⁶ Under the rule of Suleiman II, the Magnificent, 1520-1566, the Turks rapidly extended their sway. The Black Sea was practically a Turkish lake, and the whole Euphrates valley with Bagdad had fallen into the Sultan's power. The northern coasts of Africa acknowledged the supremacy of Suleiman, whose sea power in the Mediterranean had become a factor to be reckoned with in European politics. Suleiman devoted many years to the extension of his power in Europe. In 1521 he declared war against the King of Hungary, on the pretext that he had received no Hungarian congratulations on his accession to the throne, and besieged Hungary until 1541. ⁴⁷ During the year 1523, Rieger states, all Europe was astonished that the Turks

44. Neubauer, op.cit., p.151

45. Graetz, op.cit., vol.9, p.227-228

46. Vogelstein and Rieger: Geschichte der Juden in Rom, Berlin 1895; p.42.

47. Carlton J.H.Hayes: A Political and Social History of Modern Europe; vol.1, p.80-81

had made no attack on Hungary in 1523.⁴⁸ Some say it was because of a great plague raging in the orient. The Venetian Jews claimed, however, on the basis of those letters, that the reason was that a large number of Jews who had lived for two thousand years in a district in India, had now moved forward in the direction of Jerusalem, and demanded the latter city from the Sultan. Soon after, David Reubeni was heard of, and he substantiated this latter report.⁴⁹

David arrived in Rome on the fifteenth of Adar 1525.⁵⁰ Immediately upon his arrival in Rome, he rode to the Vatican on a white horse with his servant and with his interpreter, and had an interview with Cardinal Giulio in the presence of other Cardinals, Rabbi Joseph Ashkenazi, the teacher of Giulio, and the scholar Joseph Zorfosi. The Cardinal received David very cordially, and invited him to stay with him, and promised to inform the Pope about his arrival. David spent the Sabbath with Rabbi Joseph Ashkenazi, and went to the synagogue for the purpose, he tells us, לברך זכרנו האלוהים ביום הזה, "to thank God for his safe arrival". Cardinal Giulio succeeded in having Pope Clement VII (1523-1534) grant David an audience on Sunday morning at eleven. That morning, David went to the Cardinal's house and together they went to the Vatican. The Pope received David very graciously, and David spoke as follows: "King Joseph and his elders commanded me to speak to you, that you make peace by all means between the Emperor and the King of France, so that it will be good for them and for you. Write a letter for me to those two rulers so that they will help us, and we in turn will help them,

48. Rieger, op.cit., p.42

49. ibid.

50. Neubauer, op.cit., p.151. Graetz gives the date as 1524, but I believe that he is incorrect, as both texts, viz. Neubauer and Kahanah, both read "כ"ה". Biberfeld, in his book "Der Reisebericht des David Reubeni", Leipzig, 1892, page 12, gives the date 1524

and also write a letter to Prester John."⁵¹

In these words David revealed his secret mission to the Pope alone, and asked him to intercede between the Emperor Charles V, and Francis I, King of France, so that they might make peace and unite their forces against the Turk who possessed the Holy Land. David also requested that letters be sent to João III of Portugal and to Prester John, the former to furnish ships, guns, and ammunition, to King Joseph, and the latter to be induced to unite his forces with those of Joseph's, so that the attack against the Moslem might be made from both sides.⁵² The Pope answered that he was unable to make peace between the Emperor Charles V and Francis I, King of France. He told him, however, that he would write to the King of Portugal and would see to it that the latter would help him. The Pope was concerned about David's comfort, and told the Jews that he would pay all the expenses incurred in honoring David.⁵³

It seems strange indeed that Pope Clement VII should have taken such an interest in David. If, however, we consider the history of that time, and the character of Clement VII, we will readily understand why David was so well received. Pope Clement VII was born in 1478, and died on September 25, 1534. He was born a few months after the death of his father Giuliano, who was slain at Florence in the disturbances which followed the Pazzi conspiracy. Although his parents had not been properly married, they had, it was alleged, been betrothed per sponsalia de presenti, and their son Guilio de Medici, who later became Clement VII, was declared illegi-

51. Neubauer, op. cit., p.151-152

52. Biberfeld, op. cit., p.13

53. Neubauer, ibid.

timate. As a youth, he was educated by his uncle, Lorenzo the Magnificent. He was made a Knight of Rhodes and Grand Prior of Capua, and upon the election of his cousin Giovanni de Medici to the Papacy as Leo X, he became a person of great consequence. On September 23, 1513, he was made a Cardinal, and became the prime mover of the Papal policy during the whole of Leo's pontificate. He was one of the most favored candidates in the protracted conclave which resulted in the election of Adrian VI. After Adrian's death on September 14, 1523, Cardinal de Medici was elected Pope on November 18, 1523. His election was hailed at Rome with much rejoicing. Clement found the political and religious situation very serious at that time.⁵⁴

His rule was during a very troublous period. On the one hand he had to fight Luther and the Reformation, which was steadily gaining ground, and threatened to undermine the power of the Papacy; and on the other, Charles V's ambition to add to his domains of Spain and Germany, also Italy. If he strove with Charles V, the latter encouraged the Reformation, and if he became reconciled with him, Italy's freedom would be threatened.

Pope Clement treated the Jews very well. Those in Avignon, Carpentras, and some parts of France, were given a great deal of liberty and did not have to wear the badge. Many Jews from Spain settled there and were allowed to carry on trade. Anyone who molested them was excommunicated. The Christians protested to the Pope against this treatment, but he refused to listen to them.⁵⁵

In their verdict upon the character of Pope Clement

54. Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.4, p.24-25

55. Graetz, op. cit., vol.9, p.231

VII, almost all historians are agreed. He was an Italian prince, a de Medici, and a diplomat first, and a spiritual leader afterwards. His intelligence was of high order, though his diplomacy was feeble and irresolute. On the other hand, his private life was free from reproach, and he had many excellent impulses, but despite good intention, all qualities of heroism and greatness must emphatically be denied him.⁵⁶ Clement was constantly wavering, and like most of his contemporaries, resorted to astrology. He was forever looking for support, and felt that if he helped David, he would have his support and the help of his followers.

Promised aid by the Pope, David left the Vatican rejoicing. The Jews arranged beautiful living quarters for David at the house of a Jew named Joseph where he stayed six weeks. While there, David fasted six successive days and nights and then drank some boiled water, which Joseph prepared for him. This made him very sick and he was in a serious condition. He left this place and went to a rooming house kept by a Jew named Yom-tov Halevi. This place did not appeal to the aesthetic sense of David, and he asked Rabbi Joseph Zorfosi to permit him to stay at his home until he recovered. He gladly invited David to his home, and he remained there three months. During that time, David was hovering between life and death, but due to the careful attention of Zorfosi's mother and sister Dinah, David recovered.⁵⁷ After his recovery, David wanted to leave, and so went to the house of Rabbi Moses Abo drehin where he was given a beautiful room. Moses had three sons, Joseph, Samuel, and Isaac, who ministered to David's wants. Moses also had a daughter who was well versed in the Bible, and knew how to pray. While David

56. Catholic Encyclopedia; vol. 4, p. 27

57. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 153-4

was staying here, she became very ill with a contagious disease,⁵⁸ probably scarlet fever. David refused to remain in the same house for fear that he might contract the disease. Moses, who was very thoughtful, arranged a place for David at his brother's house, Rabbi Isaac. This house was very ugly and had a bad odor. Isaac, and his wife who was very intelligent, tried to make David as comfortable as possible. David was not pleased with these living quarters, and was ashamed whenever the Christian officials visited him. David wrote the Cardinal that he was not satisfied with his present surroundings since they were not in keeping with his position as an ambassador. When the Cardinal heard this, he commanded his officers to find a beautiful home for David. They carried out his order, and David was put up in better quarters. The Cardinal's⁵⁹ officials paid the rent and saw to it that David was made comfortable. David's servants loved him and served him without compensation, and even volunteered to go with him wherever he would go. David would not permit this, however, of those who had children, as these latter he did not want to see neglected. David was forced to discharge Joseph whom he had brought from Candia, for he continually quarrelled with the other servants. Joseph had also spoken against David to the Portugese Ambassador Don Miguel de Silva, who was destined to become the relentless enemy of David through the rest of his life. Joseph told Don Miguel that David had come only for the purpose of leading the Marranos back to Judaism. When the

58. Neubauer, op.cit., p.154

59. Neubauer, op.cit., p.155

Marranos of Rome heard this they came to David, and told him that they were going to kill Joseph. But David implored them not to do this, and promised to discharge Joseph, which he accordingly did.⁶⁰

Not long after, the Cardinal sent news to David that he was leaving for a two months stay in Viterbo, but he told David that the Pope's secretary would carry out his wishes while he was away.⁶¹ After the Cardinal left, David felt that he needed someone who would act as an interpreter between the Pope and himself. He met a Jew by the name of Rabbi Daniel of Pisa, and became well acquainted with him. Rabbi Daniel of Pisa was a rich, honorable, and wise Cabbalist. He was a great favorite of the Pope,⁶² lived near him, and often had an audience with him. Daniel's full name was Rabbi Daniel ben Isaac of Pisa. Daniel was anxious to have a strong Jewish communal organization. After more than twenty rich bankers and several rich members of the Jewish community had agreed with him in his proposals, he began his work of reorganization. The organization of a council consisting of sixty members which⁶³ has existed down to the present can be traced back to him. Daniel became a good friend of David's, in whom the latter confided his plans. David summoned Daniel and said to him: "I see that you are honored before the Pope and Cardinals, and that you are a great and worthy man. I desire that you act as an interpreter and adviser between the Pope and myself, and that you show me the right way for the sake of the love of God, and the love of King Joseph my

60. Neubauer, op.cit., p.156

61. ibid.

62. ibid.

63. Rieger, op.cit., p.40

brother and his elders from the wilderness of Chabor, and the love of his people Israel. And God will honor you with more honor than you now enjoy because of your service in His behalf. I have come from the east to the west to serve God, and to show my love for Israel, for they are under the rule of Christianity and Mohammedanism." David then continued to tell him everything, because he said that Daniel was an upright and good man. Daniel was in full accord with David's plan, and promised to do all in his power to help him, adding that he would not budge from Rome until he would receive all the documents for David from the Pope.⁶⁴ The next day David and Daniel appeared before the Pope and were treated very cordially. David told the Pope that he had already spent almost a year in Rome, and that it was his desire to have the Pope write to Prester John, and to all the Christians through whose country he expected to pass. The Pope promised that he would carry out his request, and David and Daniel left the Vatican rejoicing.⁶⁵

David in his diary gives us a picture of the Jewish community in Rome in the sixteenth century. Hatred toward each other was prevalent. Arrogance against co-religionists and flattery toward the gentiles was the custom. In Rome at that time there were many informers. David encountered two of them, namely Reuben and another, Moses Latino. Reuben was very wicked and would always flatter the gentiles. He spoke scandalous things about David to the Cardinals and secretaries of the Pope, but they refused to listen to him because they knew that he was very wicked.⁶⁶ Another informer

64. Neubauer, op.cit., p.156-7

65. Neubauer, op.cit., p.157

66. Neubauer, op.cit., p.158

told the Pope that David was an impostor and that he should be burned at an auto-da-fé. The Pope became very angry when he heard this, and had him arrested and sentenced to life-imprisonment on a convict ship.⁶⁷ Moses was likewise an enemy of David's, and he spoke against him to Don Miguel, the ambassador of the King of Portugal. Moses wanted to marry Dinah, the sister of Rabbi Joseph Zorfosi, but she was unwilling. Moses thought that David had spoken against him to Dinah, whereupon he retaliated by going to Don Miguel and speaking against David. He accused him of having come to lead the Marranos back to Judaism, just as Joseph had done. Don Miguel was inclined to give credit to this statement, for he had seen the Roman Marranos congregate around David and honor him. David, however, was ready to forgive Moses and prayed to God that all informers might be forgiven.⁶⁸

David remained in the house that the Cardinal had selected for him, and Daniel and the Cardinal saw to it that David was well taken care of, and had everything that he desired. The Jews of Rome came to visit David, and there was usually much feasting and merrymaking. Some of the Jews were jealous of Daniel and began to slander him to David. When Daniel heard of this, he became very angry and left, but David summoned him again to his home. Daniel told David that he knew that the informers had spoken against him, but that which they said was not true. Daniel said: "God forbid that I should do as they spoke, for I have served you

67. Neubauer, op.cit., p.158

68. Neubauer, op.cit., p.158-9

with all my strength for the love of God; I have spoken against the informers in the presence of the Pope, Cardinals, secretaries, ambassador, and all the officials, and they have asked about your honor, and I answered them with words that are good for you, and I cursed the informers in the presence of all these high officials."⁶⁹ David regretted that he had listened to the informers who told him that Daniel was false and not trustworthy, and replied to him: "I have come because of my love for God, His service, Israel, and Jerusalem the holy city. I have come from the east to the west only because of this. Since I have come to Rome, I have not seen such a good, upright, and God fearing man in this district as you. It is fitting for you to share in this mitzvah, and you will acquire for yourself and sons a good name for all Israel."⁷⁰ Daniel promised that he would secure the necessary documents, and within a few days he received them from the Pope. The Pope told Daniel that he would give David permission to leave, and that he should appear before him on the twenty-fourth of Adar-Rishon. David and Daniel appeared before the Pope and the latter said: "I have written a letter for you to Prester John, and also to the King of Portugal, and to all the Christians through whose country you will pass, so that they will help and honor you for God's love and my love." Turning to David, the Pope said: "Be strong and courageous, and do not fear for God is with you." The Pope gave David a shield that he might show it to King Joseph, and a hundred ducats. David did not wish

69. Neubauer, op.cit., p.160

70. ibid.

to accept the money, but the Pope forced him to take it.⁷¹

Leaving the Vatican, David went to the house of Don Miguel, the Portugese ambassador, in order to receive a passport. Don Miguel refused, and promised to send it to him in Pisa. David knew that Don Miguel was scheming and was purposely delaying, and so he became very angry. David was about to strike Don Miguel, but Daniel prevented him from doing this. Even the Pope interceded on David's behalf, but Don Miguel refused to listen to him, and left on a hunting trip. When he returned, David again asked him for the passport but he refused saying that he would send it to him in Pisa. David could do nothing else, he had to believe Don Miguel. On the fifteenth of Adar, David and his servants Raphael Cohen, Joseph Halevi, and Tuvyoh, left for Pisa, exactly a year after his arrival in Rome. David was escorted for five miles out of the city by many Jews.⁷²

Arriving in Ronciglione, David found an army of Francis I, who paid him honors. In Viterbo, David and his servants stayed at the house of Rabbi Joseph Ha-kohen, an honorable Jew. From Viterbo David journeyed to Bolsena, where he spent the Sabbath and was accorded great honor.⁷³ From Bolsena, he traveled to Siena, and stayed there at the house of an honorable Mohammedan. From there, David journeyed on to Pisa to the house of Rabbi Yehiel. Yehiel was very charitable and pious, as were his mother and grandmother. Yehiel of Pisa controlled the money market of Tuscany. He was by no means a heartless money maker, as he was called by

71. Neubauer, op.cit., p.161

72. ibid.

73. Neubauer, op.cit., p.162

Deliver
2-10

An
important
Jew
called
Yshmael
of Rieti

the Christians, but rather a noble charitable soul ever ready to lend a helping hand to the needy. Yehiel was also interested in Hebrew literature, and was friendly with Isaac Abrabanel. When Alfonso V of Portugal captured the African towns of Arzilla and Tangier and carried off Jews captive, the Portugese community wanted to ransom them. Abrabanel placed himself at the head of a committee to collect money for this purpose. As the Portugese Jews were unable to support these ransomed prisoners until they could make their own living, Abrabanel in a letter to Yehiel begged him to make a collection in Italy, which he did.⁷⁴ In Yehiel's house David spent seven months. At the end of a month and a half, David had to send all of his servants away because they could not get along with Tuvyoh. He kept Tuvyoh because he did not want to hurt the feelings of Daniel, since the latter had given Tuvyoh to him.⁷⁵

In the meantime, David awaited the passport that Don Miguel had promised to send. Since he had not received it, David sent an old man named Aaron to Don Miguel to inquire about the passport. The following month, Aaron returned with a letter from Don Miguel stating that the King did not wish David to go to Portugal that year. David, however, felt that this was a lie, and that the King had not written that he should not come to Portugal.⁷⁶ David was greatly worried and began a forty day fast. Yehiel, his mother and his grandmother tried to cheer him and encourage him by giving him presents, and by playing music for him, but

74. Graetz: G. der J., vol.8, p.239-240;(1890)

75. Neubauer, op.cit., p.163

76. ibid.

David could not be made happy. Finally, David decided to send a letter through a Marrano priest to the King of Portugal.⁷⁷ Yehiel treated David very kindly, and every day they would go to the synagogue. David tells us that the conditions of the Jews were terrible, for they were all very poor and miserable. David continually had trouble with his servants. The same problems that confront the modern housewife presented themselves to David. He had to discharge one after another, on account of Tuvyoh, because he would quarrel with them. Indeed, about one third of David's diary deals with his servant problems, which is interesting and entertaining reading, but is of no intrinsic historical worth.

While David was in Pisa, he received a costly silk banner on which was embroidered the ten commandments, and a gold garment from a Signora of Naples. During his stay in Rome,⁷⁸ she had sent him money on three occasions.

While David was in Pisa, Don Miguel was recalled⁷⁹ from Rome as ambassador, and Don Martin was sent in his stead. Immediately upon Don Martin's arrival in Rome, he wrote to David that the King of Portugal had heard about him and invites him to Portugal, and therefore he should leave at once. Daniel, however,

77. Neubauer, op.cit., p.164

78. Neubauer, op.cit., p.166. David does not mention her name in his diary. He merely speaks of her as the Signora of Naples. He says that he heard of her when he was in Alexandria and in Jerusalem, that she redeemed more than a thousand captives, and that she fasts every day. Graetz, op.cit., vol.9, p.231-2, states that this woman whom David mentions was the wife of Samuel Abrabanel, and is known as Signora Benvenida Abrabanela. Throughout my readings, I have been unable to find any proof that Graetz is correct, although his assumption is quite logical.

79. Biberfeld, op.cit., p.16, states that Don Miguel was recalled because he had written David that the King of Portugal refused to permit him to enter his country.

advised David that he should not leave at once but should wait until he receives additional documents from the Pope. Daniel sent a messenger to Rome to secure these necessary letters, and he himself left for Florence. Shortly after, the captain of the ship on which David was to sail for Portugal informed David that his ship was to leave the next day. The following day, David left Pisa for Leghorn, from which place the boat was to sail. David was greatly worried, for he had not heard anything from Daniel. That night, Daniel arrived in Leghorn and brought many presents for David from the Pope. On the morning that David was to sail, Daniel gave him one hundred and two ducats, and to each servant he also gave money. Daniel and Yehiel bade farewell to David, who together with his servants Solomon Ha-kohen, Tuvyoh, David Horomani, and Ben Zion set sail from Leghorn for Portugal.

The ship on which David was a passenger stopped near Cadiz, and David sent his servant Tuvyoh to the magistrate of the city with the Pope's letter, and asked that he be permitted to stay there for a day. The magistrate refused to permit this. The captain of the ship then went before the magistrate who told him that he would not permit David to land. The captain then returned and told David that it would be best for him to leave the ship, and enter another belonging to the king of Portugal lest he be ar-

80. Neubauer, op.cit., p.167
81. David does not state that Daniel brought him any additional letters from the Pope, but only mentions the fact that he received from the latter presents. He writes: [הנ]
והוא נתן לי מתנות רבות מאת האפיפיור
:והוא נתן לי מתנות רבות מאת האפיפיור
82. Neubauer, op.cit., p.168-169. Graetz states, op.cit., p.232, that the ship upon which David sailed flew the Jewish flag, but I find no mention of this in David's diary.

rested. David did so, and entered a boat belonging to the King of Portugal going to Almaria.⁸³ From Almaria, David took a boat laden^e with wheat to Tavira. When David reached land near the city of Tavira, he sent the letters of the king and the Pope to the magistrate. The magistrate gave him permission to enter Tavira. When the population heard that David had landed, they came down to the sea-shore to greet him. David rode on a mule through the streets of Tavira, which were lined with Christians and marranos eager to catch a glimpse of the Jewish ambassador. In Tavira, David stayed at the home of a Marrano, who treated him very well. David wrote a letter to the king of Portugal, and after forty days, received two letters from him, the one inviting him to his court, and the other directing all the magistrates in his kingdom to honor him, to accompany him from city to city, and to arrange for his comfort. The magistrate of Tavira likewise received a letter from the king commanding him to provide David with four soldiers, five hundred⁸⁴ ducats, a secretary to supervise the expenditures, and horses. The magistrate carried out his orders, and the next day David left. The people of the city accompanied David for two miles, and then he continued on to the king's court with his retinue. In Beja, David received a hearty welcome from the entire population. From Beja, David journeyed on to Evora, where he was given a grand reception by the magistrate and Marranos. The Christians were aroused at the actions of the Marranos, who swarmed around David and kissed his hands. The priest preached against this action, and said:

83. Neubauer, op.cit., p.169

84. Neubauer, op.cit., p.170

"Honor him greatly, but do not kiss his hand, but only the hand of the King of Portugal alone." ⁸⁵ David tells us, however, that some of them strengthened their hearts, because they believed in him with a perfect faith, just as Israel had believed in Moses their teacher. David did not make any pretenses of being the forerunner of the Messiah, or of possessing unusual powers or wisdom. In every place through which he passed, he would tell the Marranos as follows: "I am the son of King Solomon, and have come to you neither with signs, wonders, nor Cabbala, but only a man of war have I been from my youth until the present day." ⁸⁶ Despite this, wherever David went, he was accorded honor and given gifts by the Marranos and Christians.

At this time, King João III was not in Lisbon, but was staying at Almeirim on account of a plague that was raging in Lisbon. When David came within two miles of Almeirim, he sent a message to the King announcing his arrival. The messengers returned, one of whom was the King's secretary in charge of David's expenditures, and told him that the King had called his counsellors together regarding David's arrival. Some said that officials should be sent to escort David to the King's palace, but Don Miguel, the former ambassador to Italy, but now the prime minister and confidential adviser to the King, advised against such action. The secretary was questioned and had been asked whether the Marranos honored David more than did the Christians. The secretary answered that the Marranos kissed his hand and honored him greatly. When Don Miguel heard this, he said: "Did I not tell you that he came to destroy your kingdom, and to bring the Marranos back to Judaism. If you

85. Neubauer, op.cit., p.171

86. ibid.

send your officers to escort him, all the Marranos, they, their wives, sons, and daughters will go out to meet him and escort him. Then they will take counsel among themselves against the Christians and will again become Jews.⁸⁷ His advisers then counselled the King to send news to David that his grandmother had died, and that he was a mourner and therefore could not honor him, but that he himself should come before him in his palace, and his commands would be carried out. When David heard these words, he hastened to Almeirim, arriving there on a Sunday. He fasted from Sunday until Wednesday, and then came before the King. David was angry because he had not been honored, and refused to kiss the King's hand. David told the King that he was weary from his trip, and requested an audience at a later time. David then took leave of the King and went to Santarem ^{to} at the house of a Marrano. David received many visitors here, both Christians and Marranos. A Marrano, a member of the crew of one of the King's ships, visited David and related to him his travels in Africa, and told him about the island where the small children⁸⁸ of the Marranos were sent by the King.

After a week's stay in Santarem, the King sent for David, and he went before him in Almeirim. David was accompanied by his servants, Solomon Cohen and Ben Zion. The King summoned an old doctor who knew Hebrew to act as an interpreter between David and himself. Both this doctor and Solomon Cohen were deaf, and so

87. Neubauer, op.cit., p.172

88. He probably referred to San Thomas, or Lost Islands (Ilhas perdidas), where King Joao II sent the Jewish children from three to ten years of age to become Christians. The Islands of San Thomas were full of lizards and poisonous snakes, and inhabited by criminals sent there from Portugal. Most of the children died on the way or were devoured by wild beasts.

great difficulty was experienced in trying to make the King understand. At length the King said to David: "I have heard that you speak Arabic well, and since I have an officer among my servants who knows Arabic well, he will listen to your words from beginning to end, and then he will tell them to me. I cannot understand your servants, and even the Marrano, for they only tell me about one tenth of what you say, and the matter that you wish to tell me will not appear to me in a favorable light unless this officer who knows Arabic is called in."⁸⁹ David did not wish to speak Arabic to this official because he feared that the latter had entered into a conspiracy with Don Miguel. Don Miguel told the King not to listen to David unless he spoke in Arabic. David then told the King that he feared to speak to the officer in Arabic because the latter was a Mohammedan and an enemy of his. The King, however, reassured David and said: "If you speak Arabic to this official, I will do everything that you desire, and will listen and understand, and do everything that King Joseph your brother and the Pope of Rome command you. This officer is my servant and would not change your words, for he is one of the most faithful servants in my whole house, and will act as an interpreter between you and me."⁹⁰ David then presented his credentials to the King and told him about his mission, and his journey from the wilderness to Portugal. He requested the

89. From this we learn that David was unable to speak Portuguese, and that his Hebrew was so poor and "jargonized", that the Marrano physician was not able to understand him.

90. Neubauer, op.cit., p.174

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not correct

King to give him ammunition for his brother King Joseph. Though Don Miguel spoke against him, the King was pleased with David, and promised to carry out his wishes. The King invited David to move to Almeirim to be near him, which David did, and a beautiful house⁹¹ was arranged for him near the palace.

David had a great deal of trouble with his servant Tuvyoh. The latter committed an immoral act with a Mohammedan servant-girl whom David had converted to Judaism. David was forced to return her to her former master. The Arabic interpreter came to visit David on one occasion and found this converted Mohammedan girl. He returned and told the King about this, and the latter summoned David and asked him about her. David told the King that he had converted her, and strange to say, the King was happy to hear it. David states that there were many Mohammedans living in Portugal because of a great famine in Morocco. Many of them sold their children to the kingdom of Portugal in order to keep them alive. It was to this group that the Mohammedan girl belonged.⁹²

Later, a Mohammedan official, a magistrate of the King of Fez, visited David and brought him letters from the Jews of Fez. This magistrate asked David about his mission, and David told him that he had come to Portugal to secure weapons and ammunition. David also stated that his plan was to conquer the land of Israel and its environs first, and then God would hand over all⁹³ the kingdoms to the power of the King of the Jews in Jerusalem.

91. Neubauer, op.cit., p.175

92. Neubauer, op.cit., p.178

93. ibid.

The magistrate then asked David whether the Jews in Fez and the Mohammedans consider him a prophet or a Messiah. David's answer is indeed significant, for from it we learn that he did not consider himself a forerunner of the Messiah, or even a Messiah as some have accused him of being. He states in his answer: "God forbid ! I am a greater sinner against God than they, and have killed many. On a certain day, I killed forty of the enemy. I am not wise, nor a Cabbalist, nor a prophet, nor a son of a prophet, but I am only a commander of an army, a son of King Solomon, of the descendants of David, the son of Jesse. And my brother King Joseph rules over three hundred thousand in the wilderness of Chabor. All the Marranos who are subjects of the King of Portugal, and all the Jews in Italy, and in all places through which I passed, regarded me as being a wise man, or a Cabbalist, or a prophet, or a son of a prophet. But I said to them, 'God forbid ! for I am a sinner, and have been a man of war from my youth until the present.'⁹⁴"

David received many guests and delegations from Fez, and from other places in northern Africa. Rabbi Abraham of Saffi likewise visited him. David also received many letters from Jews throughout the world, and many of them believed that the time of the Messiah was near at hand.

David states in his diary that the Marranos honored him greatly and believed and trusted in him. He tells us that even the small sons of the Marranos of four years and over fasted every Monday and Thursday and hoped for the salvation of God.

94. Neubauer, op.cit., p.179

He states that the Marranos believed in God and upheld their religion.⁹⁵ David went about and tried to make peace among them. He comments upon the fact that they were strong and warlike and braver than the other Jews with whom he came into contact.⁹⁶

David was again summoned before the King, but instead of finding the King awaiting him he found Don Miguel. Refusing to speak to the latter, he left angrily. The King sent for him again and told him that since he was busy, preparing for his sister's marriage, he should make known his wishes to Don Miguel. David refused to do this, and explained to the King that Don Miguel was his enemy. The King then told David that he should write down his wishes in the presence of a priest and a secretary,⁹⁷ and then he would read them in his leisure. David did accordingly, and then departed.⁹⁸

David continued to have trouble with his servants. Tuvyoh and Ben Zion went to Don Miguel and slandered David, and in return, asked him for a passport, which he gladly granted them, and they left Almeirim. The Marranos protested to David regarding his servants, so that David was happy when they left.⁹⁹

On one occasion, a group of Marranos were arrested in David's house, but through his intervention, they were freed. The King then summoned David and said to him: "I rejoice that you

95. By this statement, David probably meant that the Marranos were practicing Judaism secretly. This is a well-known fact, for the Inquisition had not yet been introduced into Portugal.

96. Neubauer, op.cit., p.181

97., 98. Neubauer, op.cit., p.183-185

99. Neubauer, op.cit., p.186

have come to help me and to bring the Marranos back to Judaism. I heard that the Marranos pray with you and read your books by night and day, and that you have made a synagogue for them.¹⁰⁰

When David heard this, he became angry and said: "I have not come from the east to the west for this purpose, but only to magnify your kingdom, and to be in your service. Kings should not have their ears open to informers who do not speak the truth, for everything they tell you is a lie and not the truth at all." When the King heard this, he apologized because he saw that David was angry, and he promised to grant him aid.¹⁰¹

An ambassador of Charles V came to Almeirim to accompany João III's sister to the place where she was to be married. This ambassador visited David and told him that Charles V was anxious to meet him.¹⁰²

On one occasion, the King summoned David and said to him regarding the Marranos: "Be wise, what do you want to do with them? what about the report that I heard to the effect that you circumcised my secretary?"¹⁰³ David denied this, and said that it was a lie. On another occasion, the King said to David: "I am happy because you have come to help me, but you will destroy my kingdom because all the Christians say you are bringing the Marranos back to Judaism, and all the men, women, and children who come to your house, kiss your hands, and when you eat, all the sons of the Marranos bow down to you." David then answered the King: "I have

100. The King was evidently sarcastic.

101. Neubauer, op.cit., p.187-188

102. This is probably the reason why David later went to see Charles V.

103. Diogo Pires, who later changed his name to Solomon Molcho. He will be discussed fully subsequently.

come to you from the east to the west, and my house is open to everyone, both Christian and Marrano. I do not know who are Christians or who are Marranos, and I am unable to do another thing, but my house will be open to everyone until you send me away in peace. You listen to informers who speak untrue words, words that are false and deceitful, yet you believe them." The King then told David to promise to prohibit the Marranos from kissing his hand, and then he told him also that he would give him eight ships and four thousand fire-arms.

It is no wonder that David was honored and almost worshipped by the Marranos. The Marranos felt that even though David had not declared himself to be the forerunner of the Messiah, they would soon be delivered and would behold the new Jerusalem in all its splendor. They gathered about him, kissed his hands, and treated him as their savior. Messianic hopes were in the air. In the vicinity of Herrera, a Marrano maiden proclaimed herself a prophetess, and declared that she had seen visions, and would soon lead her followers into the Holy Land. Many of the Marranos believed her, and when discovered, she was burned together with thirty-eight adherents.¹⁰⁴ David, however, knowing that his position was insecure, discouraged the Marranos from such action.

Even the King's secretary Diogo Pires, later known as Solomon Molcho, came to David and asked to be circumcised, saying that he had dreamed that he had circumcised himself. David refused, for he feared that the authorities might discover it, thus endangering his life. David advised Diogo saying: "Keep your position with the King until God will grant you the opportunity,

104. Graetz, op.cit., p.233

for He knows the intentions of man. Be careful and do not do this thing now lest the Marranos, you, and myself be put in great danger." David states that Molcho disobeyed him and circumcised himself, and then fled. The King blamed David for this, who according to his diary was entirely innocent.¹⁰⁵

Shortly after the Diogo Pires affair, David was called before the King, who told him the following: "I have a great deal of business to transact, and I am unable to send ships to the east with you either this year or next year. If, however, you want to return home, go in peace and I will give you permission, and will bless you all the days since you left your country to serve and help me. However, I am unable to send ships with you because of the business I have to transact here in the west. Do you desire to go to the Emperor and tell him your wishes, or do you want to return to Rome, or go to Fez? Choose the course you desire."¹⁰⁶ David became very angry when he heard this, and after the King told him that he would have a week in which to make up his mind where to go, he left.¹⁰⁷

A week later, the King sent for David and asked him where he was going. David answered: "I want to return to Rome to the Pope. Now write me letters which will act as a witness between you and me for King Joseph my brother, that I reached your kingdom. Give me also a passport (which I may show) to all the Christians." The King promised to do this and added that he would send a letter to Tavira commanding them to give David three hundred

105. Neubauer, op.cit., p.190

106. Neubauer, op.cit., p.191. Undoubtedly, João's changed attitude toward David was due, as the Queen later told him, to the Diogo Pires affair, for the King was influenced by his court and especially by Don Miguel, and told that David was responsible for this act.

ducats. Three days later, David left Almeirim for Santarem. 108

The King, his brother the Cardinal, and the Queen, asked David about the flags he carried with him, and he answered that they were a sign among the tribes. The Cardinal had the temerity to tell David that if he would accept Christianity, he would be made a high official. David became angry when he heard this, and said: "You want me to be like the raven which Noah sent forth from the ark but which never returned. This thing will not please the kings, for I am the son of a king, of the descendants of David the son of Jesse. My ancestors did no such thing, so far be it from me, for I did not come from the east to the west for this, but only to serve God and to acquire a good name so that the whole world might praise me for the mission on which I came." 109

David received the necessary documents from the King, but he was not satisfied with them because they were not written on parchment. He returned them to the King, who in turn told Don Miguel to copy them on parchment. Don Miguel did so but changed their contents considerably. After David received the letters, he took leave of 110

the King in the middle of the year 1526.

David was accompanied by Solomon Cohen, Judah Pirnati, Aldico the Apostate, two other servants, and the Arabic interpreter. Their first stop was Coruche, where only a few Marranos lived. David spread out the flags there and the people who saw them admired them. He describes the flags by saying that one

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- 107. Neubauer, op.cit., p.191
 - 108. Neubauer, op.cit., p.193
 - 109. Neubauer, op.cit., p.195
 - 110. Neubauer, op.cit., p.195-196

was of gold and white silk, and the other of green silk; the former had a gold border and in the center were two tablets on which were written the ten commandments held by two lions. This flag also had written on it Deuteronomy and hymns. The second flag made of green silk was similar to the first one, with the exception that its border was silver.¹¹¹

After leaving Coruche, David arrived at Corimiro, where he was a guest at a Marrano's house. Here in Coimiro, David had trouble with Aldico who tried to conspire against him, so he had to discharge him. Leaving Corimiro, David journeyed on to Evora, and from there to Beja. In Beja, many Marranos came to see David, and began to weep. David consoled them by saying: "Trust in God forever, and do not fear for you will merit to see the rebuilding of Jerusalem. I did not come to the King this time to take you to Jerusalem, because we have to fight large battles there, but keep on praying until you come (to Jerusalem), until the land will be ours, and then we will offer sacrifices and after that we will come for you to bring you to the rehabilitated land. This time I came only to tell you the good news that salvation is near at hand."¹¹² In Almodovar and Loule, David was treated very well and was honored by the magistrates and the populace. In Tavira, David was given a beautiful home, but he did not receive the three hundred ducats because Don Miguel had changed the contents of the letter. David then wrote a letter to the King and sent him a horse as a present through his servants Aldico, whom he had taken

111. Neubauer, op.cit., p.197

112. Neubauer, op.cit., p.199

back, and Christopher.¹¹³

David was very friendly with the magistrate in Tavira, and gave him many presents. This magistrate was recalled and a new one, a friend of Don Miguel's, was sent. Immediately upon his arrival, he demanded to know why David had not left. He said that the King had given David permission to remain only two months, and he had already stayed almost four. He advised¹¹⁴ the Marranos not to visit David lest they endanger their lives. That magistrate was replaced by another who came to David bearing a letter from the King stating that David must leave at once. David complied and departed at once, going first to Paroa. From Paroa, he journeyed on to a village by the shores of the Mediterranean¹¹⁵ and from there went to the city of Villa Nova de Portimao. David spent the night in a camp and while asleep, the authorities came¹¹⁶ to search for Marranos who might be found with David. The magistrates told David to leave on a certain ship at once, but David refused because he had been warned that his life would be in danger were he to sail on that boat. The magistrates then tried to force him to leave, but David fled. He was pursued, overtaken, and brought¹¹⁷ back. Christopher, David's servant, returned with a letter from the King which read as follows: "I gave you permission to stay for two months, but you have remained four, and have stayed only for the purpose of bringing the Marranos back to Judaism. I received letters from the magistrates of Tavira every week, and I know

113. Neubauer, op.cit., p.200-1
114. Neubauer, op.cit., p.203
115. Neubauer, op.cit., p.205
116. Neubauer, op.cit., p.206
117. ibid.

about all your dealings with the Marranos, for I saw what you did in my presence, how much the more behind my back. But I did not want to harm you because you said you came only because of my love and for my welfare. Because of this I did not listen to anyone when he spoke evil against you, but now I say to you, 'go in peace to your country as soon as this letter reaches you, and do not delay.'¹¹⁸ David also received a letter from the Arabic interpreter stating that Don Miguel was responsible for that letter, and was instrumental in arousing the King's hostility against him. He advised David that the best thing for him to do would be to leave at once. David told the magistrate that he did not wish to leave ⁱⁿ the boat they had selected for him because he feared for his life. They acceded to his request, and another captain promised to take David to Leghorn for two hundred ducats. A week later, David with his servants, Solomon Cohen and Carbeleo, boarded the ship and after the authorities had searched the ship for Marranos¹¹⁹ and fire-arms, it set sail from Lagoa.

But David was not destined to reach Leghorn. A strong wind steered the boat out of its course, and they were forced to anchor near Almeria on the Spanish coast. The magistrate of this place was about to arrest David since no Jews were permitted in Spain, when David produced the letter from the King of Portugal, and he was given temporary freedom in the city. But the magistrate said that he would have to write to Charles V to ascertain what should be done to David. David entered Almeria and stayed at the magistrate's house, where he was treated very well.¹²⁰ David states that this magistrate was a secret Jew although

118. Neubauer, op.cit., p.207

119. Neubauer, op.cit., p.208-9

he refused to admit it. David wrote to the Emperor and his wife, whom he had known while she was at her brother's court, João III, that he was arrested. After waiting twelve days, an answer came from the Emperor stating that no evil should be done David, but honor and freedom should be given him throughout his entire kingdom, and all his needs should be taken care of.¹²¹ After receiving that letter, David left Almeria and reached a city called Sorbas, journeying from there to Purchena, Lorca, and to Albagit. David spent the Sabbath here, and on Sunday arrived in Cartagena, and stayed here in a beautiful place. When David showed the magistrates the letter from the Emperor, they honored him, and everyone in the city came to visit him. That same day on which he was honored, one of the magistrates came and wanted to arrest David. He had with him a letter from the Grand Inquisitor of Murcia ordering David's arrest. After the Magistrate saw the letters that David had from the Emperor and from the Pope, he said that he would write the Grand Inquisitor and ask him what to do.¹²² David was made a prisoner, however, in the magistrate's home until the messenger returned with a letter from the Grand Inquisitor stating that David was permitted to remain.¹²³

This is the last statement in David's diary as it has come down to us to-day. The remainder of the diary seems to have been lost, so we must depend on other sources for an account of David Reubeni, after he received a letter from Charles V granting him freedom of movement. From the report of Solomon Cohen, who recorded all the expenses incurred by David, we learn that the

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120. Neunauer, op.cit., p.211
121. Neubauer, op.cit., p.213
122. Neubauer, op.cit., p.215
123. Neubauer, op.cit., p.216

more likely v. B. 13
boat on which David was traveling was shipwrecked on an island in May 1527, and David was taken prisoner by a Spanish nobleman of Cleromont. This nobleman took advantage of the situation, and extracted much ransom from David.¹²⁴ At the end of Solomon's report, he states that this nobleman brought David in July 1527 to Avignon. The Jewish communities of Avignon and Carpentras then ransomed him. In addition, these communities received from the Pope a guarantee¹²⁵ protecting David from further persecution.

It is indeed astonishing to read the amount of money which David expended on his trip. The travel expenses for the round trip to Portugal were about twenty two hundred ducats. David was very generous in the giving of presents, and it is estimated that they cost him about two thousand ducats. Then too, the valuables that the nobleman took away from him amounted to an enormous sum.

It is in Avignon that we leave David for the present, and enter now into a discussion of one whom David influenced greatly, Solomon Molcho.

124. Neubauer, op.cit., p.216
125. Neubauer, op.cit., p.223

CHAPTER IV

DAVID REUBENI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SOLOMON MOLCHO

Solomon Molcho was born a Marrano in Portugal in 1501. He was called Diogo Pires until after his conversion to Judaism when he changed his name to Solomon Molcho. He received a good education, and studied both Latin and Portuguese. He was very brilliant, and at the age of twenty became the secretary to King João III. He spoke Latin very well and was gifted with natural eloquence. He was handsome, graceful, and imaginative, and it required only a spark to kindle his imagination and to excite him to eccentricities. It was David Reubeni who supplied this spark which resulted in his martyrdom. ¹²⁶ Joseph ^{HA-}Kohen states: "When Solomon saw David, God touched his heart, and he returned to the God of his fathers, and circumcised himself. He knew nothing of the law of God and of Holy Scriptures in those days, but it came to pass that when he was circumcised, God gave him wisdom so that in a short ¹²⁷ time he became wiser than any man." From David's diary we learned that he treated Molcho coldly and advised him not to circumcise himself. Solomon disregarded this advice and circumcised himself. This fact is substantiated by a letter that Molcho wrote to Joseph Taytasak in which he describes how he forced himself on David, and how he was rejected by him as soon as his motive was discovered. He likewise describes how he left Portugal and went to Turkey, and only at the time of the writing of the letter did he intend to visit the Christian countries. ¹²⁸ From this letter, it is apparent that the statement of Joseph Ha-kohen to the effect that Solomon ¹²⁹ went to Italy first, is incorrect.

126. Graetz: Monatschrift, vol.5, p.209-210
127. Joseph ben Joshua Meir Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.19a

Solomon Molcho took up his residence in Salonika, where he found nothing to hinder him from practicing Judaism. In Salonika he made the acquaintance of the Cabbalist Joseph Tatasak, an ascetic Cabbalist who initiated Molcho into the Cabbalistic mysteries. It is marvelous that it was possible for Molcho to learn so much about the Cabbala during the years 1525-1527, that he was able to write a Cabbalistic work entitled ¹³⁰ *חוקי חיים* and likewise his Cabbalistic ¹³⁰ *חוקי חיים*. His contemporaries believed that he acquired knowledge through inspiration. It was thought that a Magid, a heavenly messenger, brought him wisdom in the silence of the night.

Wherever he went, he established connections with the Cabbalists. At Adrianople, Molcho converted Joseph Caro, who had left Spain when a boy and had hitherto busied himself entirely with Talmudic learning, to the Cabbala. That Molcho was in Palestine is clear from his second letter, and we learn also that ¹³¹ he had a lover there named Shalsholet. We do not know exactly how long he stayed in Palestine, but we know that before January 1530 he was in Rome.

Solomon considered himself the forerunner of the Messiah, and felt that he was called to accept the role of Elijah, and was anxious to speak of the approaching redemption to the kings of Christendom. Before going to Rome, Molcho stayed for some time in Ancona, and Pesaro. Molcho came by boat to Ancona,

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128. Graetz: *Geschichte der Juden*, 1866, vol. 9, p. xlvi. He left Portugal in 1526.
 129. Joseph Ha-kohen, *op. cit.*, p. 19a
 130. *Monatschrift*, vol. 5, p. 242
 131. Graetz: *Geschichte etc.* 1866, vol. 9, p. lxi

which next to Venice was the junction between the Occident and the Orient, and was crowded with Jews going to the Orient. The Marranos of Ancona whom the Popes from Alexander VI to Clement VII had given protection, were afraid to become entangled in the fate of Solomon Molcho. They even spoke against him to the Cardinal and told him that he was an apostate from Christianity. He was called before the Cardinal and admitted that the charge was true. The Cardinal was unable to do anything because there was freedom of religion in the estates of the Church. The Cardinal accordingly dismissed him but told him that he should not preach to the Christians against Christianity. But Molcho did not obey the Cardinal and continued preaching in the synagogues. Solomon made the acquaintance in Ancona of the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere I, who took him to his home at Pesaro and established for him a residence there.¹³²

Solomon was not satisfied to stay in Pesaro, but was anxious to go to Rome to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Arriving at the outskirts of Rome, Solomon began to pray and asked God to forgive Israel. He took up his residence at a Christian inn, and dressing himself in torn and tattered clothes, so that he looked like a despised and rejected one, he took his stand among the sick and the poor on the bridge over the Tiber near the Vatican.¹³³ He did this in accordance with Messianic tradition which stated that the Messiah would tarry among the lepers and ragged beggars of Rome, to be summoned thence to triumph.¹³⁴ For thirty days Solomon sat here eating only the scantiest food. Molcho finally fell asleep

132. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.19b

133. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.20a

134. Graetz: Geschichte etc., p.242

and had a dream which is indeed significant in the light of subsequent events. The Magid appeared to him and told him that he had come to tell him what was to happen to Christendom. He took Solomon in his dream to Jerusalem, to a place between Mount Zion and Jerusalem. Here Solomon saw two men both clothed in white. One of the men held balances in his hand. Solomon was then told to ask the man about the judgment of the nation, namely Christianity. Solomon then saw a large beast which resembled a fowl of many colors flying about him. Solomon asked about this animal and was told that it was the mother of the great sea monsters and causes the rain to fall. Then Solomon saw another bird similar to the first one though smaller, and was told that this bird was the beast of the field. He was told that these two birds had come to bring about righteousness and justice; righteousness to Israel, and justice to all the nations. While the old man was speaking, a feather of the wing of the large bird fell off and the wind blew it away, and the feathers on the other wing became the color of feathers of a raven. The small bird did not change, but remained the same. There was much thunder and lightning, and Solomon became afraid. Solomon asked the meaning of all this, and was told that the large bird symbolized an earthquake and flood which will occur in Italy and Portugal. The small bird, he was told would come to intercede for the inhabitants of the whole world, and to establish the covenant which God swore after the flood during the time of Noah. Solomon was warned not to stay in Rome during the time of the flood, but should leave and then return later. The lightning, he was told, symbolized two great stars which will be seen in Rome after the flood. One of the stars will symbolize the capitulation of the countries west of Turkey into the hands of the enemy, and the other

earthquake
in Port.
Flood
in Rome

that Israel will rejoice and be happy. Solomon was cautioned to be careful of his life, for on that day many people will seek his life. He was told that in his thirtieth year he would be raised to a higher rank, and after that the Messiah would come, and the dead would be resurrected.¹³⁵

When Solomon awoke, he went back to the inn and decided that he would give himself out as a messenger of Solomon Molcho, so as to avoid being denounced by his enemies. This occurred in February 1530. He was recognized and denounced to the Inquisition. But Solomon, like David, was a friend of Clement VII and of the Cardinals, especially Guilio of Viterbo, Geronimo de Ghinucci, and Lorenzo Pucci, and so succeeded in obtaining a pontifical passport that guaranteed him against harm.¹³⁶ Solomon could now go about unafraid. Every Saturday he preached in the synagogue and won many adherents.¹³⁷

Solomon was so certain that his vision would come true that he left Rome for Venice shortly before the flood which occurred October 8, 1530. Here in Venice he remained a while to have his new Cabbalistic work printed. It was here that he again encountered David Reubeni. David had come to Venice after his unsuccessful attempt to win over the King of Portugal to his cause. In Venice he hoped to secure the aid of the Venetian Republic. When Solomon met David, he asked him about the Cabbala. But just the reverse happened, for David asked Solomon to teach him. Solomon now felt that David had deceived him, and that the latter was acquaint-

135. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.20a-21a

136. Graetz: Geschichte etc., p.243

137. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.21a

ted with the Cabbala. He no longer believed in David's ignorance, but felt convinced that Talmudic and Cabbalistic learning not being in keeping with his character as an ambassador, was assumed¹³⁸ by him in order to deceive people.

While in Venice, Solomon got into a quarrel with a physician named Jacob Mantin. Solomon tried to make peace between him and another physician Elias Chalphon. Mantin disliked this intervention on Solomon's part, and branded him a sorcerer. Solomon had many enemies in Venice among the Jews, who feared for their lives on his account, and so he was poisoned by one of their¹³⁹ number. He recovered, however, and in the spring of 1531, he returned to Rome.

Solomon was now hailed as a great prophet, for his predictions had come true. Rome was visited by a rainstorm on October 9, 1530 which lasted for a week. The Pope was not in Rome when it occurred, probably due to the fact that he heeded¹⁴⁰ Molcho's warning. Likewise in Portugal on January 26, 1531, an earthquake occurred destroying a number of houses in Lisbon and¹⁴¹ burying many persons beneath the ruins.

The Portugese ambassador Bras Neto told Solomon as follows: "If the King had known before you left Portugal that you were so wise, he would have given you permission to follow any¹⁴² religion that you would have desired."

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138. Graetz: G. der J., p.245
139. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.21a
140. Monatschrift, vol.5, p.250
141. Graetz: G. der J., p.245
142. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.21b

But Solomon was constantly persecuted by his enemies. Mantin came to Rome for the purpose of causing the downfall of Solomon. He blamed the Spanish ambassador for honoring Solomon, but he would not listen to him. Mantin then took his case to the Inquisition, and brought witnesses against Solomon from Portugal who testified that Solomon had formerly been a Christian. Solomon was then brought before the Inquisition. He showed the court the letter the Pope had given him granting him freedom. The court took the letter away from him and brought it to the Pope and asked him his reason for issuing it. Clement answered that he needed Molcho for a secret purpose, and that he should not be molested. Mantin then took the letter that Solomon had written to Joseph Taytasak concerning his past life, and his return to Judaism, and had it translated into Latin, and then gave it to the Inquisition tribunal. The letter probably contained disparaging remarks against Christianity, so the Pope was forced to consent to Molcho's being burned. Clement, however, hid Solomon in his own secret chambers, and another was burned in his stead. When the judges of the Inquisition saw that they had been duped, they asked the Pope the meaning of it. The Pope commanded that they be silent about this lest the whole world go astray after Molcho, were it known that Molcho still lived. It was not safe for Molcho to remain in Rome any longer. Escorted by a few faithful servants of the Pope, Solomon Molcho left Rome¹⁴³ in February 1531.

143. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.21b-22a

CHAPTER V

THE END OF DAVID REUBENI AND SOLOMON MOLCHO

We do not know anything about the activity of David Reubeni and Solomon Molcho from the time Molcho left Rome until the summer 1532 when they joined hands again, and conceived the idea of going to see Charles V at Ratisbon. The reason for their going to the Emperor is not clear but possibly it was to petition the Emperor to permit the Marranos and Jews to arm themselves and join the Jewish tribes in attacking the Turks. Or possibly their plan was to ask him to limit the power of the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal. That they came to convert Charles V to Judaism has no foundation. Charles V had called the Imperial Diet of Ratisbon together at that time for a discussion of Suleiman and the siege of Vienna, and also for the purpose of bringing about peace between the Catholics and Protestants.

With a banner floating, on which was embroidered Machbi,-- David and Solomon traveled to Ratisbon by way of Ferrara and Mantua, and were received by the Emperor. At Ratisbon, they found a Jewish Stadtlan, Josel of Rosheim. Josel was a favorite of Charles V and received many favors from him. When not occupied with political affairs, he studied and wrote. He composed a book entitled *שירת ירושלים* in his spare time. He loved to study, and said: "Happy were the men of old who tried to escape the vanities of this world in mind and thought in order to delve into heavenly matters."

144. Graetz: G. der J., p.251

145. Monatschrift, vol.5, p.258. The Dominicans in Spain and Portugal had influenced João to revoke Manoel's law against the

When Josel met Solomon, he tried to dissuade him from presenting his ideas to the Emperor. Josel felt that if the Emperor would learn that he had dealings with Solomon, he would get angry and refuse to grant his favorite any privileges. Josel felt that it would be for the good of all the Jews in Germany were he not to associate with this visionary, though he respected him, as he wrote in the *Shema* *Shema* *Shema* , - "In the year 1532, I had to come before the Emperor on the day the Council met in the city of Ratisbon to appear before them in behalf of the Jewish people..... In those days, came this strange man, the proselyte called Solomon Molcho, with strange ideas to arouse the Emperor by saying that he came to call forth all the Jews for a war with Turkey. When the Emperor heard what was in his mind, I wrote a letter to Molcho warning him not to arouse the Emperor lest he burst forth like a fire."

The Council was meeting during a crucial period in German history. The Turkish army was attacking Europe and was only a few days distance from Vienna. Within the country itself there was civil war between the Catholics and Protestants. It was in such a state of affairs that Charles appealed to the Christians at Ratisbon to forget petty differences and to unite against the Mohammedans.

 Josel knew that Charles was cruel and possessed little mercy. In Spain, Portugal, Naples, and Belgium he had

Inquisition. The Pope signed a bull September 17, 1531 establishing the Inquisition in Portugal.

146. Monatschrift, vol.5, p.257

146. Monatschrift, vol.5, p.257
147. Saul Pinchas Rabinowitz: משפחת רבינו שמואל, p.91-92

148. Rabinowitz, op.cit., p.92

149. *ibid.*

strengthened the arms of the Inquisition and commanded to bring hundreds and thousands of Jews and heretics to the auto da fé. In Germany the Jews enjoyed peace, and especially Josel enjoyed the Emperor's favor. Josel's main purpose in life was to do good acts for his co-religionists, and he continually asked favors for them from the Emperor. Josel felt that David and Solomon would cause a great deal of trouble for the Jews, and advised¹⁵⁰ them for the sake of Israel to withdraw from Ratisbon and not annoy the Emperor, who had enough trouble of his own.

But David and Solomon refused to heed the advice of Josel and consequently suffered. Joseph Ha-kohen tells us that Solomon would go to the Emperor and would speak with him. The Emperor probably became disgusted with their annoying presence, and had them put in chains and taken to Mantua. There they were judged by a clerical court and Molcho was sentenced as a renegade to be burned at the stake. When Solomon was to be burned, in November 1532, he was gagged, so that he would be unable to cry out. When the fire under him was about to be kindled, the gag was removed, and he was told that if he would repent and become a Christian, he would be pardoned. He answered that his only regret was that in his youth he had been a Christian, and his hope was that God would receive favorably his soul. The mob became indignant when they heard this, and he was immediately thrown to the flames.¹⁵¹ Many of Molcho's followers refused to believe that he had perished on the stake. Some said that he had escaped death the second time just as he had on the first occasion. Some said that

150. Rabinowitz, op.cit., p.93

151. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.236

they saw him a week after his auto da fe; others maintained that he visited his bride at Safet.¹⁵²

In one of the old synagogues in Prague even to the present day, the relics of Solomon Molcho are to be found. Among them are an 'arba kanfos', two small flags, and his shroud. The silk shroud has many little wooden buttons and an embroidered seam. The little flags are made of red damask silk, on which are embroidered in yellow silk the following verses from the Psalms: 43:1, 96:11, 46:8, 79:6, 83:10, 83:2, 47:6, 94:1, 47:4, 9:21, 33:3, 34:21, 76:4, 90:15, 130:1, 140:4, 47:9; Isaiah 40:2; Lamentations 3:66; and II Samuel 22:35 and 22:38. Before verse nine of Psalm 47 is added: "The Lord is King, the Lord was King, the Lord will be King for ever and ever." It is possible that these verses were the maxims of Molcho. These biblical verses have little connection with each other, but they breathe a belligerent spirit as is fitting for a propagandist of the Messianic idea.¹⁵³

Solomon wrote the following works: (i) "Sermons"; (ii) *אשר נאמר*; (iii) Cabbalistic dissertations; (iv) "Opinion of the Year of Redemption"; (v) Poems; (vi) *אשר נאמר*; (vii) His diary beginning *של יום ראשון* *אשר נאמר* *אשר נאמר* *אשר נאמר*.¹⁵⁴

David did not suffer the death of a martyr. Charles took him in chains to Bologna and later, in April 1533, brought him to Spain, and he was cast into the Inquisition prison.¹⁵⁵ The Inquisition had no power over him since he was a Jew. A Portuguese source tells us that he was still living in 1535. The place¹⁵⁶

152. Monatschrift, vol.5, p.260

153. Alfred Grotte: "Die 'Reliquien' des Salomo Molcho", Monatschrift, vol.67, p.167-170

where he was imprisoned is not known, nor is his end known, but he was probably poisoned or died from suffering.¹⁵⁷

We have seen in a previous chapter how the advent of David had retarded the introduction of the Inquisition into Portugal, and now I will try to show briefly the conditions of the Marranos after David was forced to leave Portugal. It was stated before that David was forced to leave because of the Diogo Pires¹⁵⁸ affair and was accused of trying to bring the Marranos back to Judaism. In the report of the Inquisitor of Badajoz, named Selaya, to the King of Portugal on March 30, 1528, we read a statement as follows: "Two or three years ago, a certain Jew came to Portugal from a foreign land and spoke to his co-religionists that they should prepare themselves to receive the Messiah, who will soon come and gather them from every land and lead them to the promised land. He received much support, and many heretics fled to Portugal, where they were sheltered. So many of the heretics collected on the border that an armed band of them attacked the city of Badajoz.¹⁵⁹ They had attacked Badajoz in order to rescue some Marrano women who were imprisoned in the Inquisition dungeon.

David had probably already left Portugal. João III now saw the effect of David's stay in Portugal, and influenced by the clerical party, began to make plans for the introduction of the Inquisition. Other incidents occurred which made the King

154. Rieger, op. cit., p.415

155. Joseph Ha-kohen, op.cit., p.23b n

156. Graetz: G. der J., vol.9, p.xl

157. Graetz: G. der J., p.255

158. Graetz: G. der J., p.xxxviii-xxxix

*See
from
ibid -
159*

decide to introduce the Inquisition. The Bishop of Ceuta, Henrique, a former Franciscan monk, burned five Marranos suspected of Jewish practices in his diocese of Olivença in 1530 without a trial and without troubling as to whether the tribunal of the Inquisition was or was not sanctioned by the Pope and legally established by the King. Henrique now implored the King to introduce the Inquisition in earnest, so the latter decided to ask Clement VII to sanction the Inquisition, and Bras Neto the Portugese ambassador at Rome received orders to obtain a bull from the Pope establishing the Inquisition in Portugal.¹⁵⁹ The Marranos had friends among some of the clergy however, especially Ferdinand Coutinho, Bishop of Algarve, and Diogo Pinheiro, Bishop of Funchal, who believed that the Marranos could be won over through gentle means and not through force.¹⁶⁰

At the time that Bras Neto presented the King's mandate for the introduction of the Inquisition, Solomon Molcho was enjoying the favor of the Pope and the Cardinals. Solomon had just returned to Rome after the flood, and had been hailed as a prophet. The result was that the Pope refused to sanction the introduction of the Inquisition into Portugal. In a letter of Bras Neto dated June 11, 1531, and addressed to King Joao, he states that the Pope's aversion to grant the bull sanctioning the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal, was due to his partiality for the Jewish Prince from Asia.¹⁶¹

After Solomon's departure from Rome, a different feeling toward the Marranos arose. A Portugese agent obtained a bull

159. Graetz: G. der J., p.239

160. Graetz: G. der J., p.240

161. Elkan Adler: J.Q.R., vol.15, O.S., p.421-422

from the Pope December 17, 1531 establishing the Inquisition, although several of the Cardinals opposed it. ¹⁶² The Pope who had always been a friend of the Marranos and the Jews included the Lutherans under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, and was careful to see that the Dominicians did not acquire power over the Marranos.

Diogo de Silva, the King's confessor, and a Franciscan was appointed Inquisitor General of Portugal. Three tribunals were established, at Lisbon, Evora, and Coimbra. It was not until 1536 that the Inquisition was introduced into Portugal, and in 1537 we see from the Spanish State Papers that the Inquisition in Portugal was directed first against the Moriscos and not against the Marranos. On February 7, 1537, the King issued an edict ordering that all Jews must wear a badge in order that they might be distinguished from the Christians. In February 1539, Eustace Chapuys wrote to the Queen of Hungary from Lisbon that as yet there was no Inquisition in Portugal. In the year 1540, the auto da fe began in earnest against the Marrano, but it was not until after 1560 that they became ¹⁶³ numerous.

162. Graetz: G. der J., p.248

163. Elkan Adler: Auto da Fé and Jew; p.34-35

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Before bringing this thesis to a close, it may be well to say a few words about the style of David Reuben's diary. Neubauer claims that the Hebrew style of David's diary is that of a German Jew, and asserts that David might have been such, although a native of Egypt who knew Arabic as his mother tongue.¹⁶⁴ The manuscript as printed in Neubauer is to be found in the Bodleian Library. Neubauer does not believe that it is the original because of the many mistakes and frequent omissions. This manuscript came to the library among the Michael Manuscripts in 1848, being then numbered 560. It has been missing since 1867 and the text as we have it is printed from a facsimile which fortunately had been made by the Rev. J. Cohen. As to the style of the Hebrew, I regret that my knowledge of the language does not permit me to distinguish between a German style of Hebrew, and Hebrew as employed by a Jew from Arabia. However, I will attempt to point out some of the characteristics of David's style and even some of his mistakes as I found them in his diary. He often uses feminine nouns with masculine verbs, as for example הָיָה בָּהֶן .¹⁶⁵ He uses the same word in both genders, for example הָיָה , which is always masculine, he uses at times in the feminine.¹⁶⁶ He uses the plural of nouns with singular verbs, as for example הָיוּ הַיּוֹדִים .¹⁶⁷ David's style is very simple. He uses plain, ordinary language which is as one would

164. Neubauer, op.cit., p.xiii
 165. Neubauer, op.cit., p.154
 166. Neubauer, op.cit., p.142
 167. Neubauer, op.cit., p.141

expect from a military man. At times it is difficult to understand everything due to faulty constructions, but allowance must be made for errors made in copying.

After studying his diary and the works written about him, it is my humble opinion that David Reubeni left Arabia for the purpose of securing aid for his fellow Jews who were harassed by the Mohammedans there. It is my theory that at that time there were Jews living in Arabia who carried on a spice trade. It is likely that they were frequently attacked by the Bedouins and were robbed. I believe that the idea of a Jewish kingdom was a pure invention on the part of David in order to secure aid from the Christians. It is possible that there might have been a large number of Jews living in that district then, and they might even have had some political organization, but that they were the descendants of the ten tribes is probably a fiction invented by David to arouse sympathy and interest. David knew that at that time the Turk was hated in Europe by all the great powers including the Pope, and he thought that it was an opportune moment for him to secure aid in fighting the common enemy. This in brief was his mission; the rest was mere embellishment.

Handwritten note on left margin:
It is likely that they were frequently attacked by the Bedouins and were robbed.

It is a keen sense of regret to me that we do not possess the complete diary of David Reubeni. I can now appreciate the feelings of scholars who discover lost fragments of manuscripts, men, who in the eyes of the world appear as dry archaeologists, but who through their diligent work are adding to the thought and progress of the world. It is my fervent prayer that some day the remainder of the diary will be found which will throw new light on the character of DAVID REUBENI.