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JEWISH HISTORY AS APOLOGETICS:

Elijah Capsali's Treatment of the Jews of Spain and Portugal in his Seder Eliyahu Zuta

Kenneth L. Brickman

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Gwen Marcus, to whom I dedicate my thesis. I can think of no more appropriate words with which to express my gratitude to her than those which appear at the top of our Ketubah:

זה דודי וזה רעי בנות ירושלם.

This is my beloved and this is my friend O daughters of Jerusalem. (Song of Songs 5:16)

Four years after our Ketubah was inscribed, these words have taken on new meaning. I thank Gwen for working together with me to build a home founded on love and friendship, a home in which each of us has been able to pursue our own career goals while helping to advance the other's.

INTRODUCTION

Elijah (Eliyahu) Capsali, author of the Seder Eliyahu Zuta, is the last member of the distinguished Capsali family whose name is recorded in the annals of Jewish history.* The first reference to this family is found in the records of the Ottoman Empire of the early fifteenth century. Documents from that time mention Elijah Capsali, the great-grandfather of the author of the Seder. Elijah Capsali lived in Greece on Cape Capsali in the south of Morea. He had two sons, Moses and David. The latter had one son, Elkanah, who was the father of the author of the Seder.

Elkanah Capsali lived in Turkey in the latter half of the fifteenth century. He was a talmudist and a prominent philanthropist. Elkanah studied with his uncle, Moses Capsali, in Constantinople. Moses Capsali, who was born in 1420 and died in 1495, served as head of the academy in Constantinople and the leader of Constantinople's Jews. After Elkanah completed his studies with his uncle, he settled in Candia on the island of Crete where he quickly became a respected member of the community.

Elkanah Capsali served as Candia's rabbi as well as its constable. The constable of the Jewish community acted as the civil leader of all the Jews of Crete. As constable, Elkanah Capsali directed the relief efforts for the Spanish exiles who came to Crete in 1492 and 1493. Elijah Capsali praises his father's work in the Seder amd notes that he collected vast sums of money for the refugees and personally supported many destitute Jewish exiles.

Elijah b. Elkanah Capsali was born in Candia about 1490. In 1508,

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*Biographical material is taken from the articles on Elijah Capsali in the Jewish Encyclopedia and the Encyclopedia Judaica.

he went to Padua to study with the great scholars of northern Italy. Capsali had intended to study with Judah Minz, but he died eight days after his arrival in Padua. Capsali, therefore, studied with Meir Katznellenbogen, Minz' son-in-law and successor. In 1515, Capsali returned to his home in Crete. Three years later, he was appointed rabbi of Candia when the acting rabbi, Menahem del Medigo, became too old to officiate. In 1523, five years after Capsali became rabbi of Candia, he was also appointed the constable of the community. He assumed this position as the plague was beginning to ravage the island of Crete and remained in it throughout this terrible calamity. For four years Capsali devoted himself to curtailing the suffering of the Jews and relieving the stricken.

Capsali's primary responsibility until his death in 1555 was to make halakhic decisions for the Jews in his community. In the process of writing and publishing his Takkanot and responsa, Capsali corresponded with the preeminent scholars of his time, including Joseph Caro. The collections of his legal decisions demonstrate that Capsali displayed a remarkable independence in deciding legal matters and often took unpopular positions. For example, Capsali felt that the accepted custom of selling honors in the synagogue was inappropriate, so he abolished it. Instead, he ordered that honors such as the aliyot to the Torah on Simchat Torah should be given to the community's scholars. Capsali's decisions were often opposed by his colleagues and his responsa show that he was intolerant of his opponents and often quarreled with them.

While Capsali mostly wrote books of responsa, these works are not as significant as his historical work, the Seder Eliyahu Zuta. The Seder, also referred to as de-Vei Eliyahu, was written in 1523, the year in which

Capsali became constable of Candia. It is primarily a survey of the history of the Ottoman Empire. However, the Seder also includes an account of Spanish history and the suffering of the Jews of Spain and Portugal until the time of the expulsions.

Selections of the Seder first appeared in print in modern times in 1869 in M. Lattes' work, Likkutim Shonim mi-Sefer de-Vei Eliyahu. In my research, I used the critical edition of the complete Seder published in 1975 by Aryeh Shmuelevitz and Shlomo Simonsohn.

In my study of the Seder Eliyahu Zuta, I examined the sections dealing with the history of Spain and Portugal. My goal was to analyze Capsali's approach to the history of the period and determine his principles of selectivity, objectivity, periodization and sources. In reading Capsali's work, one discovers that three factors determined his approach to and presentation of history: his position in the community, the audience for whom the text was intended and the times during which the book was written.

Capsali served as the rabbi and constable of Candia during the height of the Ottoman Empire's power in the Near East.* In 1520, Suleiman extended the borders of the empire to the point where they included most of the eastern Mediterranean, including the land of Israel. During Suleiman's peaceful reign, which lasted until 1560, the Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its military, political and economic power.

Suleiman improved the legal status of the Jews in his realm. He protected individual Jews and Jewish property from attack and allowed Jews to travel freely. The existence of these privileges led to a rapid

*Information on the Ottoman Empire is taken from the article on this subject in the Encyclopedia Judaica.

development of religious institutions and increased interest in Jewish study among the Jews of the Ottoman Empire.

It is no surprise, therefore, that many of the Jews who emigrated from Spain and Portugal in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries settled in the Ottoman Empire. The Jewish exiles established their own communities in which they spoke their own languages and preserved their own traditions.

The chauvinism of the new arrivals, as well as of the native inhabitants, created tension in the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire. The exiles considered themselves to be more cultured, learned and of better lineage. The natives regarded themselves as more worthy of respect because they were the founders of the communities into which the exiles had moved.

It is in this context that Capsali writes the Seder. As a member of one of the most prestigious families of Crete, if not of the entire Ottoman Empire, Capsali sets out to discredit the claims of Spanish and Portugese immigrants, establish his right to lead the entire Jewish community, and preach that those who follow him will participate in the greatest revival of the Jewish people, perhaps even the messianic advent.

Evident throughout Capsali's work are indications that he truly believed that the Messiah would come soon if Jews behaved in such a way as to indicate that they were ready for him. It is understandable why Capsali felt this way. In the early sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was the center of Jewish study. Academies flourished and many volumes of legal literature were written. The leaders of the empire allowed the Jews to practice their faith freely, and even went so far as to prevent the spread of blood libel and other anti-Jewish accusations. In Capsali's

traditional mindset, never before had there been a time in which the Messiah's arrival was more likely.

Unfortunately, Capsali's vision was never realized. After his death, the power of the Ottoman Empire declined and the rights of the Jews were revoked, making it impossible for the Jews to reach the level of cultural and religious achievement for which Capsali had hoped.

Nevertheless, Capsali's work is an important source for the history of Spanish Jewry. One must be careful, however, because Capsali's primary concern was not to leave an accurate and complete history of the Jews of Spain who lived in his community. In writing the Seder, Capsali sought to integrate these people into his community, convince them that he was their legitimate leader, and work together with them in preparation for the Messiah's arrival.

PART I

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Chapter 1

APPROACH

Eliyahu Capsali's introduction to the section of his work, Seder Eliyahu Zuta, which retells the history of Spanish Jewry indicates that Capsali's approach toward history was a contemporary one in the sixteenth century. Like other non-Jewish historians of that period, Capsali was basically a chronicler. His history is a record of the events known by him to have happened to the Jewish population in Spain from the community's founding until its expulsion in 1492. Most of Capsali's information was collected from the Jewish exiles and their descendants, whom he met as head of the community of Candia. In recording this information, Capsali attempted to describe the settlement of the Jews on the Iberian Peninsula; and the misfortunes which this community encountered.[1]

In the style of Renaissance historians, who for the first time began to seek the causes for events in history, Capsali analyzes each event to determine its cause. The closing statement of his introduction makes no pretense of objectivity:

> God saved us (the Jews) from their (Spanish) land, and had compassion on us, and turned to us because of the covenant which He had entered with our ancestors...In all nations, each person invokes the name of his God, and we invoke the name of the Lord, or God.[2]

Capsali intended to respond to the disillusionment and disorientation of the Jewish exiles living in his community. As a rabbi, Capsali knew of only one place in which to search for answers: the Jewish tradition. Through his study, he hopes to demonstrate that this tradition is as valuable for the displaced Jews in the sixteenth century, as it was for their ancestors.

As the last line of his introduction shows, Capsali believed strongly in a covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people. His perception of God's role in this relationship is the central theme of his work. According to Capsali's presentation in the Seder, no human affects the fate of a nation. Earthly leaders only fulfill the plans which God has ordained for the world. Whether or not an individual believes in the God of Israel, He determines the future of each human being.

The implications of this belief are most important for the Jews of Capsali's community who surely considered themselves to be God's chosen people. One would assume that every decision which God makes, and which in turn is enacted by human leaders, must be for the good of Israel. In light of Jewish suffering, this premise seems difficult to support. Capsali, however, developed a cyclical understanding of Jewish history which explains how each event, whether tragic or joyful, which befell the Jews eventually improved their lot.[3] Capsali believed the same series of events occurred in every Jewish community. The Jews were enslaved and persecuted. As their suffering increased, they prayed to God for redemption. In each case God responded to their plea by arranging their redemption.

The actual ongoing process of redemption continuing to the time of the Spanish expulsion consisted of a series of repeated actions. Capsali claimed that each time the Jews were persecuted, God sent a scholar into their midst. These scholars, generally rabbis, entered the affected community and opened a school. In these schools students studied and mastered traditional texts. Upon graduation, each student went out to teach others. Inevitably the spread of Torah study imme-

diately led to the amelioration of all suffering.[4] Capsali concluded that increased devotion to the Law relieved suffering and created a situation in which Jews lived in security and prospered.

Throughout the Seder, Capsali demonstrates how this arrangement improved the lives of individual communities in Spain. In Capsali's community of Spanish and Portugese exiles, the message which he hopes them to draw from his interpretation of these past experiences is clear. The Jewish exiles had suffered. They cried out to God, but had yet to meet the leader who could restore their communities. They yearned for this redeemer.

It should come as no surprise that Capsali imagined such a redemptive leader would be a rabbi. He doubtlessly intended to prove that he was the scholar sent by God to guide the exiles to their national revival. But Capsali first had to convince the exiles that God had not abandoned them. The exiled Jews questioned the power of a God who permitted their persecution and expulsion from Spain. Capsali responded to their doubts by explaining that God influences everything in the world. God is always aware of the Israelites' suffering. Every decision made by a leader, whether Jewish or Gentile, is inspired by the God of Israel. Capsali offered the Jewish exiles several examples as proof of his hypothesis.

Following Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the middle of the fourth century, Jews throughout the Roman Empire were pressured to renounce Judaism and convert to the new faith. In Spain, as well as throughout the Empire, rulers enacted restrictions which limited Jewish rights in an attempt to encourage conversion. Capsali indicated that the restrictions and persecutions which oc-

curred in Spain during this period ended as a result of divine intervention.

God inspired a treaty which was negotiated between Spanish authorities and the leaders of the Jewish community. In exchange for a commitment from the Jews to pray for rain, the Spanish officials ceased all conversion attempts and guaranteed the security of the Jewish community. Although his sources are unclear, Capsali recorded that the treaty was initiated by Spanish authorities, who recognized the power of the God of Israel.[5]

Capsali also believed that God influenced government policy during the persecutions which followed the Christian reconquest of Spain. Though his information in regard to this case is sparse, it appears that Capsali believed that God inspired advisors to the king. They realized the potentially important role which the Jews could play in the development of the land. Once again God's intervention ended the persecution and the Jews prospered.[6]

Capsali further noted that several non-Jews were so impressed by God's omnipotence that they secretly adopted Jewish beliefs and practices. In one such incident, the mystics of Ashkenaz were insulted that Nachmanides had rejected the Kabbalah.[7] They sent a mystic to Spain to enlighten him. The emissary performed several miracles and convinced Nachmanides and his disciples of the efficacy of the Kabbalah.

Non-Jews who witnessed the miracles began to worship the God of Israel. In fact, Capsali claimed that these non-Jews were the first Marranos (secret Jews). They professed Christianity in public, but lived secret lives observing Jewish law.[8]

God's influence extended beyond Gentile conversions. According to Capsali, the rise and fall of every Spanish ruler was ordained by God. Capsali attributed the first major upheaval in Spain--the Moslem conquest of the Visigoths--to God's decision to end the tenure of one ruler and to install another.[9] Similarly, he claimed the Christian reconquest of the peninsula succeeded because God changed the ruling power in Spain.[10] Following the misdeeds of the Moslems, Capsali claims God assisted the Christians' attempt to overthrow the Moslem kingdom and regain power over the peninsula. The reconquest was a slow process taking over three hundred years to complete. Traditionally, its end is marked by the capture of Granada by King Ferdinand. Capsali stressed that God's support determined the battle's outcome before it was fought. Quite simply, God withdrew his support from the Caliph of Granada, and endorsed Ferdinand's plan to annex Granada. Calamity after calamity befell the army of Granada. Ferdinand's forces were victorious.[11]

The Jewish exiles may have been impressed by Capsali's suggestion that many non-Jews accepted Judaism, but undoubtedly they were more interested in his concept of God's aid to Ferdinand in the capture of Granada. This statement may have shocked the exiles. Many of them believed, as did Capsali, that the capture of Granada was the first step toward the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.[12]

With a theory of a divine masterplan, Capsali hoped to restore the exiles' faith in a God who was constantly concerned with their welfare. He also began to restore the exiles' pride in their faith, which Capsali felt was the key to their ultimate redemption. He explained that the persecutions and the expulsion had to be a part of

God's plan for the Jews, because many of those who persecuted them were really secret Jews who also awaited the redemption and the revival of the Jewish nation at which time they, too, could practice their faith publicly.

While Capsali believed that God arranged the history of the world, he assumed that no divine plan could be carried out unless God appointed individuals to fulfill it. The Seder contains abundant examples of these individuals' roles in shaping history. Capsali stresses the importance of these individuals beginning with the earliest immigration of Jews to Spain.

According to Capsali, the first immigration of Jews to Spain followed the Babylonian conquest of Judah in 586 B.C.E. Capsali assumes that the exiles believed that God had destroyed Judah as a punishment for the sins of its people, as it is written in Jeremiah:

> ...because they did not listen to My words--declared God--
> when I kept sending My servants, the prophets... (Jeremiah 29:19)

If one accepts this premise, it is conceivable that King Pedro of Spain, who brought Jews back to his land after the Babylonian destruction, was also acting according to God's wishes. According to Capsali, King Pedro accompanied Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in 586 B.C.E. to Judah, where Pedro accumulated his share of Judean property, including a large number of captives.[13] These Judeans were the basis of Spanish Jewry.

During each change in the ruling power of Spain, Capsali also believes that individuals were placed by God at specific moments of transfer of power. The establishment of the Moslem hegemony over the peninsula was facilitated by an alliance of enemies of the Visigoth

authorities. Each participant in this group had once been betrayed by the Visigoth monarchy.[14] When God abandoned the Visigoths, the members of this alliance invaded and overthrew the government. Similarly, when the time came for the Moslems to fall, there was an alliance of enemies waiting who seized the opportunity and established a Christian monarchy.[15]

One story which Capsali tells illustrates his belief that the Jews of Spain were once aware of God's role in the world. However, they delved so deeply into secular pursuits, neglected the study of Jewish tradition, and thus dismissed God's power. Having served kings and lived among non-Jews, they were convinced that human leaders changed the course of history. The story of Don Abraham Senior demonstrates this confusion.

Don Abraham Senior, as an advisor in the court of King Ferdinand of Aragon, according to a tradition cited by Capsali, arranged the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella.[16] Another tradition, which Capsali cites, taught that Ferdinand was a Jew.[17] Believing this, Don Abraham was convinced that the marriage would be to the Jews advantage. Senior expected Ferdinand to improve the lives of the Jews in his realm and guarantee their security. The marriage did not have the aforeseen result.

The combined forces of Ferdinand and Isabella's respective kingdoms, Aragon and Castile, began a campaign to capture the only surviving Moslem Caliphate, Granada. The events preceding the fall of Granada were generally thought to have occurred as a result of human error, but Capsali waived this as an historical illusion. He stressed that Ferdinand, Isabella, and the Moslem Caliph all played the roles

predestined by God.

Granada's decline began with the Caliph's seduction of a servant girl. When the Caliph's daughter discovered her father's immoral behavior, the Caliph was forced to divorce his wife and marry the servant. His wife fled from the kingdom with her children. The people of Granada divided their support among various potential monarchs: the Caliph, his wife and his various children. The dissension weakened the kingdom, allowing Ferdinand to intervene and extend his kingdom into Granada.[18]

It was after the war for Granada that Don Abraham Senior's assumption would be tested. Isabella made a vow during the war. She promised to expel the Jews from Spain if Ferdinand was victorious. Soon after Isabella made her pledge, Granada fell and was annexed to the United Monarchy. Immediately Isabella sought to fulfill her vow.[19]

This was the first test of Ferdinand's loyalty to his Jewish subjects and of Senior's assumption that he would favor the Jews. Would he help his wife carry out her promise or would he support the Jews? To their disappointment, Ferdinand abandoned the Jews and helped Isabella accomplish her goal. Capsali claimed that Ferdinand was forced to follow Isabella's wishes. She accused him of considering the welfare of the Jews over that of his Christian subjects and threatened to expose his Jewish heritage. Frightened, Ferdinand ordered that the expulsion be instituted.[20] Capsali believed that the expulsion, having been enacted by those who ruled with the support of God, was inevitable. Capsali implies that the Jews' world view had become secularized to the point that they believed human action could reverse what God had ordained.

As the time of the expulsion drew near, the Jews attempted to reverse the decision of Ferdinand and Isabella. Isaac Abravenal, an influential Jewish leader, personally approached the monarchs and demanded that they revoke the decree of expulsion.[21] According to Capsali, the rulers' response was totally predictable. The decree remained in effect and Abravenal was forced to flee for his life before the official expulsion began.

Capsali's moral attitude toward the relationship between the earthly leaders and God is clear. Throughout the entire history of Spanish Jewry, human leadership fulfilled God's plans for His people. However, it was relatively easy for Capsali to illustrate how past leaders were the instruments of God. Legends could be retold so as to emphasize this point. The difficulty arises when Capsali turned to the task of proving that he was next in the continuing chain of divinely inspired leaders.

Chapter 2

CAPSALI'S SOURCES

The sources and style of Capsali's Seder Eliyahu Zuta were important tools by which Capsali tried to prove his authenticity. Capsali's primary source for the Seder is the Bible, including the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Virtually every paragraph of his work either quotes the Bible directly or refers to it. Not only does Capsali copy biblical verse and images, but he also imitates biblical literary style and uses biblical Hebrew grammar. This format cannot be coincidental. Capsali clearly intended to draw a connection in the minds of his readers between the Bible and his work. By presenting Spanish history as a continuation of the biblical experience and implying that his work, like the Bible, was sacred, Capsali hoped to bolster his own credibility.

One could quote hundreds of biblical references, but some are particularly significant. Capsali rarely refers directly to other historical sources. In two cases, Capsali uses biblical verse to support historical facts. Both verses are taken from the time of the Babylonian exile. The first verse substantiates Capsali's assumption that Spanish Jewry originated from the community of Jews who left Judah during the Babylonian exile. Capsali quotes Obadiah, verse 20:

> And the captivity of the host of the People of Israel that are among the Canaanites even unto Zarepath and the captivity of the Jerusalem that is in Seferad (assumed to be Spain) shall possess the cities of the south.[22]

Fifty years later, the ruler Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild their community. The Jews of Spain preferred to remain in their adopted homeland. Capsali quotes Cyrus' decree as it

appears in Ezra 1:3:

> Whosoever, there is among you, of all his people--his God be with him--let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah and build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. He is the God, who is in Jerusalem.[23]

The Spanish exiles who settled in the Ottoman Empire during Capsali's lifetime named their new communities after Spanish towns from which they had fled.[24] This fact clearly influenced Capsali's theory of how Spanish towns acquired their names.

As further proof of the antiquity of the Spanish Jewish community, Capsali suggests that four major Spanish cities were named by Judean exiles who settled in Spain. The name of Toledo was derived from the Hebrew root טלטל, to wander. Capsali believed the name indicated that the Jews were among Toledo's first inhabitants. They chose this name to commemorate their travels from Judah to Spain.[25]

A second city was Maqueda, named after the Israelite city of מקידה mentioned in the Book of Joshua 15:41. The coastal city of Ashkelon in ancient Israel was transformed into the Spanish town of Escalona. Finally, the biblical town of Luz became the Spanish city of Lucena.[26]

Capsali also suggests that the names of prominent individuals and groups also originated in the Bible. The most prominent individual in this category was Queen Isabella. According to Capsali, she was named after איזבל בת אתבעל (I Kings 16:31).[27] The similarity of the names extends beyond the sounds of the two names. The biblical character was a Queen of a non-Israelite nation that believed in the Near Eastern God Baal. Thus, both Queens represented cultures who worshipped dieties considered to be false gods among the Jews. Though

this would have been enough evidence to connect the two characters in the minds of the Jewish exiles, it seems even more significant that the Hebrew root means someone who is unexalted. Capsali certainly wanted to portray Isabella, an alien leader and an idolator, as a monarch who was unworthy of the Jews' respect. Moreover, Capsali reinforces his belief that no human leader can be exalted since only God merits this. Capsali's association of the biblical queen with her fifteenth century namesake also implied that the Bible prophesied Isabella's wickedness, a fact which the Jews of Spain might have realized if they had closely followed their tradition.

Another anachronistic use of a biblical name by Capsali is his reference to פלישתים, Philistines, when speaking of the Berbers.[28] During the Moslem rule of Spain, the Berbers allied themselves with the Christians living outside the borders of Spain in the hope of forcing the Moslems to leave the land. During the battles between Berber-Christian forces and the Moslems, the Jews supported the Moslems. The Berbers threatened the stability of the prosperous Moslem Caliphate, under whose rule Jews were living securely. It is logical that Capsali linked the Berbers to the biblical antagonists of ancient Israel, the Philistines, who constantly threatened the stability of the Israelite Kingdom.

Capsali also used the Bible as a source to re-educate the exiles in his community. Many Spanish Jews had been forced to attend conversionary sermons, delivered by Christian clergymen. In their sermons, the preachers tried to convince the Jews that Jesus' advent had been foretold in the Hebrew Bible. They suggested that the Jews had misunderstood the text. By linking the exiled Jews' experiences to bib-

lical verses, Capsali offered an alternative interpretation of some of the same verses quoted by Christian preachers. Christian preachers cajoled the Jews to convert and claimed that their misfortunes had resulted from their denial of Jesus as the Messiah. Capsali inferred that the Bible prophesied many of the Spanish Jews' experiences. Therefore, the persecutions and expulsion they underwent were not punishments as the Christians claimed. Capsali viewed these as a step in the messianic process begun in biblical times and continuing in the exiles' own time.

Finally Capsali hoped to re-establish the centrality of the Bible in Jewish life. He felt that the Spanish Jews had drifted away from their tradition. For Rabbi Capsali, the key to their future security would be, as it had always been, obedience to the Torah.

Far less numerous, though no less significant than his biblical references are Capsali's citations of rabbinic sources. By quoting verses from the halakhic and midrashic literature of the rabbinic period, Capsali hoped to accomplish many of the same goals as when he used biblical sources, particularly the re-education of the people and the re-establishment of a life based on traditional sources. The following is a partial list.

a. Shabbat 149a:

> One should not read anything under an idol or icon on Shabbat lest it appear to be idol worship.

Here we see Capsali's attitude toward Jewish involvement in secular pursuits. While he never totally condemns participation in the secular world, Capsali stresses that one must carefully ascertain that one's involvement does not subtract from the Jewish tradition. More

importantly, a Jewish should never let his actions be misconstrued as acceptance of alien beliefs or as denigration of Judaism.[29]

b. Shabbat 11a:

> If all seas were ink and all reeds pens and all men scribes it would not be enough to copy all the devices of government.

Capsali uses this traditional image to explain the severity of the suffering endured by Spanish Jews. If all the statements in this verse were accurate, it would be impossible to re-write all the decrees against the Jews of Spain.[30]

c. Berachot 3b:

> A handful cannot satisfy a lion, nor a pit be filled up with the dirt taken out of it.

With this verse, Capsali explains why a famine occurred in Naples after many Jewish exiles settled there. The natives of Naples could not produce enough food to feed themselves and the new arrivals to their land.[31]

d. Mishnah Rosh Ha-Shanna 2:3-4:

> The Mishnah text describes the flares used to proclaim the advent of the new moon. It creates a picture of flares being lit on mountain tops across the land until all received the news.

Capsali explains that a Moslem monarch named מארקוש used the same method to communicate with people who lived in the far reaches of his kingdom. He erected towers and lit flares, making it possible to send messages from Spain to Egypt. Capsali obviously wanted to stress that if rabbinic laws were valuable enough to be implemented by non-Jews, the Jews certainly could not ignore them.[32]

e. Mishnah Peah 1:1:

> There are three things whose fruits a man enjoys in this world while the reward awaits him in the world to come.

Capsali quoted this verse to explain the confiscation of Jewish property during the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal. There, government officials traveled from community to community to inventory Jewish possessions. When the Jews were ordered to leave, their valuables were taken to repay any outstanding debts to non-Jews. Capsali uses this verse to remind the people that their material losses were relatively insignificant. He emphasized, instead, their continuing devotion to their tradition, which guaranteed the real reward awaiting them in the world to come.[33]

f. Ketubot 28a:

> Moving around is more difficult for a man than for a woman.

Capsali uses this verse to explain the large number of male deaths immediately following the expulsion.[34]

g. Hullin 92a:

> Israel is like a vine; its branches are the aristocracy, its clusters the scholars, its leaves the common people, its twigs those who live in Israel that are void of learning. This is what was meant when word was sent from Palestine.
>
> Let the clusters pray for the leaves for were it not for the leaves, the clusters could not exist.

Here Capsali explains the relationship between the Spanish Jewish communities and the diaspora during the Moslem Period. The verse, coincidentally, describes Capsali's relationship to the Jews of his community. Capsali is a cluster; the people are leaves. They depend on each other; therefore, they must support each other.[35].

h. Megillah 10b:

> Ahasueraus persisted in his wickedness from beginning to end.

Capsali compared Ahasueraus, the classic example of a monarch who was oblivious to Jewish suffering, to Ferdinand. Both could have protected the Jews in their realms.[36]

i. Hagigah 15b:

Rabbi Meir ate the dates, but threw away the kernel.

Capsali used this verse to explain the Spanish leaders' treatment of the Jews. They used Jewish expertise, then exiled the Jews to prevent the growth of a community from whose ranks they could draw future advisors. Just as Rabbi Meir could have enjoyed more dates if he had planted the seeds, Spanish monarchs could have gained more by allowing the Jewish communities to flourish in their midst.[37]

j. Miscellaneous Egyptian References:

Megillah 14a:

This verse explains why the Hallel is recited in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, even though this event took place outside the borders of the Land of Israel.[38]

Sota 11a:

This passage defines the phrase "difficult work" in the context of the Hebrew slave experience in Egypt.[39]

Pesach 37a:

This verse tells which type of flour is permitted to be used on Passover.[40]

(For the significance of these verses, see Chapter 4 which deals with the parallels to the exodus experience in the Seder.)

In all probability, Capsali was only one of many Jewish leaders attempting to comfort the Spanish exiles. Each leader offered a program based on his own understanding of the Jewish tradition. Surely many of the leaders who vied for the community's attention, including Capsali, felt that the suffering of the Jews indicated that the coming

of the Messiah was at hand. The platform of various messianic leaders varied according to their views of how soon the Messiah would come. On one end of the spectrum stood the imminent messianists who interpreted the suffering of the Jews as an indication that the Messiah was coming in the near future.

As a rabbi, Capsali represented the other extreme. He believed the Messiah would arrive in the distant future and feared that those who followed imminent messianists would suffer further disappointment when the Messiah's arrival was delayed. Most importantly, Capsali was suspicious of anyone who proposed denial of Jewish Law, which he felt was central to Judaism. Traditionally, the imminent advent of the Messiah allows one to neglect his halakhic responsibilities in order to prepare for the great day. Therefore, imminent messianists were likely to have declared the Halakha no longer valid. The Messiah, for Capsali, would come following a return to the Law. Therefore, he used rabbinic sources to legitimize the halakhic world view of rabbinic Judaism.

By using rabbinic sources, Capsali encouraged a contemporary and insightful use of rabbinic wisdom in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He reinterpreted the laws of the Talmud and the midrashic passages to fit the needs of his generation. Similarly, by quoting rabbinic sources, Capsali sought to teach his people the value of traditional sources in their lives.

While Capsali uses many Jewish sources, the Seder contains only one attributed reference to a non-Jewish material. Capsali refers once to a work entitled The Chronicles of the Early Spanish Kings in order to support his claim that the Jews were among the earliest

inhabitants of the Peninsula. According to this chronicle, an unnamed Caesar sent 50,000 Jewish households to Spain. In Capsali's context, this appears to refer to the Jewish captives taken from Jerusalem to Rome following the capture of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.[41]

The paucity of attributed secular sources indicates that either further sources were unavailable to Capsali or that he chose not to use them. It is impossible to prove either of these possibilities, but it is conceivable that Capsali would ignore secular sources. Non-Jewish records of Spanish history were comprised of official court records and church chronicles. The former would have stressed the lives and accomplishments of those Jews who were active in the court of the king. The latter would not have portrayed Jews in a positive light unless they had converted to Christianity. In both cases, references to such materials contradicted Capsali's purposes, especially the revival of Jewish faith among the exiles. Furthermore, the use of non-Jewish sources would have undermined Capsali's effort to familiarize his people with Jewish texts and prove their value to them. By omitting references to secular sources, Capsali denied their value.

Chapter 3

LEGENDS

While references to named secular sources are few in Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Capsali retells many anonymous legends. Undoubtedly, the Jews who left Spain and Portugal, whom Capsali met in his own community, told him many legends which had been transmitted through both secular and Jewish Spanish culture. Capsali carefully selected and edited those legends which supported his view of Spanish history and included them in the text.

The first category of legends consists of tales about Spanish kings. Many of these legends give the reader an inside look at the behavior of Spanish royalty. The first example describes an incident involving King Pedro, an early Spanish leader, presumably of the Visigoth era. Pedro sent one of his generals out to wage war against a Moslem adversary. During the campaign, the general sent his daughter to Pedro's palace for her safety. Pedro was attracted to the young girl. When the girl refused Pedro's sexual advances, he raped her. When the general returned, his daughter reported what had happened. The general devoted the rest of his life to avenging his daughter's honor. Eventually, the general allied himself with other enemies of the king and mounted a revolt that overthrew Pedro.[42]

Among the officials who joined forces with the general was a man named Don Ludwigo, the subject of another Capsali legend. He inherited the throne of דון לידרדוש, who was assumed to be his father. In reality, shortly after the marriage of לידרדוש to the king of Portugal's daughter, the queen discovered that she was sterile. She

ordered one of her servants to kidnap a child from a peasant family. She feigned a full-term pregnancy and then presented the child to the king as his own son.[43]

After the death of דון לי אדרש, Don Ludwigo assumed his father's throne. Royal courtiers became immediately suspicious of his behavior. Don Ludwigo disliked the foods preferred by members of the royal family and never participated in the favorite royal pasttimes. He favored the foods and sports which were popular among the peasantry.[44]

The barons, who suspected that Don Ludwigo was not of royal blood, investigated his ancestry and discovered his true lineage. They expelled him along with all of the individuals involved in the deception. Ludwigo left Spain and was replaced by a ruler of true royal ancestry. Soon after his expulsion, Ludwigo joined the general in preparing for the overthrow of the Visigoth rulers.[45]

Capsali recorded a similar legend of a monarch who unknowingly left an illegitimate heir. In the fifteenth century, King Henrique's wife gave birth to a son sired by another member of the royal household. The child, named Juana, became queen after her father's death. Juana's reign was short, however. When her aunt Isabella discovered Juana's heritage, she expelled her and assumed the throne.[46]

Capsali mentions only one incident of sexual indiscretion among the Moslems, this being the case of the King of Granada who seduced his servant girl, married her and expelled his real wife, which was mentioned above.

Another group of legends scattered among the royal legends are stories about the exploits of court Jews. In the first example,

Capsali explains how an anonymous court Jew helped an anonymous Spanish monarch become emperor of Europe.[47]

An unnamed pope wanted to appoint an emperor over all of Europe. He arranged a contest to select the worthiest king. All kings were invited to display their crowns. The king with the most impressive crown would be appointed emperor.

The king of Spain wanted to enter the contest, but he lacked an appropriate crown. His Jewish advisor suggested that he make a crown out of fine flour. The king followed this suggestion. His crown and his modesty impressed the pope so much that he immediately appointed him emperor. In that position, the king rewarded the Jews and guaranteed their security.

Another such legend describes the exploits of Don Samuel HaLevi, an emissary who visited foreign lands. His wisdom impressed the king so much that he rewarded Don Samuel with an important position in the government. Samuel became wealthy and helped Jewish communities in Spain and abroad. His prominence did not last long. Eventually, Christians who coveted his position stole his money and killed him.[48]

The last Jewish courtier to be the subject of several legends in the Seder is Don Abraham Senior. The most important legend about him concerns his arrangement of the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, as mentioned above.[49] Two additional legends do not fit into any of the above categories. One is a tale of Moslem heroism in Granada. A Moslem warrior wished to marry the daughter of a particular nobleman. The nobleman did not want his daughter to marry the warrior. During an attack against Granada by Christian forces, the Moslem nobleman was captured and imprisoned. The young warrior discovered the location of

the prison and saved the nobleman. As a result of the warrior's bravery, the nobleman agreed to give him his daughter in marriage.[50]

The last royal legend, which I shall describe, demonstrates the weakness of King Ferdinand. As already mentioned, Isabella vowed to expel the Jews in exchange for victory in the campaign against Granada. When time came for the expulsion to take place, Ferdinand refused to participate until Isabella shamed him into it. She threatened to expose his Jewish heritage and embarrass him. Ferdinand conceded and helped her expel the Jews.[51] Jewish heritage or not, for Capsali Ferdinand was no different than all other secular leaders. He was more concerned with protecting the royal image than he was with considering the morality of his actions.

One would imagine that Capsali heard many more legends than the few which are preserved in the Seder. The inclusion of certain legends was not arbitrary. Most of the legends about Spanish royalty debase the royal image. Kings and queens are portrayed as common adulterers and kidnappers. Moreover, these tales imply that the myth of the purity of royal blood is just that, a myth. Capsali also shows how the kings of Spain used the Jews to improve their positions, but then did not help them when they suffered and needed protection.

Capsali's schizophrenic attitude toward Jewish participation in a non-Jewish world is evident in his presentation of these legends. On the one hand, Capsali shows that Jewish participation in the government temporarily improved the Jewish status in society. On the other hand, the Jews always suffered because of the role they played in the royal household. Eventually, non-Jews would grow jealous of their success and instigate their downfall. The clearest message of these legends is

that the Jews displayed innate talents as royal advisors. Capsali does not hesitate to boast about their expertise and success in handling court matters.

Capsali is clearly rebuilding the self-respect of a community whose members once sat in the councils of kings but now were impoverished and helpless. The message for the future is that the Jews should not rely on others for security and prosperity. The Jewish community must use the talents of its members to revive itself based on its traditional values: self-sufficiency, internal leadership, and trust in God. The Jews must use the talents which they displayed in the courts of the kings to protect themselves.

Another major group of legends consists of stories about famous Spanish rabbis. The first legend tells the story of Rabbi Moses b. Hanoch of Bari who, according to Capsali, initiated the first serious study of traditional sources in Spain. The legend about Rabbi Moses is the only one whose origin Capsali acknowledges. Before Capsali begins to tell the story, he admits that it was first told by Abraham Ibn Daud.[52] According to Capsali's version of the story, Rabbi Moses was among four famous rabbis from Bari, a town in Italy, who were captured by pirates patrolling the Mediterranean Sea for the Spanish king in 990.[53]

Each rabbi was redeemed from his captivity by a major Jewish community in the area. Rabbi Moses was saved by the people of Cordoba in Spain. His wife, who was also on the ship, drowned before reaching the shore. Capsali tells his reader that her death was not accidental. The pirates aboard the ship threatened to rape her. Rather than submit to this indignation, Moses' wife preferred to drown. She asked her

husband whether those who drowned in the sea would be resurrected when the Messiah comes. Her husband assured her that by drowning, she would not affect her reward in the world to come. Upon hearing this, she immediately jumped overboard.[54]

Once in Cordoba, Rabbi Moses and his son, Rabbi Hanoch, established many academies for the study of Torah. Moses became a judge in the community of Cordoba, despite the presence of another judge named Rabbi Nathan, presumably because of his legal expertise. With Rabbi Moses in their community, the Jews of Cordoba became learned in the Torah and the Talmud. They prospered and lived without fear.

A legend about Samuel HaNagid describes his rise to power.[55] Capsali says that Samuel was a scribe who owned a shop next to the scribe of Habbus, ruler of Granada. One time a servant of Habbus asked Samuel to compose a letter for her. Habbus saw the composition and was so impressed by Samuel's literary style, that he employed him as a royal scribe. As Habbus came to know Samuel better, he became more impressed with his talents and he eventually appointed him the chief of all his royal advisors. Samuel used his authority in this position to support Jewish communities in Spain as well as throughout the Mediterranean area.[56]

Capsali relates one legend about Rabbi Moses b. Maimon (Maimonides). It is an unusual tale about a chance meeting between Maimonides and the Moslem Caliph. During Chol HaMoed Sukkot Maimonides was walking through the streets of Cordoba carrying a lulav and an etrog, as is the custom during Sukkot. The Caliph rode by Maimonides on a horse and asked him whether he was intoxicated or insane. Maimonides responded to the Caliph by throwing stones at him. The Caliph under-

stood Maimonides' response to be an insult against him because according to Moslem practice, one throws stones at persons considered idolators.[57] The Caliph sent his soldiers after Maimonides so that he could punish him. Maimonides heard of the Caliph's plan and fled from Spain. Eventually, he settled in Egypt where he became a successful physician and a respected scholar. Capsali notes that Maimonides died in 1217 at the age of 81.[58]

The legend preserved about Nachmanides describes the events which led to his acceptance of mystical beliefs. Capsali portrays Nachmanides as a vehement opponent of the Kabbalah in his early career. At every opportunity, he preached against mysticism.[59] This troubled the people of Ashkenaz who fervently adhered to mystical beliefs. The community of Ashkenaz met and decided to send one of their elders to Nachmanides to excommunicate him if he would not convert.

The elder arranged a scheme which would allow him to demonstrate his mystical powers. He walked through the marketplace where the community's prostitutes were known to stand. The police caught the elder among the prostitutes and imprisoned him. As the leader of the local Jewish community, Nachmanides was asked to visit this foreign Jew in jail. Nachmanides pleaded with him to repent his sin. The elder told Nachmanides to return to his home and prepare for Shabbat; and he would meet him at his home in time for Shabbat dinner. When Nachmanides left the prison, the elder invoked magical names of God and transported himself to Nachmanides' home just as Shabbat was about to begin.[60]

The miracle impressed Nachmanides. He acknowledged the validity of the Kabbalah and devoted the rest of his life to writing a mystical commentary on the Torah.[61] Though this legend appears to support Nach-

manides' devotion to the Kabbalah, Capsali's footnote to the story casts doubt on this conclusion. Capsali notes that the elder remained in Cordoba to study with Nachmanides. The elder was so impressed with Nachmanides' wisdom that he became his disciple and never condemned him as he had originally intended.[62] This statement, when considered with Capsali's choice of Nachmanides as the exemplar of Spanish Kabbalah begins to shed light on Capsali's attitude toward mysticism, a subject which will be discussed later.

The last of Capsali's legends which portrays the life of a successful rabbi is the story of Rabbi Asher b. Yechiel. God sent Rabbi Asher to Toledo in the year 5065 in order to rebuild the community after a period of persecution.[63] Rabbi Asher established an academy and restored Torah study among the Jews of Toledo. Rabbi Asher's most famous disciple was his son, whose knowledge of the tradition soon exceeded that of his father. Asher's respect for his son was so great that he refused to sit down in his son's presence. Asher's son did not feel that it was appropriate for a father to rise before his son, so he left his father's synagogue and established his own.[64] Asher and his son continued to teach the Jews of Toledo for many years. As a result of their work, God protected the Jews and they lived in peace.

As the fortunes of Spanish Jewry declined, so did the accomplishments of their rabbis. This is clearly demonstrated in the experience of Isaac Abravenal who, as noted above, attempted to reverse the decree of expulsion. Though he was articulate and a friend of the royal court, he could do nothing to change Ferdinand and Isabella's decision. Unlike his predecessors, he could not improve the life of the Jewish community, probably because he did not approach the task through

Torah.[65]

In short, Capsali uses these legends to describe the ideal Jewish leader, the rabbi. These legends support Capsali's notion that rabbis are redemptive figures. When a rabbi entered a community, it was rebuilt both in terms of Jewish observance and economic security. As long as the rabbinic presence remained, the well being of the community was guaranteed. Jewish leaders, who were devoted to the Torah, enhanced the community's image, created stability within the community, and pleased God. He hoped that the people in his community would recognize him as the next leader in this tradition.

Several legends about rabbis which do not seem to agree with this pattern deserve separate analysis, for example, the story of Samuel HaNagid. Even though he was employed in the Spanish court, Samuel HaNagid warranted Capsali's praise because he used his position and the wealth which he accumulated in it to build schools throughout the Near East. Therefore, like the other rabbis mentioned by Capsali, Samuel HaNagid also encouraged the spread of Torah study and stabilized the Jewish community.

According to Capsali's legend about Maimonides, he seems not to help the Jews of Spain at all. Maimonides is worthy of being mentioned because he fled from a land where apparently Judaism was not respected, as indicated by the Caliph's remark. Note that Capsali ignores both Maimonides' participation in the non-Jewish culture of Spain and his achievements before settling in Egypt, facts which would have contradicted his theory. Instead Capsali implies that Maimonides accomplished nothing of value until he settled in Egypt where he could practice his religion and pursue study of the Torah.

The legend of Maimonides' meeting with the Caliph is included for another important reason. As will be shown throughout this paper, Capsali consistently portrays the Moslems in a much more positive light than he shows the Christians. This legend is one of the few polemics against Islam in Seder Eliyahu Zuta. Capsali mentions that Maimonides' response to the Caliph was considered in some circles to be an acknowledgment of the presence of idolatry.[66] As will be discussed later, Capsali considers Maimonides to be the most important rabbi since the biblical Moses. Obviously, people can learn much from his words and from his actions. His response to the Caliph teaches the Jews what Capsali thought about Islam. To the Jewish reader the message is clear--Islam is not a true faith. To the non-Jewish reader who understood the implication of Maimonides' action, the criticism may have gone unnoticed because Maimonides' exile would be seen as an appropriate punishment for his behavior.

As alluded to above, Capsali's treatment of Nachmanides' conversion to mysticism reveals that he was not himself a devoted adherent to this movement. If Capsali had wanted to defend the legitimacy of the Kabbalah, there are many more impressive examples of Jews who were mystics in Spain. Capsali's choice of Nachmanides indicates that he could not ignore the mystical tradition which was widespread and well known in Spain. Nachmanides is clearly a compromise example. He was a minor mystical figure who used mystical beliefs to interpret traditional texts. He was the type of mystic whose activities Capsali could condone. Nachmanides' response to mysticisim is for Capsali the appropriate response to such movements in his own time. Capsali condemned mystics who denied the validity of the Halakha, but he could

accept mystics who used their beliefs to interpret traditional texts. Capsali wanted the mystics in his community to follow Nachmanides' example and return to the study of traditional sources.

Capsali's selection of legends, which he included in the Seder Eliyahu Zuta, was clearly influenced by his polemic intention and cannot be seen as an objective look at the history of Jews in Spain. However, the analysis of Spanish history as portrayed in the Seder, to be discussed in Part II, will demonstrate that these legends do contain many allusions to the historical reality of pre-expulsion Spain.

Chapter 4

GENESIS AND EXODUS PARALLELS

Capsali's selection and presentation of several of his legends clearly stands out as an effort on his part to convince the exiles that they were participants in the process of redemption and that he was God's chosen leader. Capsali selected several legends from Spanish history for which parallel situations existed in the biblical books of Genesis and Exodus.

In order to understand Capsali's point, one must first be familiar with the biblical author's conception of the history of the Israelites. The history of the Hebrew tribes before their enslavement in Egypt and redemption was considered to be the pre-history of the Israelite nation. The Israelite nation emerged as the result of a three-step process. First, the Hebrews left Egypt, freeing themselves both physically and spiritually. Second, the people received the word of God at Mt. Sinai through Moses who taught them what God expected of them. Finally, once they were worthy of entering the "Promised Land," God helped them to capture it.

In Capsali's understanding of the history of Spanish Jewry, everything that happened to them up to and including the expulsion was pre-history, a preparation for their national revival. Now they were involved in the three-step process of redemption. The first step had already been completed: the Spanish Jews had left their Egypt. The next step would be their revelation at Sinai which would mean a return to the observance of the tradition begun at Sinai and handed down throughout the generations. Then once they were found worthy, the

exiles would be able to complete the process of redemption and return to Israel, the "Promised Land," as did their biblical counterparts.

The first legend which Capsali presents and which is clearly meant to parallel a biblical story is the tale of the Visigoth king who defiled his general's daughter. As mentioned above, the king's indiscretion led to his own exile and eventually to the establishment of the Moslem Caliphate.[67] According to Capsali's understanding of Spanish history, this act marks the beginning of Spanish history or at least it is the event with which Capsali begins his record of Spanish history.

The parallel to the story of Adam and Eve is striking. In the story of Adam and Eve, their sexual relations led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Traditionally, this event is considered to mark the beginning of human history. In both cases an expulsion is the event which starts history. In the one case, it is the history of Spain and in the other the history of humankind. For the exiles from Spain who mourned the destruction of their communities, the message is clear. Their expulsion need not mark the end of their Jewish lives. By re-establishing their communities in their new lands, they can both rebuild their personal lives and start a new era in Jewish history.

There is another tale of an expulsion in the Bible which ends with the birth of a new nation. The story of the expulsion of Ishmael and Haggar from Abraham's camp is in Islamic tradition the starting point of Moslem history. This story was probably well known to the Spanish Jews whose ancestors had lived among Moslems as well as to the Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century.

The parallel which Capsali draws between the story of Ishmael and what he perceives to be its Spanish counterpart is all the more inter-

esting in light of the fact that he could assume that his readers knew the details of the biblical incident. Capsali develops the Isaac/Ishmael image in the context of the story of Don Ludwigo. As already mentioned, Don Ludwigo was a Spanish monarch, born of peasant parents and kidnapped by the queen when she discovered her infertility.[68]

Capsali describes the day of Don Ludwigo's weaning as follows:

ויגדל הילד ויעש המלך משתה גדול ביום
הגמל את יצחק

The child grew up and the king made a great feast on the day of the weaning of Isaac, his son.[69]

Except for the switch of Abraham's name for the word, king, Capsali copied the verse exactly as it appears in Genesis 21:8. Another verse which is copied from the Bible in reference to this story is the queen's description of how she deceived her husband:

וצחק עשה לו

She played a trick (mocked) him.[70]

In the biblical version, Sarah uses similar words when she reacted to the news of her pregnancy at the age of 90. Sarah, however, felt that she had been deceived or mocked when she said "God has brought me laughter, everyone who hears will laugh at me." (Gen. 21:6)

Capsali's use of the same biblical verse in his retelling of the Don Ludwigo legend is puzzling. In the biblical story of Isaac's weaning, the celebration commemorates the existence of a legitimate heir who could inherit Abraham's role as patriarch of the Hebrew tribes. In the Seder, Capsali recreates the same celebration, but in this case at its center is a king who would be declared an illegitimate ruler and expelled.

The key to understanding Capsali's conflation of the Isaac image

with the Don Ludwigo legend may be found in the eventual outcome of the latterstory. The expelledking returns to Spain triumphantly during the Moslem conquest of the Peninsula. By integrating the references to Isaac into a story about a potential Moslem ruler, Capsali makes a statement about his attitude toward the Moslems.

Don Ludwigo, the Isaac figure in the Seder, returns to become the legitimate ruler of Spain. Under his rule and the rule of his successors, the Jews prospered. From this, it may be understood that the Moslem Caliphs were worthy of ruling over the Jews. By association, the heirs of Don Ludwigo, the rulers of the Ottoman Empire have a right to rule over the Jews in their realm. Taken one step further, Capsali is telling his community that they can once again prosper under the rule of the Moslems.

Several legends draw parallels between the Jewish advisors who worked in the courts of Spanish royalty and Joseph's role as advisor to Pharaoh in Egypt. The most blatant connections are drawn by Capsali in the story of Don Samuel HaLevi. Don Samuel served as a foreign emissary for the King of Spain. Capsali recalls that during one trip to Portugal, the king was very impressed by Don Samuel's talents. The king praised Don Samuel with these words:

הנמצא כזה אש אשר רוח אלהים בו

> Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?"[71]

These are exactly the words spoken by Pharaoh in praise of Joseph.[72]

When the king sent Don Samuel on another mission to a foreign land,[73] Capsali says that he used these words:

ויוסף עוד וישלחהו בפיינדרא

And he added (yosef) another and he sent him to Fendra(?)[74]

The use of the verb, yosef, does not seem accidental. It is a homonym for the name of Joseph in Hebrew. When considered with the other references to Joseph, it must be understood as another means by which Capsali links Don Samuel to his biblical counterpart.

According to Capsali, Don Samuel's second trip was to a land in which no Jew lived and to which no Jew had ever traveled before. The inhabitants of the land demanded to see the Jew.[75] Don Samuel feared that the crowds would kill him if he appeared in public. He devised a plan which both fulfilled the people's request and protected his own life. Don Samuel dressed a goat in a tallit and tefillin. When the people assembled in the courtyard of the palace, he sent the goat out onto the palace balcony. The people responded as Don Samuel had expected. They stoned the goat to death.[76]

Following his brush with death, Don Samuel responded with these words:

ברוך ה' הציל מתחת יד מצרים

Blessed is God who saved me from the hands of the Egyptians.[77]

This response would have been more appropriately uttered by Joseph in Egypt. When Don Samuel returned to Spain, the king rewarded him abundantly. In the words of Capsali, he...

ויאהב המלך את דון שמואל הלוי
מאד מאד ויהי לו ליועץ ויפקידהו
על ביתו וכל יש לו נתן בידו.

...liked Don Samuel HaLevi so much that he appointed him his personal attendant and placed him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned.[78]

Lest at the end of the story there be any doubt about Don Samuel's

similarity to Joseph, Capsali has the Spanish king use the same words which the Pharaoh used to reward Joseph for his services.

In biblical Egypt, new Pharaohs arose who were not familiar with Joseph's accomplishments, among which was saving the Egyptian people from famine. As the population of Hebrews increased in Egypt, the new Pharaohs feared that they would soon outnumber the Egyptians. If this occurred, they could threaten the Pharaoh's power. The phrase which describes the population explosion among the Hebrews in Egypt indicates that their numbers increased dramatically.

ובני ישראל ירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד.

The Israelites multiplied and increased very greatly.[79]

Capsali uses the same emphatic verse to describe the increase in the number of Jews in Spain after the expulsion of the Jews from France.[80] Capsali's use of this verse means that he correctly sensed that the influx of French Jews was a factor in the eventual decision by the Spanish authorities to expel the Jews from Spain. It was likely to have been more though than the increase in the size of the Jewish community which threatened the Spanish monarchs.

As in Egypt, Jewish advisors were eventually unable to help their co-religionists. The new Spanish kings, according to Capsali, were like the new Pharaohs. They did not realize the important role which the Jews had once played in Spanish history. Later advisors like Don Abraham Senior and Isaac Abravenal could do little to help Spanish Jews, whereas Don Samuel, like Joseph, had supported Jews in his own country and abroad.[81]

Capsali makes three other references which support his premise that parallels to the experience of Spanish Jewry can be found in the

Bible. In describing the treatment of Spanish Jews by the government before the expulsion, Capsali writes:

ויתחזק מצרים על העם.

Egypt strengthened its grip upon the people.[82]

According to Capsali, the edict of expulsion arrived in Jewish homes on the first night of Passover,[83] the night on which the Hebrew slaves began the Exodus from Egypt. Finally, Capsali completes his image by referring to the actual expulsion in these words:

כי גורשו ממצרים.

They were expeled from Egypt.[84]

Besides accomplishing many of the goals attributed to Capsali earlier in this chapter,[85] the description of major events in Spanish Jewish history in terms of the biblical history of the Israelites probably was intended to raise their self-image. Capsali wanted the exiles in his midst to see themselves as Jews whose role in Jewish history was as central as that of their ancestors who participated in the Exodus from Egypt. Capsali transformed the Spanish expulsion into the Exodus. The exiles became the slaves who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Though never verbalized, Capsali becomes Moses, the leader chosen by God to guide His people toward Sinai and the "Promised Land." By making the exiles figures of biblical stature, Capsali would surely attract many of them to the traditional way of life encouraged by his rabbinic segment of the community and raise his own status.

PART II

HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

In his seventy-page synopsis of 2000 years of Spanish history, Capsali does not use the names for periods of Spanish history commonly accepted among modern historians (i.e., Visigoth, Moslem, Christian, etc.). In order to analyze his presentation in light of modern historical research, I have determined to the best of my ability when the events mentioned by Capsali happened. When accurate names are given, this is an easy task. When, as often occurs, the names and dates are inaccurate, I could only hypothesize as to the true context of the event and try to place it in its appropriate time period.

I have tried to follow the chronology of Spanish history according to Capsali's presentation. For the most part, he is accurate and consistent. Occasionally, however, Capsali deals with a particular subject as a separate entity rather than within its historical context. These deviations disrupt the chronological development of his work as well as of my paper.

Finally, I have not presented a complete outline of Spanish history. The parameters of my presentation were set by the boundaries of Capsali's work. I have tried to contrast the events described by Capsali with more conventional analyses by contemporary historians. Any gaps in my work, therefore, reflect similar lacunae in Capsali's text.

Chapter 1

ORIGINS OF SPANISH JEWRY

As mentioned in Part I,[86] Capsali traces the origins of Spanish Jewry to the period of the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. Among the captives King Pedro allegedly carried back to Spain were many members of the priestly cast, including the Levites and members of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah.[87] According to Capsali, these Jews who were among the leaders of both the Judean state and the Israelite cult, quickly became acclimated to life in Spain. They were so assimilated into Spanish life that when Cyrus of Babylonia gave them the right to return to Judah in 538 B.C.E., they refused.[88] Capsali explains that even though these Jews had been committed to the establishment of an independent Jewish state, they saw no reason to return to a homeland where the Temple and all its ritual objects had been destroyed.[89]

The Babylonian exiles established communities in Spain which they named after their home towns in Judah.[90] These communities grew slowly until after 70 C.E. In that year, the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and many families were taken as captives to Rome. A large number of these households found their way across the Roman Empire to the Iberian Peninsula. The arrival of these immigrants meant rapid expansion for the early communities of Babylonian Jews.

Capsali implies that the Jews who arrived in the first wave of immigration received privileges which were not granted to those who came later. All the Jews of Spain were required to pay a special tax of 30 פרוטות during any period when Christians ruled the land,

according to Capsali. The tax was levied against the Jews to punish them for having denied the divinity of Jesus.[91] Capsali indicates that the Spanish government exempted the citizens of Toledo, and the other towns where a Jewish community existed before the birth of Christ, from paying this tax. The Spanish authorities assumed that because these Jews lived in Spain well before the crucifixion of Jesus, they could not have taken part in his denial. Therefore, they were not penalized.[92]

Capsali refers to the non-Jewish native inhabitants of Spain as Gentili. He characterizes them as idolators who worshipped as gods the stars, moon and sun.[93] Little more is said about the Gentili in the Seder because they converted to Christianity during the reign of Constantine along with the other citizens of the Roman Empire. Immediately following the Constantinian conversion, the Jews of Spain were prohibited from participating in Spanish society. Many communities were persecuted and many individuals were martyred. Eventually, the Spanish Christians realized this treatment would not encourage the Jews to accept Christianity, and the authorities gave the Jews rights which guaranteed their security and allowed them to practice their own faith.

Capsali's presentation of the origins of Spanish Jewry is directed at both Jews and non-Jews. As an apologetic, it is intended for non-Jews, especially Christians who persecuted Spanish Jewry. Capsali defends the legitimate right of the Jews to live in Spain by establishing their early, pre-Christian origins. He also stresses the importance of Jews since the earliest Spanish history by claiming that they were influential in establishing Spain's national identity (e.g.,

naming of cities).

Capsali's efforts to prove the settlement of Jews in ancient Spain may also be a response to Christian writers of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was common for Christian polemicists to use the tradition of an early Jewish settlement in Spain as the basis for stories of Jewish treachery. The Jews are identified with foreign invaders who conspired to destroy the culture of the native Hispanic peoples and impeded the spread of Christianity.[94]

Finally, Capsali demonstrates that early attempts to convert Jews to Christianity were unsuccessful. Those who tried immediately realized that the Jews were devoted to Judaism. Neither the deprivation of their rights nor physical persecution could make them deny their faith. The effort was quickly abandoned, and the Jews were afforded the right to practice their own religion.

As a polemic, Capsali's presentation is intended for the Jews in his community whose religious identity he hopes to define. Capsali tells the Spanish exiles that their community was established by Judeans who were among the elite of their society. They were government and cult officials, all devoted to the Jerusalem cult which represented the normative Judaism of its time. Capsali implies that the exiles must return to their roots in order to return to Jerusalem and revive the Temple cult which throughout Jewish history has represented the messianic ideal. They must deny their association with any non-mainstream movements like mysticism or imminent messianism. The exiles must also free themselves from their involvement in the secular world. Once this is done, they can assume their proper place among

the leadership of their people, as their Judean ancestors did prior to the exile.

Throughout his outline of Spanish history, Capsali's recollections hint at factors which later historians have come to see as essential for an understanding of Spanish Jewish history. Capsali often does not emphasize these events or issues, either because he did not understand their significance or because they did not help him in accomplishing the goal of his work.

There are times, however, when Capsali emphasizes an event or a trend in Spanish history that in modern times has come to be considered important. Still, his interpretation usually reflects his polemic intention rather than historical reality. One such case involves Capsali's contention that Jews arrived in Spain during various waves of immigration. Here Capsali does more than establish the existence of Jews in ancient Hispania. His presentation reflects the historical reality of Spain. As a natural land bridge between Europe and Africa, the Iberian Peninsula was subject to frequent intervention by foreigners passing between the two continents.

Capsali imagines that the Jews were welcomed by the natives of the peninsula and lived securely until the time of Constantine. According to modern histories of this period, that situation seems unlikely.[95] It has been suggested that the constant intervention by external forces caused the native tribes on the peninsula to isolate themselves from each other as well as from foreigners. It is doubtful that with the xenophobic attitude the native Hispanic tribes would have welcomed any foreigners, including the Jews.

The Romans were the first power to break through these tribal

barriers and begin to unify the diverse elements living in Spain. They standardized the peninsula's economy and created the first pan-Hispanic army. The means by which they accomplished this unification was Christianization. From this point on, the Jews were officially outsiders, and as long as they maintained ties to their faith, their chances of acceptance were remote. Though they enjoyed occasional periods of prosperity and freedom, it was only a matter of time before they would have to convert to Christianity or leave the peninsula.

Chapter 2

VISIGOTH SPAIN

Capsali selected and described only two events from the era of Spanish history known as the Visigoth period.[96] Both of these incidents have already been mentioned above. The first is the story of the king who raped the daughter of his general.[97] The second is the story of Don Ludwigo, the king who was expelled because of his peasant origins.[98] Capsali retells both of these stories with a single purpose: to set the stage for the Moslem conquest of Spain. Each story is presented to explain how and why the main character eventually joined forces with the Moslem ruler מארקוש and participated in the assassination of the Visigoth monarch and the conquest of Spain.

Capsali's review of this period lacks any references to the status of the Jews under the Visigoths. Because much of Capsali's information was gathered from those exiles he met personally, one might expect that references to earlier periods of Spanish history would be limited. However, even if Capsali were aware of the situation of the Jews in Visigoth Spain, he may have purposely omitted such information. Capsali may have believed there was little to learn from this period in Spanish history because the centers of Jewish study were still located in the eastern Mediterranean, specifically in Babylonia and Palestine. During the Visigoth period, there were no great rabbis and no academies in Spain. Capsali, therefore, may have deliberately omitted any references to Jews in this period. For an author trying to present a model for a traditional community, there are no lessons to be learned from a time when that community did not exist.

Conventional analyses of the status of Jews in Visigoth Spain suggest that there was relatively little cultural and religious development during this period. During the period after the establishment of the Visigoth authority, Jews enjoyed many privileges. In 586 C.E., Visigoth rulers converted from Arian Christianity to Roman Catholicism. The change led to increased efforts to eradicate Judaism from the land.[99]

In 613 C.E., King Sisebut decreed that all Jews must convert or leave Spain.[100] Sisebut's successor, Swintila, annuled the edict of conversion and permitted converts to return to Judaism. He also invited all Jews who had left to return to their homes.[101] This vacillating policy toward the Jews continued into the Visigoth decline in the early eighth century. During the last generation of Visigoth rule, the treatment of the Jews reached its lowest point when Judaism was no longer considered a legal religion and Jews could no longer study the Torah or observe any of their laws.[102]

Throughout the Visigoth period, the treatment of the Jews fluctuated between outright persecution and minimal tolerance. They were never allowed to travel freely in Spain and they were estranged from foreign centers of Jewish scholarship.[103] It is no wonder, then, that Capsali had little to say about this period.

What Capsali does say seems to support some conventional analyses of Visigoth rule. The Visigoth kingdom was torn apart by serious political and social strife which constantly threatened its stability.[104] The most serious rift existed between the rich and the poor. The nobility and the wealthy members of the clergy exploited the peasants and virtually enslaved the serfs.[105] In the Seder, the expulsion of Don Ludwigo because of his peasant origins, intimates the class divi-

sion in Visigoth Spain.

Capsali's impression that the Moslem invaders took advantage of a weakened Visigoth monarchy also reflects the conventional analysis of the Moslem takeover. After the death of the last Visigoth ruler, Witzia, his three sons fought over who should inherit the throne.[106] Their quarrel undermined the foundations of a kingdom already weakened by internal disorder. Their disagreement led to civil war which set the stage for Moslem intervention.[107] The Moslem who led the invasion was Tarik, or מארקוש, as he is called by Capsali. Tarik defeated the Visigoths on the shores of Spain on the 19th day of July in the year 711. He immediately advanced across the peninsula toward Toledo in the heart of Spain.[108]

Chapter 3

MOSLEM SPAIN

Based upon the information known about the treatment of the Jews by the Visigoths, one would expect that the Jews would support any power which held out the hope of improving their status. Standard histories of the Moslem conquest indicate that, in fact, this did happen. As soon as the Moslems landed on the peninsula, the Jews joined the invading forces along with many other minorities who suffered at the hands of the Visigoths. The Jews took an active part in the initial military conquest of Spain and assumed an important political role in those areas where the initial stages of the Moslem conquest were completed. The Jews played an important role in the stabilization of the native population after the Moslem troops moved on to their next conquest.

The Moslems generously rewarded the Jews for their help.[109] In the short run, the rewards were the material possessions the fleeing Visigoths left behind. They also acquired the right to inhabit all property abandoned by the Visigoths. In the long run, they were rewarded with civil rights in the new Moslem Caliphate. They were allowed to move freely within Spain. The Jews received a guarantee of security and economic rights which allowed them to support themselves.[110]

As the Moslems continued to move northward, extending their realm further into the Spanish Peninsula, the Jews stayed behind to destroy pockets of resistance among Visigoth loyalists and rebellious Hispanic tribes. The Moslems took advantage of the Jews' familiarity with Spanish geography, using them to seek out and destroy opponents of

the Moslems wherever they hid. The Jews were appointed local leaders, responsible for helping to create among the masses a sense of unity and devotion to the Islamic rulers.

The Jews pledged their loyalty to the Moslem Caliphate, and in exchange were given more privileges. Their allegiance to the Caliph and his authority would in the long run, however, prove not to guarantee the Jews the security they desired. The Christian minority which lived in the areas under Islamic rule would always identify the Jews with the Moslem oppressor. This identification would prove crucial in the development of a policy toward the Jews after the Christian reconquest.

Capsali does not mention any cooperation between the Jews and the Moslems during the conquest period. He assumes that Moslem Spain was unified under the rule of the Caliph from the first day Tarik stepped foot on the Spanish coast.

Beginning with the reign of Abdarahman in 755, a lasting unification of the various factions in Spain was initiated.[111] Abdarahaman was a despot, hated by his subjects, rarely seen outside his palace. He did, however, lay the foundations on which his successors would build a stable centralized government.[112] The Jews remained allies of the Moslems and continued to be represented in the royal court during this period as well as throughout the history of Moslem Spain. Capsali offers only one example of a Jew who rose to a position of authority during the Moslem period--Samuel HaNagid, a Cordoban scholar who became advisor to the Caliph.[113] Samuel was trained in Cordoba by Rabbi Hanoch, son of Rabbi Moses of Bari. Capsali characterizes HaNagid as a master of both traditional Jewish texts and Moslem literature. Early

in his career, Samuel fled from Cordoba. In 1009[114] the combined forces of the Berbers and the Castilian Christians invaded Cordoba, extending Christian rule back into Cordoba for the first time in 300 years. As a Moslem loyalist, Samuel HaNagid had no choice but to flee into territory still under Moslem control.

As Capsali tells the story, Samuel rose through the ranks of the royal household of the Caliph Habbus because of his literary skills. First, he became an assistant to the royal scribe and replaced the scribe at his death. Finally, the Caliph decided that Samuel HaNagid was too valuable to be employed as a scribe and appointed him an advisor to the Caliph and eventually his chief advisor.[115] According to Capsali this meteoric rise to power was based completely on Samuel's ability to write beautiful letters in Arabic.

More convention analyses attribute Samuel's ascent through the ranks of the Caliph's palace to his economic rather than his literary output.[116] The Moslem Caliphate was constantly in need of money. HaNagid, like many Jews in Moslem Spain, prospered as a result of the freedoms which he enjoyed. Those who could afford to used their resources to help support the Caliph. In return, many Jews were rewarded with official positions in his court. For the Jews of Moslem Spain, these contributions were an investment in their personal and communal futures. For while much of the money went to the personal support of the Caliph and his household, a substantial amount financed military expeditions to repel Christian military incursions from the north.

Capsali is probably correct in his praise of HaNagid's literary style, but clearly style would not have been enough to help him achieve an influential position in the Caliphate. HaNagid was prag-

matic. He knew he would not enjoy such freedom and prosperity under Christian rule so he did what he could to guarantee the continuation of Moslem rule. For this he was rewarded.

At the time of Habbus' death, Capsali notes that he left two heirs to the throne, his sons Badiz and Balkin. Each had his followers. Among the supporters of Badiz was Samuel HaNagid. Balkin's followers included the members of the Spanish nobility and the Jews of his realm.[117]

Balkin's supporters were more powerful and succeeded in arranging Balkin's appointment as Caliph. However, he was killed by the opposition soon after he assumed the throne. Badiz, who was appointed his successor, rewarded Samuel HaNagid for his loyal devotion by reinstating him in his previous position. As Samuel's wealth increased, he used his resources to help the Jews of Spain and abroad. For Capsali, this was what made HaNagid great. Capsali was not impressed by Samuel's accomplishments in the political sphere but by his use of authority to improve the life of the Jews.

Capsali notes that Samuel HaNagid died in 1055. His son Joseph HaLevi HaNagid inherited the position of royal advisor.[118] Joseph had little time for accomplishments in this position because he was killed by a group of Moslems who were angered that a Jew would hold such an important position in an Islamic government.

As an historian, Capsali attributes the fall of the Moslems to the succession controversy which occurred after the death of Badiz. Badiz left two sons as heirs. Since they were unable to decide who should become Caliph, they split the kingdom into two parts with one son ruling each part. According to Capsali, the division of the kingdom weakened

it to such an extent that the Christians could hasten their reconquest of the peninsula.

Capsali's presentation leads one to believe that throughout the existence of the Caliphate there was constant tension between the Moslems and the minority religions in their realm. According to Capsali, many of the inhabitants of the peninsula fled during the Moslem conquest because they were frightened by the Moslem invaders. Capsali claims that the Moslems had peculiar eating habits which led the Visigoths to believe that they were bloodthirsty cannibals.[119] With regard to the treatment of the Jews, Capsali states that those Jews who did not flee were subject to harsh restrictions and severe taxes.[120]

Capsali does not perceive a change in this situation until a religious renaissance occurred in the Jewish community. Through their study of traditional texts, the Jews demonstrated their ability to analyze and solve complex problems. This was a skill the Moslems needed to run their government and, therefore, Jews quickly rose to positions of great authority.

Capsali attributes the success of individual Jews to their ability to offer a particular service to the Caliph as in the case of Samuel HaNagid. But even in these cases, Capsali feels that the relationship between the Jews and the Moslems was uneasy. As Jews became more involved in running the Caliphate, Moslems who felt that they deserved these positions grew angry. The presence of Jews in the court often enraged those Moslems already in high positions, as Capsali shows in the story of Maimonides' encounter with the Caliph.[121] He seems to imply that the mere presence in court of Jews who were knowl-

edgeable in Islamic tradition created tension and often changed Moslem attitudes toward the Jews.

Modern histories of the Moslem period contain no evidence that the tension of which Capsali writes ever existed. Moslem invaders were tolerant of all religions in Spain. As foreigners, the Moslems felt that they could not afford to antagonize the inhabitants of the land. Whenever possible, they avoided needless slaughter.[122]

The Moslem invaders worked hard to establish credibility among their subjects. One of the ways they did this was to appoint native administrators throughout the land who were familiar with the people they governed. They also allowed all religious groups on the peninsula to continue practicing their faith according to their tradition.[123]

Because of their role in subduing residual revolts in the conquered territories,[124] Jews were afforded more rights than their Christian neighbors.[125] While the treatment of most non-Moslems fluctuated, the Jews enjoyed religious freedom and were never subject to forced conversions.[126]

The importance of the later development is minimized in light of the fact that voluntary conversion to Islam increased during the reign of the Moslems over Spain. Though the trend to convert was strongest among Christians, one can assume that Jews also converted.[127] Despite the Moslem preference for non-Moslem administrators, non-Moslems were considered second-class citizens. Arab leaders held them in disdain, seeing as their only role to "enrich the Arabs, the great nation which had been called to rule."[128] Through conversion, both Jews and Christians could improve their status.[129]

But as long as the Jews continued to demonstrate their loyalty to

the Caliph through support of the national treasury, their status steadily improved. Arab historians depict them sympathetically as an integral part of the leadership of the Moslem state and esteemed advisors of the Caliph.[130] At one point, the legal status of the Jews was raised to that of royal servants and they were given virtual freedom of religion. There are records which state that Jews often even participated in the councils of the Caliph which decided Church policy and dictated Christian religious belief.[131] The population of the Jewish community grew as oppressed Jews from neighboring lands immigrated to Spain to attain the privileges enjoyed there.

The eventual decline of the Jewish status seems not to have been instigated either in the Jewish or Moslem communities, but rather among the Christians. In 838, a disillusioned priest named Bodo converted to Judaism and took the name Eliezer.[132] Eliezer became a zealous preacher predicting the coming of the Messiah. His activities aroused both Christian and Jewish leaders. For ten years Eliezer was the center of attention in Spain, especially during a series of debates with a Christian named Alvaro.[133] Even though little is known about Eliezer's whereabouts after 847, his influence continued well beyond his actual presence in Spain.

Eliezer inspired a messianic fervor among Christians. One of the first leaders of the Christian messianists was Eulogius. He traveled throughout Spain preaching the superiority of his faith.[134] Eulogius developed a large following of zealots who purposely broke the law in an attempt to be martyred. The Moslems preferred not to create martyrs but eventually had no other choice if they were to protect the integrity of the Law.

Eulogius' movement created an atmosphere of religious fanaticism which became characteristic of Spanish society for several centuries.[135] The Christian leadership disavowed any connection with these groups. They feared that the activities of the fanatics would endanger their own security. The Moslem people responded to the Christian fanatics by creating groups of their own which demanded the dismissal of all non-Moslems from official government positions.[135a] In the beginning their demands were ignored. Most Moslem leaders, out of fiscal necessity, still practiced a policy of tolerance.[136]

Movements developed among Jews which paralleled the Christian groups. Jewish communal leaders responded to these groups in the same way as their Christian counterparts. They disavowed any support of them and linked their destinies to the ruling Moslem power.[137]

Eventually, the Moslem rulers were forced to suppress the groups of Christian and Jewish zealots. This policy change led to an increase in immigration to northern Spain, the center of Christian power. The Jews who moved to the north were oppressed and persecuted. The Christians identified them with the Moslems as oppressors rather than as comrades in the fight against the Moslems. The social status of the Jews in the north was inferior to that of their southern co-religionists. They lacked the security guaranteed by allegiance to the Caliph's court. The Jewish communities of the north never developed to the extent to which southern Jewish communities did.[138]

During the period of the Berber alliance with the Castilian-Christians, the Jewish position in the south improved markedly. The Jews called the Berbers Philistines, identifying them with their arch-enemies in biblical times.[139] Moslems and Jews joined forces in an

attempt to repel them. The Castilians and the Jews occupied the same role on different sides of the war. The former supported the Berbers, and the latter the Moslems.[140] Until the end of the Caliphate, the Jews continued the cooperation with the Moslems that had begun in the early eighth century.

Capsali minimizes, if not ignores, the cooperation between Moslems and Jews. However, he exaggerates the development of religious studies by Jews during the Moslem period. Capsali portrays pre-Moslem Spain as a vast wasteland void of academies and scholars where no one studied Torah. Capsali describes the situation in the community of Cordoba in greater detail. The people of Cordoba were uneducated. Their only religious activity, in the words of Capsali, was

היו דורשין והיו עושין מדרש.[141] This phrase seems to mean that the people were involved in occasional textual exegesis, rather than serious legal interpretation. Cordoba supported only one synagogue, one school and one judge named Nathan the Hassid (righteous).[142]

The situation changed drastically with the arrival of Rabbi Moses and his son, Rabbi Hanoch, both of Bari. Both became judges soon after their arrival. They taught many disciples and raised the religious standards of the community.[143]

Capsali singles out Maimonides as the greatest rabbi of the Moslem period. Capsali praises him for his activities which included raising many disciples, writing responsa, and composing many legal commentaries.[144] To Capsali, Maimonides was as great as were Rabina and Ashi, the rabbis who, according to tradition, compiled the Talmud.[145] Capsali's final comment on Maimonides sums up his respect for him:

> From Moses (the lawgiver) until Moses (i.e., Maimonides) there was none like Moses.[146]

The only other scholar Capsali singles out in detail is Nachmanides whose conversion to the Kabbalah has already been described.[147] Capsali does, however, list several other rabbis he considers important:

a. Solomon Ibn Gabriol
b. Judah HaLevi
c. Abraham Ibn Ezra
d. Moses Ibn Ezra
e. Abraham Ibn Daud
f. Isaac b. Baruch
g. Isaac b. Yehudah
h. Isaac b. Tzaddik
i. Isaac b. Reuven
j. Isaac b. Jacob Alfassi[148]

Capsali does not indicate why each of these individuals is important. Instead, he groups their accomplishments together listing such achievements as:

a. the creation of academies in Spain
b. the spread of Torah study
c. halakhic decisions
d. poetic compositions
e. the formulation of a formal Hebrew grammar[149]

Capsali omits completely any references to overtly anti-rabbinic trends which flourished in Moslem Spain. As noted above, he makes passing reference to only one movement which veered away from rabbinic Judaism, that being Kabbalism.[150] He totally ignores the most virulent anti-rabbinic trend in Judaism in the Moslem period--messianism. Frequently, men who claimed to be messiahs found followers among poor Jews who were disillusioned with rabbinic leadership. Messianic fervor lay dormant among the Jewish masses who identified the rabbis with the upper

class and felt that they were not responsive to their needs. The fiery attacks by pseudo-messiahs against the rabbis hit a responsive chord among the poor Jews who yearned for deliverance. They were more than willing to alter the halakhic structure or deny it completely in protest against the rabbinic authorities.[151]

In the early eighth century a pseudo-messiah arrived in Spain, declaring that the time of the deliverance had arrived. He was a convert to Judaism named Severa.[152] Immediately, Severa attracted a large following of uneducated Jews. Not being well versed in the law, they were ready to accept any changes which Severa suggested. Severa assembled his followers on the Spanish coast and they set out on the long march toward Jerusalem. When they reached Syria, Severa was imprisoned. No one knows what happened to the Jews who accompanied him, but one can assume that they were integrated into the Syrian people.[153]

One can understand why poor Spanish Jews went to such extremes to disassociate themselves from the rabbinic leadership in their land. Wealthy Jews spent most of their time working toward the creation of a Judeo-Spanish culture in Spain rather than in study of the Jewish tradition.

From the beginning of the Moslem period, Jews identified themselves politically with the Moslems. As time went on, they also developed a desire to be part of Islamic culture. In the tenth century, an efflorescence of Arabic culture occurred. Under the rule of Abdarahaman III, a movement began to create a pan-Spanish culture which sought to integrate the different religious groups under the rule of the Caliph.[154] The Jews, who were already a part of the Moslem political structure, immediately began to take part in the development of Spanish culture.

In the mind of the Jews, their participation was more than an effort to integrate with the majority culture. Just as the Spanish Moslems wanted to make Spain a center of Arabic culture, the Jews wanted Spain to be a center of Jewish culture.

The movement was initiated by Hasdai Ibn Shaprut.[155] Ibn Shaprut was a Spanish courtier who strove to serve the Caliph. A poet and benefactor of Jewish writers and poets, he became totally immersed in the practices of the Spanish nobility. It was not too long before many Jews joined their Moslem neighbors in the study of philosophy and other subjects which they thought might help them find answers to the questions of faith that plagued them.[156]

Jews became more deeply involved in the development of a Judeo-Spanish culture as fanatic Islamic practices waned.[157] In both Islam and Judaism, religious practices were no longer based on simple faith. Science replaced superstition as both faiths re-examined their theological foundations. Before long, Jews were well represented in the agnostic movements which characterized Spain. Wealthy Jews moved freely among Moslem men of wealth and Spanish intellectuals. The freedom the Jews enjoyed during this period which came to be known as the "Golden Age of Spain," were the result of religious indifferences and moral laxity, not legislated tolerance. Politically, the "Golden Age" was marked by absolutism and tyranny for anyone outside the inner circle.[158]

The "Golden Age" lasted for three generations, long enough for the Jews to reinforce their economic and social position and to reach cultural achievements unparalleled in Jewish history.[159] Capsali's most significant omission is any direct reference to this period. In his list of notable rabbis, Capsali mentions some of the luminaries of

the "Golden Age," but he never specifically refers to any of their accomplishments.

While one would expect this period to be central to any history of Spanish Jewry, one can understand why Capsali ignores it. From a psychological perspective, there would be nothing gained by reminding a group of impoverished refugees of their glorious past achievements. From a polemical point of view, Capsali would not want to glorify a period whose characteristics contradicted the ideals he supported. As a rabbi, Capsali could not idealize an age whose secular accomplishments he felt contributed to the decline of Jewish learning.

Capsali's only mention of anything or anyone related to the "Golden Age" is his portrait of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut. It is, however, fashioned in such a way as to support Capsali's attitudes. Capsali explains that after the death of R. Moses, two of his disciples vied for his position.[160] One was his son, R. Hanoch, and the other was one of his students, R. Yose b. R. Isaac, also known as Ibn Abitur.

The people of Cordoba were divided over which should become the head of the community. According to Capsali, Ibn Shaprut had the situation under control, but after his death a virtual civil war broke out. Eventually, Hanoch inherited his father's title. Once secure in his position, he excommunicated R. Yose, claiming that his scholarship was faulty and misleading. R. Yose feld to Babylonia where he tried to join the academy of Hai Gaon. Hai Gaon would not accept him so he went to Damascus where he spent the rest of his life.

While conventional histories agree with Capsali concerning the occurrence of a succession crisis following the death of R. Moses in 970, they outline it differently.[161] The contest was between R. Hanoch who was a revered scholar and Ibn Abitur, a member of the Spanish

aristocracy. The two possible successors represented two possible paths the community could follow: maintenance of tradition or increased secularization.

Since the community was evenly split over this issue, they asked the aged Hasdai Ibn Shaprut to make the decision.[162] He chose R. Hanoch, destroying Ibn Abitur's chances for success because no one would oppose the revered Ibn Shaprut.

Immediately following the death of Ibn Shaprut in 975, Ibn Abitur and his supporters renewed their campaign against R. Hanoch.[163] This time no one within the Jewish community was influential enough to mediate the conflict so the Jews of Cordoba sought the assistance of the Caliph. Ibn Abitur expected the Caliph to support him because he was an aristocrat and friend of the Caliph. To Ibn Abitur's surprise the Caliph maintained the status quo. Ibn Abitur fled from Spain and sought asylum in many countries but was refused entrance in most. Finally, the Jews of Egypt hesitantly accepted him.

Capsali does not retell this story to support the position of Ibn Shaprut whose participation in the dispute is minimized as much as possible. Capsali has purposely adapted this story to fit his needs. Capsali's representation of the succession of R. Hanoch supports several halakhic mechanisms which were important to Capsali if he was to legitimize his position.

As the son of a great rabbi, it was essential for Capsali to present a story which unquestionably defends the validity of hereditary leadership in rabbinic families. Just as Hanoch inherited his father's title, Capsali wanted to make it clear that he deserved the title of his well-known father, Rabbi Elkanah Capsali. In retelling the story,

Capsali also stresses the right of a legitimate leader to excommunicate those who have strayed from what he considers acceptable practices. As R. Hanoch had the right to excommunicate Joseph Ibn Abitur, Capsali wanted the right to expel competing leaders in his time and thereby consolidate his position.

Capsali claims that Hai Gaon would not accept Ibn Abitur into his academy because he had been associated with the Spanish academies which had competed with Babylonian schools. This is one of the few cases where Capsali's presentation is historically accurate. It should be no surprise that in this case historical reality conforms to Capsali's polemic interests.

Before the ransom of R. Moses of Bari, the Spanish Jews were completely dependent on the scholars of Babylonia for solutions to their halakhic problems. Each year they sent their legal questions to Babylonia along with their financial support for the academies.[164] After Rabbi Moses' development of Spanish academies and native scholars, Spanish Jews stopped sending their questions to Babylonia and ceased their financial support of the academies. According to Capsali, the cessation of income from Spanish Jewry caused severe financial problems for the Babylonian schools.[165]

By the time of Samuel HaNagid, the situation was completely reversed. Spanish communities were at the center of the Jewish world. They supported the Jewish communities in their area by creating academies and distributing copies of essential legal texts.[166] As a result the eastern academies declined in prominence and the Spanish schools were respected throughout the diaspora.

It was clearly in Capsali's self-interest to praise the develop-

ment of local academies and independent scholars. Capsali could not maintain his role if Jews in his community looked to foreign rabbis as authorities. Capsali further enhances his position by pointing out the benefits which resulted from the development of local halakhic authorities. Whereas the Jews of Spain who lived before the arrival of R. Moses were as deprived financially as they were religiously, by the time of Samuel HaNagid, the wealth of the Jews matched their religious expertise. Once again Capsali shows that prosperity and security are linked to proficiency in traditional texts in which he was learned and willing to share his knowledge.

Chapter 4

CHRISTIAN SPAIN

Capsali perceives little change in the role of Jewish advisors during the Christian conquest of Moslem Spain. As examples of the continued participation of Jews in the Christian court, he tells the story of the anonymous Jewish advisor who helped the Spanish monarch become emperor of all Europe, and the story of Don Samuel HaLevi.[167] Through these stories, Capsali demonstrates that Jews were appointed to important positions in the Christian period, as they had been during the rule of the Caliph. The reasons for their success, Capsali notes, were the same in both eras: The Christian monarchs were as impressed by the wisdom of the Jews as were their predecessors. During the Christian period, the Jewish community still benefited from its association with the crown by receiving the guarantees of security that allowed their communities to grow and prosper. Capsali believes that this prosperity made it possible for Jews to devote more time to study which in turn made their lives more secure.

Capsali does realize that the Christian middle class was no more pleased about the involvement of Jews in the royal court than its Moslem counterpart.[168] This is proven by the response of the people to Don Samuel HaLevi's achievements. The masses, who were jealous of him, killed him and distributed his wealth among themselves.[169] The seriousness of the anti-Jewish sentiment was demonstrated by the spread of violence against the Jews following Don Samuel's death. Capsali claims that his assassination was followed by a wave of destruction of Jewish communities throughout Spain. As a result of these persecutions, many Jews were killed and others were forced to flee from Spain.

Because there was no learned Jew who could lead the people, Capsali

indicates that they turned their backs on their tradition and began to study Greek philosophy.[170] The assimilation was so great, according to Capsali, that no one studied the Torah and only one or two people were still involved in the study of Talmud.[171]

Capsali writes that God eventually saw fit to send a savior to the Jews of Spain named קאנפאנטרן, who was ordained to return the people to the study of their tradition.[172] He raised four disciples, but unlike his predecessors in the history of Spanish Jewry קאנפאנטרן and his disciples were not able to convince the Jews to return to their faith. Capsali suggests that the Jews were so far removed from Judaism that they could not be redeemed. Despite their previous experiences, they were hoping to improve their lives by increasing their involvement in the royal court, as the tale of Don Abraham Senior demonstrates.

Senior was a court Jew in the palace of the Aragonese King Ferdinand.[173] When Ferdinand approached his advisors and asked them whether he should marry Isabella of Castille, the advisors were divided over what he should do. Senior led the group of advisors who supported the marriage because he was sure that would improve the lives of the Jews. Senior believed this strongly enough to arrange the secret meeting between Ferdinand and Isabella at which they were wed.[174]

After the wedding, Ferdinand and Isabella legally joined their two kingdoms, creating the United Catholic Monarchy of Spain. Capsali traces the roots of the united monarchy back through its founders, Ferdinand and Isabella, with the hope of demonstrating how its treatment of the Jews was predictable and inevitable.

The story of Isabella's rise to the throne of Castille should have made Don Abraham Senior suspicious about how she would treat Jews. The

biblical derivation of her name, mentioned in Chapter 2, was the first indication that she would not be a friend of the Jews.[175] Obviously, Abraham Senior was not familiar enough with traditional sources to understand this warning.

Even so, Isabella's rise to power in her own realm should have warned Senior that she would gladly sacrifice those around her to achieve her goals. Isabella was the daughter of Don Juan, King of Castille. When her father died, her brother Don Henrique assumed the throne.[176] Henrique married a Portugese princess who discovered soon after their marriage that her husband was sterile. Not wanting to disappoint her husband, the queen conceived a child by one of her servants, Don Beltran de la Cuerva. Henrique never knew that the child, a daughter named Juana, was not his own.[177]

Henrique died still believing that Juana was his legitimate daughter. After his death, she assumed the throne of Castille. Juana's reign was brief, however, because soon after Henrique's death, Isabella learned of her true lineage. Isabella exposed Juana's illegitimacy to the other members of the royal court. With their help, Isabella overthrew Juana and became queen. Juana fled to a nunnery where she lived out her life.[178]

The story of Isabella's rise to power portrays her as an opportunist ready to employ any means to achieve her ends. Capsali, by retelling this story, infers that the Jews should have been suspicious of anyone who would expel her niece and seem to have no regrets about it.

Capsali's intent in retelling the story of Ferdinand's lineage and ascent to the throne of Aragon is quite different. In that story Capsali proves that Ferdinand was undeniably of Jewish stock which under other circumstances could have been a source of hope for the Jews. Ferdinand,

however, was too far removed from his Jewish roots to be sensitive to the plight of his people, and he was too weak to prevent Isabella from carrying out her intentions.

In telling this story, Capsali absolves Ferdinand of any guilt for the expulsion of the Jews and blames Isabella for their persecution. Capsali does imply that there was another guilty party, the Jews of Spain. Like Ferdinand, many of them were Jews by birth but so far removed from any association with the Jewish people that they could not understand what was happening to them.

Capsali traces Ferdinand's Jewish lineage back to his great-grandfather, Fadrique Enrique, the Admiral of Castille. Fadrique was a national hero and chief advisor to the king. Once, while traveling through the countryside, Fadrique was attracted to a beautiful Jewish woman named Palumba. When he returned to his home, Fadrique ordered Palumba to appear in his chambers. Some time later, she gave birth to a son. Fadrique Henrique ordered the child brought to the palace where he was raised as a member of the royal family.[179]

After the death of Fadrique Henrique, his illegitimate son inherited the position of Admiral of Castille. The new admiral, King Ferdinand's grandfather, sired three sons and a daughter. The daughter married King Carlos of Aragon. Together they gave birth to a son who became King Ferdinand of Aragon.[180] After he inherited his father's throne, Ferdinand married Isabella and their kingdoms were united for the first time in several centuries.[181]

At first, the monarchs improved the lives of the Jews as well as of all the subjects of their realm. The people lived without fear, prospered economically and enjoyed religious freedom. According to Capsali, it was

immediately apparent that Isabella was in charge and that in her hands lay the fate of the Jews.

When the United Monarchy minted coins, each side was engraved with a portrait of one of the monarchs. Capsali, who may have actually seen some of these coins, notes that Isabella's portrait was larger and more prominent than her husband's.[182] More important than this symbolic gesture was the fact that decrees issued by the two monarchs were not treated equally. Isabella's decrees were always immediately enacted. If Ferdinand proposed an official act, even within the borders of his own kingdom, he needed Isabella's endorsement. In fact, Capsali recalls that in most cases Isabella refused to support any decree issued by Ferdinand, meaning that nothing he ever suggested was ever carried out.[183]

This characterization of the relationship between the monarchs minimizes Ferdinand's guilt for supporting the decree of expulsion. One could not expect him to be any more effective in preventing his wife from enacting the edict of expulsion than in any other situation. The Ferdinand of the Seder, as characterized by Capsali, saves face among his fellow Jews, despite the expulsion. He is Isabella's puppet, possessing no real power in Spain. Isabella was the real villain because she controlled events in Spain, and there was no hope of repealing any decree she had issued.

There was only one area in which Ferdinand was successful, the expansion of his kingdom.[184] In the Seder, Ferdinand comes across as a brilliant military leader who successfully defeated his neighbors and enlarged the realm over which he and Isabella reigned. Around 1480, according to Capsali, Ferdinand annexed the kingdom of Portugal to the united monarchy.[185] Several years later, he accomplished his greatest success

by capturing the last stronghold of the Moslems on the peninsula, the Kingdom of Granada.[186]

Ferdinand took advantage of the serious civil strife in Granada, a situation which made his conquest easier. The Moslem Caliph in Granada, עלי מולכין אלחסן (Ali), was a descendant of the King of Damascus, who Capsali claims was a direct descendant of the biblical patriarch Abraham.[187] Ali seduced one of his child servants. One day when the servant was in Ali's private chambers, Ali's daughter entered the room. Ali's daughter, whom Capsali characterizes as a wicked girl, publicized her father's offense throughout the land. Ali decided to divorce his wife and marry his concubine.[188]

The Caliph's behavior embarrassed his people as well as Moslems all over the world.[189] His divorced queen and her children fled to the farthest reaches of the kingdom. One of Ali's sons, מחמיט (also known as Chico), raised an army and attacked his father.[190] During the civil war which followed, Chico was captured by Spanish troops and imprisoned.[191] Ali returned to the throne with the renewed support of his subjects and his queen fled once again.[192]

When Ali died, there was no one to succeed him. Two of his sons had died during the war and the other languished in a Spanish prison.[193] Ali's brother, also named מחמיט, became king.[194] Ferdinand of Spain heard reports that the people of Granada were not pleased with their new king and decided to take advantage of the situation to expand his kingdom.

Ferdinand released Chico from prison and offered to help him regain his throne. Although Chico was suspicious of Ferdinand's offer, his desire to become king of Granada overcame his apprehensions.[195] Ferdinand

provided Chico with an army and sent him off to regain his throne. Meanwhile, Ferdinand had plans of his own. In the words of Capsali:

והמלך הלך בדרך אחר לבדו.
אל תקרי לבדו אלה לכדו.

> King [Ferdinand] went off on a different route alone. Don't read alone (l'vodo), rather to capture him (l'codo).[196]

Ferdinand succeeded in capturing all of Granada in stages, eventually forcing Chico and his family to flee to Fez. The people of Granada, including the Jews, welcomed Ferdinand and Isabella, praising them upon their arrival and celebrating their success.[197]

Capsali's presentation of the political achievements of Christian Spain, and the Jewish role in them, is more accurate than his presentation in other periods. First, the information at Capsali's disposal was more reliable. Many of the events he describes happened within the lifetimes of the exiles with whom he had contact. Other events occurred within a few generations before the expulsion, making it possible for the exiles to retell them accurately. Second, the Jewish position in society constantly disintegrated during the Christian rule over Spain. Because this was a central theme of this period, Capsali has less need to adapt history to his polemic stance.

During the early Reconquest, Jewish notables steadily advanced in the Christian court as they had done during the Moslem period.[198] The reasons were the same: the kings of the Reconquest needed the counsel and wealth of the Jews.[199] In the Christian period, however, the association of the Christian monarchs with the Jews was also based on a religious principle. The early Church fathers taught that Jews were destined to be the eternal servants of Christians.[200] Therefore, the Christian kings of Spain saw it as their religious duty to employ the Jews in their court.

With this rationale, the king could appease the people who were jealous of the Jews while taking advantage of the Jews.

The benefits of this relationship for the Jews were many. As the property of the king, they were protected by him. They were guaranteed employment either in the royal court or as administrators in outlying areas. Often they were given property which was abandoned by the Moslems who fled from the Christian forces.[201]

Still, the disadvantages of the Jewish status in Christian society often outweighed the benefits.[202] The Christian kings rapidly drained the wealth of the Jews and demanded more. As time went on, the Jews found it difficult to replace the money because more restrictions were enacted against them.

Moreover, as the property of the king, they were subject to his arbitrary behavior, and often were left helpless. This occurred especially during interregnum periods when no clear heir to the throne was available. With no king in power, the enemies of the Jews could take advantage of their vulnerability. This vulnerability increased in direct proportion to their distance from the king's palace. Often local clergymen would incite the people to persecute the Jews. Other times the people would initiate attacks because the Jews represented the king. Similarly, it was common for the king to restrict the rights of the Jews, or to expel them from a particular area, as a concession to a local leader.

The height of the Jewish participation in the courts of Christian Spain occurred before the eleventh century. At that time, their help was still needed, and they could still identify with the goals of the Reconquest. Before the eleventh century, the Reconquest was basically a political movement controlled by the heirs of the Visigoths who sought

to re-establish their rule. At that time, the religious theme of the Reconquest was the expulsion of the Moslems, a goal the Jews could support.

By the middle of the eleventh century, the Christian tone of the Reconquest increased. The Christian monarchs were slowly influenced by the spirit of the nascent Crusades and began to view their campaign as part of the unification of the Christian world.[203] From that time on, there were only two occasions when the Moslems succeeded in preventing the advance of the Christian troops. Once was under the Almoravids in 1080 and the second was under the rule of the Almohades in 1140. Despite these temporary successes, the Moslems had little hope of restoring their control over the Iberian Peninsula.[204] From the thirteenth century on, the Christians advanced steadily southward capturing all of Spain except for the Kingdom of Granada.

By the fourteenth century, the Jewish role in the Reconquest ceased, and their identification with the ruling powers diminished.[205] The Moslem threat had been destroyed, and the resettlement of abandoned Moslem property had been completed. All land grants to the Jews were cancelled.[206] The sources of Jewish money were disappearing and Jews were forced to leave the positions their wealth had guaranteed them.[207]

The close of the Reconquest brought to an end the conditions that enabled qualified Jews to obtain positions in the country's administration.[208] Despite these changes, the Jewish role in Christian Spain remained favorable as long as the Jews maintained a moderately important economic role. But this was not enough to guarantee their continued protection.[209]

The Christian monarchs in Spain developed what can be called a typical medieval attitude toward the Jews.[210] They protected them for the

sake of their own positions as long as was realistically possible. The monarchs of medieval Europe desired to maintain law and order in their lands, control the population, and prevent uprisings against Jews from developing into general revolts.[211] Persecutions against the Jews in fourteenth century Spain demonstrated that it was impossible to protect the Jews as demands increased at a grassroots level for their conversion.[212]

During the riots of 1390-91, the king quickly realized he could do little to restrain the masses who attacked the Jews. Christian clergymen, who lived among the people and were respected by them, were far more influential in their lives than were distant monarchs.[213] Not until after the riots ended in 1392, could the king even attempt to punish those involved. By that time, his plan to protect the Jews became a plan by which he attempted to salvage the remnants of the Jewish community. But once the program began, the presence of the "New Christians" (Conversos) prevented its completion. Integrating the Conversos into Spanish society demanded the immediate attention of the king and made rebuilding the Jewish community a secondary consideration.

The policies of the United Kingdom of Aragon and Castille provided the Jews a temporary respite by returning them to their previous status. But Christians' demands for more restrictions against the Jews increased. This, combined with the diminishing ability of the Jews to make valuable contributions to the running of the government, set the stage for increased persecution and eventual expulsion.

While Capsali is aware of the changes in the treatment of the Jews by Christians, he does not attribute these changes to political and economic factors. In Capsali's opinion, the decline in the status of

the Jews resulted from the evil intentions of two particular individuals.

For example, the riots of 1390-91 were instigated, according to Capsali, by a Satanic priest named Vincent Ferrer.[214] Ferrer travelled throughout Spain delivering fiery sermons urging Jewish conversion. Capsali believed that his rhetoric incited the Christian populus to attack the Jews.

Similarly, Capsali believed that the Inquisition was initiated by an individual, not by the Church as conventional histories contend.[215] In this case, Isabella played the role of the devil. According to the legend on which Capsali bases this contention, Isabella accidently discovered that the Jews of Toledo were not paying the special tax required of all Jews in her realm.[216] She was infuriated and immediately ordered payment. At the same time, and apparently as a result of her discovery, she demanded an investigation to ensure that all Christians were observing their faith.[217] Capsali claims that the priests empowered to conduct this investigation were overly zealous. They soon extended their investigation to the Conversos and eventually used their authority to persecute the Jews. In reality, the decline in the treatment of the Jews was not the result of the evil intentions of any individual; however, Capsali's presentation does reflect a kernel of historical reality.

The Christian masses, under the leadership of local clergy, were prepared from the time of the Reconquest to pressure the Jews to convert by any means necessary.[218] Local clergymen often inspired popular uprisings and were at the head of movements which urged the dismissal of Jews from positions of authority. They forced Jews to attend conversionary sermons and arranged public disputations between Christians and Jews in which the Jews would lose. Often, these actions were undertaken with the support

of the Pope.[219]

These attempts to convert the Jews met with only moderate success as long as Jews remained important in the government. As their importance in political and economic spheres declined, so did the number of court Jews who could act as advocates for their co-religionists.[220] Christians replaced Jews in the state administration, and the status of Jews decreased.[221] As a result of these factors, anti-Jewish activities could increase unimpeded.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, two events contributed to the increase in the number of anti-Jewish uprisings. The first was the Spanish civil war.[222] While Jews were not directly involved, they probably were not passive observers. Many took sides in either a political or military capacity. After the war ended, both sides exaggerated the role of the Jews and blamed them for the country's misfortunes which resulted from the destruction during the war. Another catastrophe for which the Jews were blamed was the black plague which decimated the country.[223]

These factors converged in the late fourteenth century, creating an atmosphere in which serious anti-Jewish legislation could take hold. In 1377, the Cortes prohibited the Jews from making loans to the Christians, an activity which was essential for Jewish economic survival.[224] In the same year, the Cortes revoked the laws that imposed fines against persons who murdered Jews. This legislation left the Jews economically insoluable and open targets for physical violence.

In 1380, the Cortes further limited Jewish rights.[225] They banned the recitation of the benediction against heretics in the daily worship and deprived them of the right to retain jurisdiction over their own criminal cases. Finally, the ability of the Jews to attain prestigious

positions was curtailed by a ruling that no Jewish signature could appear on official documents.

Such legislation was seen by the people and by Church officials as a signal to expedite their efforts to convert the Jews. A manifestation of this attitude was the 1390-91 riots which the government neither supported nor tried to quell. Initially, the riots were popular uprisings sparked by religious fanaticism. However, soon after they began, the Church organized the riots and directed them against the Jews.

The activities of Archbishop Ferrant Martinez demonstrate how this happened.[226] Martinez called for government assistance in his program of destroying synagogues and confining the Jews to their quarters. While the government refused to help, such assistance was not really necessary because as the people heard his plea, they immediately set out to destroy synagogues and kill Jews who refused to convert. Once one community set the example, others followed suit.

The first large scale uprisings occurred in Aragon in 1348. They were a model for the riots which swept Valencia in 1390[227] when many communities were converted en masse. In August of 1390, the Barcelona Jewish community was destroyed, sealing the fate of the Jews of Gerona, the next community to which the riots spread.[228] In 1391, all the Jewish communities of Catalonia were destroyed or impoverished.[229] As the riots spread across the peninsula, Jewish communities were overtaken in rapid succession. Their synagogues were in ruins, and many of the Jews who were not converted by force died as martyrs.

The end of the riots did not mean the end of the persecution of the Jews. Christians set up barriers against those who did not convert while increasing attempts to convert them by any conceivable means. The primary

method used was forced attendance at conversionary sermons. Among the most famous preachers of these sermons was Vincent Ferrer. He urged forced baptism, further social exclusion for those who remained Jews, the eviction of all Jews from urban areas, increased anti-Jewish legislation and an Inquisition. He final demand threatened the Conversos more than those who remained Jews because it was meant to ascertain their devotion to Christianity. Many of the "New Christians" worshipped publicly as Christians and privately as Jews. If the truth was discovered during an Inquisition, they could be killed.

The Conversos represented a large proportion of Spanish Jewry.[230] While many of them, especially during periods of persecution, demonstrated their zeal for Christianity and tried to convert others, some remained faithful to Judaism.[231] Not only did the convert often continue to practice the Jewish religion, but in many families the descendants of the Conversos remained loyal Jews.[232]

The old Christians were always suspicious of the Conversos. They considered them aliens, Jews by race, who were not devoted to Christianity.[233] Because most of them had converted under duress, the Christians feared that they would revert to their original faith if they were given the chance.[234] In order to differentiate the new converts who accepted Christianity from those who secretly practiced Judaism, Christian clergy urged that an Inquisition be established. The Inquisition would ascertain the loyalty of Conversos to their adopted faith.

As with every other policy toward the Jews, the activities of the Inquisition initially fluctuated with the political and economic needs of the time. Even Ferdinand and Isabella employed Conversos as advisors early in their reign. Their presence in the royal court protected the

position of the Conversos until Ferdinand and Isabella consolidated their position enough to feel secure to promote a definite policy against Conversos.[235]

Ferdinand and Isabella urged that all political and ecclesiastical means be used to solve the Conversos problem.[236] With this policy, they took the first step toward obliterating all traces of Judaism from their kingdom in order to unify their subjects under the banner of Christianity.[237] All favorable aspects of the Catholic monarch's policy toward Jews were abandoned and their anti-Jewish policies took precedence.[238]

In 1478 the government policy toward the Jews was endorsed by the Vatican. On November 1, 1478, Pope Sixtus IV invested Ferdinand and Isabella with the power to appoint an Inquisitor General.[239] Immediately, fanatic Christians set out to attack the Jews. The first reaction of the Conversos and the Jews was to fight back, but they soon decided that they were not strong enough to succeed.[240] In 1482, the Conversos appealed to the Pope, who supported their cause. He demanded that the Inquisition be controlled and that all sinners be allowed to repent and save their lives.[241]

In 1483, Torquemada was appointed Inquisitor General. With him presiding over the supreme council of the Inquisition, there was little hope the Pope's demands would be met.[242] Torquemada was empowered to issue all regulations and define all the principles by which the Inquisition functioned.[243] One of his first official acts was to revoke all earlier edicts which allowed favorable treatment of the Conversos. He also permitted the Inquisitors to independently set and authorize fines.[244] His leadership led to increases in arrests and killings, and local expulsions began to take place.

Torquemada's rulings were not accepted by all of his associates. There was much criticism of his methods.[245] More enlightened clergy considered the Inquisition an outdated means of dealing with the Jewish problem. Many felt that local inquisitors had too much discretion in setting policy. Even the supporters of the Inquisition thought that its practices should be unified and cruelty should be prohibited. The moderates, who offered these criticisms, could never affect the policy of the Inquisition which was strictly under the control of the extremists.

Capsali glosses over the Inquisition period, making only one mention of Torquemada in a completely different context.[246] Capsali's omission cannot result from a reluctance to mention the persecution of the Jews. He does refer to two other periods of persecution in the fifteenth century. One was the result of the travels of Vincent Ferrer, and another occurred after the death of Don Samuel HaLevi. The aftermath of both of these periods of persecution are described by Capsali in the same way. There was a great deal of physical destruction in the affected Jewish communities. Many scholars were killed, most of the holy books were burned, and most Jewish communities were forced to close their schools.

While Capsali describes the actual destructions in broad generalizations, his portrayal of the religious revival following each conflagration is presented in minute detail. Following the persecution inspired by Vincent Ferrer, God sent a savior from Ashkenaz named Asher b. HaRav Yehudah.[247] He received a tumultuous welcome from the 10,000 Jews of Toledo. They prepared a communal celebration and greeted him with the words, בא ברוך ה׳. He was succeeded by his son, R. Yehiel, who was a scholar in his own right. The two of them increased study in Toledo and created native legal authorities in Spain, providing all the Jews of

Spain with prosperity and security.

The persecutions following the death of Don Samuel ended with the arrival of ר' יצחק קאנפנטו.[248] Capsali says that he temporarily turned the people back on the path of Torah. He and his disciples tried to create a fence around the Torah, a legal limit which kept the Jews within the boundary of the Law. קאנפאנטון 's disciples were R. Isaac Aboab, R. Isaac de Leon, R. Isaac Hayyun and R. Simon Memmi. All except Memmi died before the expulsion. Memmi was martyred during the persecutions of the expulsion.

No Jew, in Capsali's view, or at least according to his polemic intent, would consider doing anything but returning to the traditional way of life after any persecutions. Capsali must have been aware that this was not always the case. He seemed to have no problem ignoring reality except in the case of one group, the Conversos. If they were as numerous and well known as standard histories of the period indicate, there was no way in which Capsali could write a history of pre-expulsion Spain and ignore them. Capsali does, however, mold the Conversos into what he would have wanted them to be, secret rabbinic Jews.

According to Capsali, Conversos observed most if not all traditional Jewish practices.[249] On Passover, they baked matzot and followed all the required dietary laws. They also refrained from all prohibited work on festivals and Shabbat. Each Shabbat, the Conversos closed their shops and gathered to worship and study in secret synagogues. For Capsali, it is inconceivable that the Conversos' behavior was not noticed by their Christian neighbors.[250] But since they were nobles who often were in the company of Spanish royalty, Capsali assumes that their behavior was overlooked. He hypothesizes that the Spanish authorities allowed them to live

securely, practicing Judaism as they wished. Capsali felt that the Conversos fared better among gentiles than they did among Jews. Despite their devotion to the Law, Capsali says that the Conversos were excommunicated by Jewish leaders for turning their backs on their faith.

A more conventional view of the Jewish response to their persecution shows that the Conversos' answer was only one among many. As in the Moslem period, Jews searched their mystical and messianic traditions for ways to reshape their lives after periods of unrest.

The mystical response was very popular among the Jewish masses who were most seriously affected by the outbreaks of violence. As in the Christian period, they condemned the upper class and rabbis for their lack of moral and religious commitment.[251] The mystics sought to remove Judaism from the mundane entanglements of the Halakha and make it more responsive to the needs of the people. They hoped to restore the Jewish tradition's ability to guide people's lives. In the mystical tradition, the lives of the poor were sanctified, and people who suffered became the seed of the ultimate redemption.[252] With the Zohar as their guide, mystical leaders attempted to help Spanish Jewry recreate their lives.[253] The rabbinic authorities responded to the claims of the mystics by excommunicating them on the charge of heresy.[254]

Many Jews decided to follow men who claimed to be the Messiah in the hope of ameliorating their conditions. As in the case of a false Messiah who appeared in 1295, seldom did the appearance of such individuals improve the condition of Spanish Jewry.

In 1295, a man who claimed to be the Messiah arrived in Castille. He attracted a large following which he led outside the city to await the Messiah's arrival.[255] Legend has it that while the people waited for the

Messiah, a shower of crosses fell from the sky. Many who witnessed the event went to a renowned Jewish doctor named Abner of Burgos for an analysis of it. After hearing these reports, Abner, who had long doubted the validity of Judaism, converted to Christianity. After his conversion, Abner published many books in which he urged his former co-religionists to follow his example and convert.

Abner's motivation for his conversion was similar to that of many who joined him. His belief in Judaism had been undermined by the tribulations of his people and their unfulfilled messianic prophecies.[256] Yet, despite the disappointment inherent in following those who claimed to be the Messiah, such claims continued to stir the masses, especially as the plight of the Jews deteriorated in the fifteenth century.[257]

As well as denying the existence of any non-rabbinic groups, Capsali also fails to mention the existence of any individuals or groups who had authority in the Jewish community except those rabbis who fit into a traditional pattern. Perhaps afraid that they would threaten his own position, Capsali only writes about those who were empowered with authority from the traditional sources, specifically the rabbi and the Bet Din. In doing this, Capsali ignores the variety of communal organizations and individuals whose presence influenced Jewish life in Christian Spain.

As long as the Christian authorities needed the revenue supplied by the Jews, the autonomy of the Jewish community was protected.[258] There were two different communal organizations which functioned in the autonomous Jewish community, the Alijama and the Kahal. The former was an independent political entity, involved mainly in the maintenance of economic stability within the Jewish community.[259] The duties of the latter encompassed a wide range of communal activities.[260]

The Kahal supervised the autonomous courts of the Jewish community. These courts were run according to the legal standards of traditional Jewish jurisprudence. The judges who adjudicated disputes were the leaders of the Jewish community. The Kahal was empowered to enforce all laws within the community including those dealing with criminal, civil and religious issues.

Each year the leader of the Kahal collected the required donation of tzedakah (charity) from all the members of the community. They then allocated these funds to the poor and to all communal institutions. The Kahal also supervised all aspects of the community's economy on which Jewish law might have a bearing, including the prohibition of gambling. Occasionally, they used their authority to preserve the peace. For example, if too many of a particular business already existed in the marketplace, the Kahal would prohibit similar businesses from opening.

The Kahal also monitored the acquisition of luxuries by individuals and prohibited people from accumulating too much wealth, apparently in an attempt to prevent a class struggle within the Jewish community. Finally, the Kahal played an important role in preserving the rights of the Jews and defending their position in Spanish society. They would respond to all charges against the Jews by both local and royal officials.[261]

Some individual Jews also played significant roles in the supervision of the Jewish community. The Nasi was a special court Jew who acted as the advocate for the Jews in the court of the king.[262] In the Jewish community, there was a chief rabbi called el Rab,[263] appointed by the king. As official liaison between the king and the Jewish community, the chief rabbi enjoyed social and political prestige. Some influ-

ential families received the title of "Free Jews" as a reward for their support of the king.[264] This designation brought with it special rights and privileges in Spanish society.

As one might well understand, all of these special titles caused much conflict in the Jewish community. Because all of the honors went to people who used their wealth to purchase them, the average Jew felt left out. The leadership of the Jewish community was restricted to wealthy Jews who, in order to maintain their positions, had to spend more time in the court of the king than in the Jewish community. The people could not accept them as religious leaders.

However, as the plight of the Jews worsened, the gap between the leaders and their community narrowed. Two examples demonstrate that at least during times of persecution, the Jews drew together for their mutual protection. In 1354, following a period of civil strife in which many Jewish communities were destroyed, community representatives gathered in Barcelona.[265] They drew up a plan for Jewish protection which they presented to the king. It is not known whether this conference achieved anything. There are neither records of the existence of any Jewish organization after this initial meeting, nor any indication of the results of their efforts.

A more successful unification of the Jewish community occurred after the riots of 1390-91.[266] By that time the Jews realized that they had to work together to protect themselves. Because of the total destruction of so many communities, their efforts were immediately directed at resettling Jews and reestablishing a functioning economy among them. As important as these concerns were, the religious controversies which arose after the riots demanded the attention of the leaders of the Jewish community. The

large number of forced and voluntary conversions among Jews caused new problems. Many of the converts wanted to return to Judaism. Many families were split because part of the family had converted and part was still Jewish. This situation posed numerous legal questions which had not been dealt with in the past.

Because the riots led to the dismissal of many Jews from government positions, their attempts to solve the problems of the Jewish community met with moderate success. The Jewish community no longer had the means to help itself, and since its ties with the government were severed, it was difficult to get any official help toward their goal.

Since Capsali ignores the existence of government-sanctioned leaders in the Jewish community, he does not mention any of the strife between those leaders and the people. Similarly, he need not discuss any attempts to rebuild Jewish communities, initiated by Jews affiliated with the Spanish authorities, because in his understanding of Jewish life in Spain, each crisis was solved by the true leaders of Spanish Jewry, the rabbis.

Because Spain was often the perfect example of the prosperity and security which a functioning traditional community guarantees, Capsali explains that the Jews who were expelled from France immigrated to Spain en masse.[267] Conventional analyses indicate that the French immigrants brought with them more than Capsali realized. Prior to the expulsion of the Jews from France, French Mendicant Friars brought charges of heresy against them. With the immigration of the Jews from France to Spain, the Friars sought to extend their persecution of heretics into Spain.[268]

Also prior to the expulsion of the French Jews, the French Church had begun to re-examine the content of Jewish legal texts.[269] In 1240, all Jewish books were confiscated in Paris. Following an investigation

of the content of these books, the Talmud was burned. At the time when these events were taking place, the Spanish authorities were surely cognizant of their occurrence. However, while this anti-Jewish legislation was being promulgated in France, the Christian monarchs of Spain were still involved in the Reconquest, so these policies were not implemented in their land.[270] One can be sure, though, that when the Spanish instituted anti-Jewish legislation, it was modeled after the French precedent.

The presence of the exiled French Jews in Spain had an immediate and long-term effect on the treatment of Spanish Jewry. Many of the French exiles had been baptized before leaving France. Spanish Jews encouraged them to reconvert. The reconversion of French Jews raised doubts about the devotion of Spanish converts to Christianity.[271] The presence of French Jews did more than increase the size of the Jewish communities of Northern Spain. The influx of French Jews affected the treatment of Spanish Jewry and probably even influenced the eventual decision to expel them. Capsali even understood this, as he demonstrated in the parallel he drew between the growth of the Spanish Jewish communities caused by the French immigration and the population explosion among the Hebrew slaves in biblical Egypt,[272] mentioned in Chapter 4.

Not all Jews who immigrated to Spain were fleeing their homelands. Conventional histories support Capsali's suggestion that often Spanish Jews invited diaspora leaders into their communities. It is not always clear whether these individuals were invited by communal leaders or by the people themselves. In the case of R. Asher, a German rabbi, who entered Spain in the early fourteenth century, it seems unlikely that communal leaders would have invited him because his platform would have threatened their position.[273]

R. Asher survived the massacres that occurred in Germany in 1298. He was a student of Rabbi Meir who was martyred during the persecutions. Upon his arrival in Spain, R. Asher immediately established himself as a talmudic expert. He castigated the leaders of the Jewish community for their arrogance and undisciplined observance of Jewish law. He tried to warn them that unless they changed their way of life, they would meet the same fate as the Jews of Germany. Whether R. Asher succeeded is not clear, but one fact suggests that he never achieved his goal. He is said to have died in Germany, after having returned there to rebuild his own community.

During the Christian period, there is evidence of two major periods of emigration from Spain. The first occurred during the Reconquest when some Spanish Jews moved into Southern France in flight from the Christians. The second period of immigration occurred throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when many Jews left for Palestine, often led by pseudo-Messiahs. As one might expect, immigration to Palestine increased as the persecution of the Jews became more serious.

Chapter 5

1492-THE EXPULSION

In the winter of 1492, Capsali imagines that the Spanish Jews joined their non-Jewish neighbors in celebrating Ferdinand's victory over the Moslem forces of Granada. Little did they know that bad times were about to befall them. In the words of Capsali, ישראל (Yisrael) was about to become ישראל (Yisrael), "the sufferers of God."[274] With the annexation of Granada, the time came for Isabella to fulfill the vow which she had made to Torquemada to expel the Jews.

At first Ferdinand refused to assist his wife in her plan. Isabella's suggestion enraged Ferdinand. According to Capsali, he responded by throwing his shoe at her.[275] His response is more than a sign of anger. In pre-modern Jewish tradition, a widow was required to marry her husband's brother if she had been left childless. If the brother of her deceased husband did not want to marry her, thereby freeing her to marry whomever she wished, he had to perform a ceremony known as Halitzah.

In this ceremony the brother removed his shoe, then threw it at the widow to signify their divorce. Capsali could very well be saying that Ferdinand, at first, divorced himself from Isabella and her plan, only to return when she threatened to expose his Jewish heritage and undermine his official position. In this way, Capsali once again defends Ferdinand in the eyes of the exiles by portraying him as initially unwilling to expel his fellow Jews. After Ferdinand reconsidered, he returned to his wife and said to her, "I will do what you want to the Jews, lest people think that I am a Jew."[276]

Once he agreed, the "Edict of Expulsion" was issued. The terms of the edict, as reprinted by Capsali, gave the Jews three months to repay

all debts owed to non-Jews. Then, a government official would travel throughout the land to inventory all Jewish property and possessions. When the time came for the Jews to leave, they would be required to hand over all they owned as an exit tax.[277] Since, according to Capsali, the edict arrived in Jewish homes on the first night of Passover, the Jews had until the early summer to obey all the terms of the edict and leave the country.

The reaction of the Jews varied depending upon which segment of the Jewish community one examines. Observant Jews immediately began a period of mourning and fasting. They even fasted during the days of Passover, a practice strictly forbidden by Jewish law.[278] Throughout their preparation for the expulsion, the religious Jewish community praised God and reaffirmed its belief in the covenantal relationship between the Jews and God,[279] saying:

> In all the nations, each person invokes the name of his god, and we invoke the name of the Lord, our God.

Jews who were involved in the secular society of Spain immediately approached Ferdinand and Isabella seeking an annulment of the edict. Isaac Abravenal wrote letters and visited the king personally to try to convince him to change his mind. Don Abraham Senior co-signed Abravenal's letter in an attempt to use his influence with the king. Neither of these men could affect a change in royal policy.[280]

After his attempts failed, Abravenal fled in fear of his life. Senior died soon after the king received his letter. The circumstances of his death are very mysterious. After his death, his family was rewarded with prestigious positions in the royal household and was allowed to stay in Spain after the expulsion. Conventional histories of the expulsion suggest that Senior may have made a deal with the king to sacri-

fice his life in order to save the lives of his children and their communities. But even if Senior's influence did help a few individuals, it could do nothing to reverse the edict. Once Jewish property was inventoried, and the tax was collected, the Jews left on the day set aside for that purpose in the original decree.

Capsali mentions that the Jews were not the only people who approached Ferdinand and Isabella in the hope of rescinding the edict. According to Capsali, many Christians who were friends of the Jews endangered their own lives by speaking out against the edict. The support of these sympathetic Christians could do nothing. Eventually they, too, fled because they were unable to remain in a land where Jews were persecuted. Sympathetic Moslems were also among those who fled with the Jews, according to Capsali.[281] Although it is important for Capsali to demonstrate to the exiles that they had allies who felt so strongly about their cause that they, too, left Spain, it is unlikely that this was the reason. It is more realistic to suppose that any non-Jews who accompanied the Jews did so because their efforts on behalf of the Jews branded them as traitors and endangered their own lives.

Capsali paints an amazing picture of the day on which the expulsion took place. He says that all the Jews took to the road on the same day. In a long caravan, they walked toward the seashore offering praise to God all the way. When they reached the coast, they found ships from the "four corners of the earth" waiting for them. The ships had been sent by leaders of Islamic lands who wanted to save the Jews and bring them to their own lands. The Moslem rulers welcomed the exiles and considered the Spaniards fools for having sent them away.[282]

The expulsion brought to an end a long and sometimes glorious his-

tory of Jews in Spain. From the Christianization of the peninsula by the Romans, however, the day of the expulsion was inevitable. As long as the Jews would not convert, they remained outsiders. This fact was ignored only as long as they remained useful to the ruling powers. Once the Reconquest was completed and efforts to assimilate the Jews continued to fail, the government had no choice but to expel them. Once their usefulness ended, the presence of the Jews threatened to tear apart the social fabric of Spanish society. The devout Christian people of Spain, seeing no reason for allowing the Jews to remain among them, would have continued to deal with the matter as they saw fit. The continuing riots, persecutions, and popular uprisings against the Jews would have eventually led to anarchy. The only way to prevent this was to remove the source of the problem, the Jews.

Chapter 6

POST-EXPULSION COMMUNITIES

According to Capsali, the first place to which the exiles fled was Oran. The population reacted violently to their arrival, attacking the ships and killing many Jews. The king and the government were more hospitable. They welcomed the exiles and provided them with food and housing.[283]

The reaction to the arrival of the Jews in Naples was similar to that in Oran. King Ferdinand of Naples welcomed the representatives of the Jews to his palace and decided to admit the exiles to his land.[284] The people of Naples were angered by the king's decision.[285] Many of the exiles were sick because they had spent months on ships without adequate food and water. The people of Naples feared that the Jews would spread disease and suffering throughout their land.

According to Capsali, the situation worsened as Jews began to die from their afflictions. In the first few months of their stay in Naples, Capsali records that 50,000 Jews died. The protests of the people of Naples became violent. They accused the king of threatening their lives by admitting the sick and impoverished Jews. Their presence was not only a threat to the country's health, it was a threat to the nation's economy. The people could not grow enough food to feed themselves and the Jewish refugees so a serious famine spread throughout Naples.

The king's response to their outcry was unexpected, at least to the Spanish Jews. He threw his crown to the ground and said to his people, "If you can do better than I, then do it."[286] The people bowed down and accepted the king's leadership. Immediately the king enlisted a staff of doctors to travel to all Jewish communities to treat the sick and he built

hospitals to care for the seriously ill.

Once the famine ended and the health of the Jews improved, the Jewish community of Naples grew and prospered.[287] Wealthy Jews supported poor Jews through charity. They also contributed to non-Jews, who were still affected by the famine and the diseases it had caused. The Jews of Naples were very grateful to King Ferdinand. When he died they observed the traditional seven-day period of mourning (Shiva), an honor rarely accorded non-Jews.[288]

The throne of Naples was inherited by Alfonso, Ferdinand's son. During his reign the Jewish community began to suffer, as the French began to invade Naples.[289] King Alfonso did not want to fight the French, so as they landed on the shores of his land, he abdicated his throne. As he fled, he crowned his son Ferdinand king of Naples. In the confusion, the French advanced toward the capital and captured it. King Ferdinand fled with his family. The people of Naples welcomed the French and vowed their allegiance to them.

Mostinfluential Jews fled with Ferdinand. Those who remained lived securely for a time, but persecutions at the hands of the French soon began.[290] The suffering of the Jews ended with the return of King Ferdinand.[291] Ferdinand expelled the French, redeemed confiscated Jewish property and again guaranteed the security of the Jewish community.

This period of prosperity for the Jews did not last long. Soon after Ferdinand's return, the French recaptured Naples.[292] At that time the Spanish and French were at war. Not long after the French had captured Naples, the king of Spain attacked the country in the hope of annexing it to Spain. The king of Spain captured Naples and won the war against France. After the war ended, the king of Spain realized that the

population of his newly acquired territory included a large number of Jews. In 1510, the king of Spain declared that all Jews who lived in all territories acquired by Spain after 1492 were to leave immediately.[293] This decree brought to an end the existence of the Jewish community of Naples.

As a result of this expulsion as well as of the previous expulsions, Jewish communities sprouted up all over the Near East. There were, in Capsali's words, "a few here and a couple there."[294] Capsali recalls that one of his ancestors, Moses Capsali, travelled throughout the Mediterranean area collecting charity for the support of the exiles.[295] Soon all of the Levant was filled with Jews, since every community to which they came redeemed them[296]

Capsali gives several examples of communities that admitted Jews. Among them was Turkey where the king ordered his subjects to welcome the Jews. The penalty for those who did not comply with his order was death. As one might expect, the people welcomed the Jews more out of fear for their own lives than out of love for the Jews.[297] Capsali writes that in his community of Candia, his father, Elkanah Capsali, supported the exiles singlehandedly by collecting charity and selling the possessions of his synagogue.[298]

Although not in proper chronological order, Capsali also mentions the community of Jews who entered Portugal after their initial expulsion from Spain. According to Capsali, King Don Juan of Portugal considered the actions of Ferdinand and Isabella insane because of the wealth of the Jews, so he personally invited them to reside in his land.[299]

It became clear, as Jews began to enter Portugal, that Don Juan's first concern was not the welfare of the Jews. He stationed guards at

the borders to steal the possessions of the Jews as they entered. Those who could not pay were immediately enslaved. Among those who were enslaved Capsali lists 5,000 children between the ages of 10 and 15.[300] Many Jews died due to the king's decree. It was a time of great suffering for the Jews of Portugal and those who could pay their way fled to the east.

Eventually, the Jews had no choice but to leave because the king ordered their expulsion. Capsali quotes the edict:

> All peoples from the community of exiles have been given enough time here (six months). If they wish to continue to stay from this day on they will have to pay eight פרחים. All who do not pay this fee will become perpetual slaves.[301]

Wealthy Jews offered the king bribes in order to be allowed to remain in the land. Poor Jews immediately set out in ships to Moslem lands.[302]

Of the 60,000 Jews who left Portugal, Capsali claims that most died of hunger and thirst as they sailed across the sea seeking asylum. After three months of wandering, many settled for a short time in North Africa. The rulers of North Africa did not welcome them. After a few months persecutions began again, and the Jews continued their travels until they found secure homes in the East under Islamic rulers.[303]

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to his work, Historians' Fallacies, David Hackett Fischer defines history as a "problem-solving discipline" and historians as people "who ask open-ended questions about past events and answer them with selected facts which are arranged in the form of an explanatory paradigm."

From my research, I have concluded that the Seder Eliyahu Zuta is a historical work and Elijah Capsali can be considered a historian according to Fischer's definition. However, the Seder is not primarily a history of Spanish and Ottoman Jewry as Capsali contends. It is a history of Elijah Capsali's life and the community in which he lived. More specifically, the Seder elucidates Capsali's struggle to lead the Jews of Candia. While the events alluded to in Spanish history shed light on the context in which they occurred, they are more effective in illuminating life in sixteenth century Crete.

The problem which Capsali attempts to solve is at once a personal and communal one. As rabbi and Constable of Candia, he was in a most unenviable position. Capsali assumed the leadership of a fragmented Jewish community as the plague broke out within its borders. He stood between two major factions in his community, the native inhabitants, of whom he he was one and the Jewish exiles from the Spanish and Portugese expulsions and their descendants. In addition to the effects of the plague, the Jewish exiles suffered from years of persecution and disorientation due to the expulsion from their homeland. These two major factions were divided further as leaders arose who proposed solutions to the community's problems. Capsali felt that for the welfare of Candia's Jews and the preservation of his own position, he had to unify the disparate parts of

the community.

As would any politician, Capsali adopted a moderate stance in the hope of attracting the broadest base of support. He proposed a program based on the traditional themes of study and ritual observance. He also implied that those who followed his program closely would not only ease their immediate suffering, but also would participate in a revival of the Jewish people unparalleled since the exodus from Egypt.

Capsali spells out his beliefs and his program in the Seder, using a traditional midrashic literary style. Throughout Jewish history, Midrash has been used as a tool to help Jews understand their lives. In communities where Jews have suffered and questioned their faith, the Midrash has guided them back to their tradition by using biblical references to give meaning to their lives. In the words of the members of the Dead Sea sect:

> ...make place in the desert, a highway for our God, that being the midrash of the Torah which He commanded through Moses to do in accordance with all that is revealed in every era.
> (Manuel of Discipline 8:12-16)

Capsali used this midrashic style to guide the Jews of his community back to their tradition. He rewrote Spanish history, mentioning only those events which supported his polemic premise and annotated his retelling of these vents with verses from the Bible and rabbinic literature. In this way, Capsali reeducated the Jews of Candia, responded to their immediate needs and at the same time solidified his position as their leader.

FOOTNOTES

Part I

1. Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Elkana Capsali. Seder Eliyahu Zuta. Shlomo Simonsohn, ed. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1975) 40, p. 143.
2. Seder 40, p. 143.
3. Seder 40, p. 143.
4. Examples of this process will be detailed throughout this paper.
5. Seder 40, p. 145.
6. Seder 53, p. 172.
7. Seder 51, p. 166-7.
8. Seder 52, p. 168.
9. Seder 49, p. 152.
10. Seder 52, p. 170.
11. Seder 63, p. 196.
12. See text accompanying note #19.
13. Seder 40, p. 144.
14. Seder 41-46.
15. Seder 53, p. 170.
16. Seder 58, p. 185-7.
17. Seder 53, p. 182.
18. Seder 62, p. 193f.
19. Seder 66, p. 202.
20. Seder 67, p. 205.
21. Seder 69, p. 208-9.
22. Seder 40, p. 144.
23. Seder 40, p. 144.
24. Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 16, column 1534.

25. Seder 40, p. 144.
26. Seder 40, p. 144.
27. Seder 56, p. 186.
28. Seder 48, p. 160.
29. Seder 59, p. 186.
30. Seder 53, p. 172.
31. Seder 70, p. 212.
32. Seder 46, p. 157.
33. Seder 69, p. 209.
34. Seder 69, p. 210.
35. Seder 47, p. 157.
36. Seder 67, p. 205.
37. Seder 66, p. 203.
38. Seder 70, p. 211.
39. Seder 40, p. 143.
40. Seder 69, p. 208.
41. Seder 40, p. 144.
42. Seder 41, p. 145f.
43. Seder 43, p. 150-1.
44. Seder 44, p. 153.
45. Seder 45, p. 154-5.
46. Seder 56, p. 181.
47. Seder 53, p. 173.
48. Seder 54-55, p. 174-8.
49. Seder 58, p. 185.
50. Seder 58, p. 185.
51. Seder 67, p. 205.

52. Seder 47, p. 158.

53. Capsali's date does not agree with the accepted date of Rabbi Moses' arrival in Cordoba which is 950. See EJ, Vol. 17, col. 417.

54. Seder 47, p. 158. Capsali may have another reason for mentioning this halakhic point. It is likely that many Jews drowned in their travels from the Iberian Peninsula to their new homes. By reiterating Rabbi Moses' conclusion on this point, Capsali reassures the relatives of those who drowned that they, too, will receive their reward in the world to come.

55. According to the EJ, the legend of Samuel HaNagid was also first recorded by Abraham Ibn Daud. Capsali does not attribute it to him. See EJ, Vol. 19, col. 816.

56. Seder 48, p. 160.

57. Seder 50, p. 164.

58. Seder 50, p. 164.

59. Seder 51, p. 166.

60. Seder 51, p. 167.

61. Seder 52, p. 168.

62. Seder 51, p. 166.

63. Seder 53, p. 171.

64. Seder 53, p. 171-2.

65. See Chapter 1.

66. Apparently throwing stones at someone was an indication that he was an idolator.

67. See Chapter 1.

68. Seder 44, p. 151.

69. Seder 44, p. 151.

70. Seder 44, p. 151.

71. See Genesis 41:32.

72. Seder 54, p. 174.

73. פיינדרא (i.e., Belgium according to Simonsohn's edition).

74. Seder 54, p. 174.

75. The text of this legend parallels the story of Abraham's visit to his nephew, Lot, in Genesis 19.

76. Seder 54, p. 175.

77. Seder 54, p. 176.

78. Seder 54, p. 176. See Genesis 39:4.

79. See Exodus 1:7.

80. Seder 53, p. 173.

81. See Chapter 3.

82. Seder 54, p. 178.

83. Seder 69, p. 208.

84. Seder 69, p. 208.

85. Also see Chapter 2 on Capsali sources.

Part II

86. See text accompanying note 13.

87. Seder 40, p. 144.

88. Seder 40, p. 144.

89. Seder 40, p. 144.

90. See text accompanying notes 24-26.

91. Seder 40, p. 144.

92. Seder 40, p. 144.

93. Seder 40, p. 145.

94. Yitzhak Baer, A History of Jews in Christian Spain (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), vol. 1, p. 23.

95. Stanley G. Payne, A History of Spain and Portugal (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), vol. 1, Chapter 1.

96. I.e., c.415-711 C.E.

97. See text accompanying note 42.

98. See text accompanying note 43.

99. Eliyahu Ashtor, The Jews of Moslem Spain (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), vol. 1, p. 11.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 119.

103. Ibid.

104. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 6.

105. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 7.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

108. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 9.

109. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 16.

110. Ibid.

111. Ashtor, vol. 1, pp. 46-7.

112. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 48.

113. Seder 48, p. 160.

114. Ashtor, vol. 2, p. 15.

115. Seder 48, p. 160.

116. Baer, vol. 1, p. 33.

117. Seder 48, p. 161.

118. Seder 48, p. 161.

119. Seder 46, p. 157.

120. Seder 47, p. 157.

121. See text accompanying notes 58 and 59.

122. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 19.

123. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 10.

124. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 15.

125. Ibid.

126. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 34.

127. Ibid.

128. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 38.

129. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 34.

130. Ashtor, vol. 2, p. 60.

131. Ashtor, vol. 1, pp. 92-3.

132. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 69f.

133. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 74f.

134. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 81.

135. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 82f.

135a. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 88.

136. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 89.

137. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 90.

138. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 114.

139. See text accompanying note 28.

140. Ashtor, vol. 2, p. 20.

141. Seder 47, p. 158.

142. Seder 47, p. 158.

143. Seder 47, p. 159.

144. Seder 50, pp. 164-65.

145. Seder 50, pp. 154-65.

146. Seder 50, p. 166.

147. Seder 51, p. 166f.

148. Seder 49, pp. 162-63.

149. Seder 49, pp. 162-63.

150. See text accompanying note 60.

151. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 35.

152. Ashtor, vol. 1, pp. 36-37.

153. Ashtor, vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

154. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 242.

155. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 242f.

156. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 385.

157. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 26-27.

158. Baer, vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

159. Ashtor, vol. 2, p. 27.

160. Seder 47, p. 159.

161. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 355f.

162. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 351f.

163. Ashtor, vol. 1, p. 365.

164. Seder 47, p. 157.

165. Seder 47, p. 159.

166. Seder 48, p. 161.

167. See text accompanying note 48.

168. See Part II, Chapter 3.

169. Seder 55, p. 177.

170. Seder 55, p. 178.

171. Seder 55, p. 179.

172. Seder 55, p. 179.

173. Seder 58, p. 185.

174. Seder 58, pp. 185-87.

175. See text accompanying note 27.

176. Seder 56, p. 180.

177. Seder 56, p. 181.

178. Seder 56, p. 181.

179. Seder 57, p. 182.

180. Seder 57, p. 183.

181. Seder 59, p. 187.

182. Seder 59, p. 188.

183. Seder 59, p. 188.

184. This happened because God supported Ferdinand. See Part I, Chapter 1.

185. Seder 61, p. 189.

186. Seder 62, p. 193f.

187. Seder 62, p. 193.

188. Seder 62, p. 193.

189. Seder 63, p. 194.

190. Seder 63, pp. 195-96.

191. Seder 63, p. 196.

192. Seder 64, p. 197.

193. Seder 65, p. 199.

194. Seder 65, p. 199.

195. Seder 65, p. 200.

196. Seder 65, p. 201.

197. Seder 66, pp. 203-04.

198. Baer, vol. 1, p. 65.

199. Baer, vol. 1, p. 112.

200. Baer, vol. 1, p. 85.

201. Baer, vol. 1, p. 139.

202. Baer, vol. 1, p. 115.

203. Baer, vol. 1, pp. 46-47.

204. Ibid.

205. Baer, vol. 1, pp. 174-75.

206. Baer, vol. 1, p. 175.

207. Baer, vol. 1, p. 176.

208. Baer, vol. 1, p. 177.

209. Baer, vol. 2, p. 29.

210. Baer, vol. 2, p. 96.

211. Baer, vol. 2, p. 102.

212. Baer, vol. 2, p. 96.

213. Baer, vol. 2, p. 99.

214. Seder 53, p. 171.

215. Seder 60, p. 188.

216. See text accompanying note 91.

217. Seder 60, p. 188.

218. Baer, vol. 1, p. 149.

219. Baer. See vol. 1, Chapter 4.

220. Baer, vol. 1, p. 189.

221. Baer, vol. 1, p. 311.

222. Baer, vol. 1, p. 368.

223. Baer, vol. 2, p. 224.

224. Ibid.

225. Ibid.

226. Baer, vol. 2, p. 95.

227. Baer, vol. 2, p. 99.

228. Baer, vol. 2, p. 106.

229. Baer, vol. 2, p. 110.

230. Baer, vol. 2, p. 278.

231. Baer, vol. 1, p. 133.

232. Baer, vol. 2, p. 272.

233. Baer, vol. 2, pp. 278-79.

234. Baer, vol. 2, p. 274.

235. Baer, vol. 2, p. 306.

236. Ibid.

237. Baer, vol. 2, p. 313.

238. Baer, vol. 2, p. 322.

239. Baer, vol. 2, p. 325.

240. Baer, vol. 2, p. 326.

241. Baer, vol. 2, p. 328.

242. Baer, vol. 2, p. 331.

243. Ibid.

244. Ibid.

245. Baer, vol. 2, p. 232.

246. Seder 66, p. 202.

247. Seder 53, pp. 171-72.

248. Seder 55, p. 179.

249. Seder 66, p. 180.

250. Seder 66, p. 180.

251. Baer, vol. 1, p. 243.

252. Baer, vol. 1, pp. 246 and 277.

253. Baer, vol. 1, p. 261.

254. Baer, vol. 1, p. 272.

255. Baer, vol. 1, p. 308f.

256. Baer, vol. 1, p. 330.

257. Baer, vol. 2, p. 293f.

258. Baer, vol. 2, p. 175.

259. Baer, vol. 2, p. 179.

260. Baer, vol. 2, p. 231.

261. Baer, vol. 2, p. 231f.

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267. Seder 53, p. 173.

268. Baer, vol. 1, p. 150.

269. Ibid.

270. Baer, vol. 1, p. 149.

271. Baer, vol. 2, p. 9.

272. See Part I, Chapter 4.

273. Baer, vol. 1, p. 316f.

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277. Seder 68, pp. 206-07.

278. Seder 69, p. 208.

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