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JACOB CULI'S ME^{C}AM LO^{C}EZ (GENESIS)

SHELTON J. DONNELL

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

New York, New York

1977

Advisor: Dr. Martin A. Cohen

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Acknowledgments

Scholars, writing about the development of Sephardic history and literature, invariably point to the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez as the most important example of Ladino prose. In light of the present rise of interest in Sephardica, it is indeed curious that very little has been written on Culi's encyclopedic biblical commentary. Because of this dearth Dr. Martin A. Cohen suggested that I write my thesis on this monumental work. To him I owe many thanks for his guidance throughout the long and sometimes frustrating process of research and composition. I am grateful to him for adding substance to my enthusiasm for learning more about my Sephardic heritage.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Philip E. Miller, Acting Librarian of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, New York. He carefully read over primary drafts and offered many valuable suggestions to improve the content and form of this thesis. Further thanks go to the library staff of HUC-JIR, N.Y. for their help and cooperation, and to Mrs. Shirley Driks for typing the final manuscript.

Above all I lovingly thank my wife, Wenda Bocarsky Donnell, for her steadfast encouragement and patience. She has shown great fortitude in putting up with the little annoyances of New York and thesis writing. I dedicate this thesis to her.

Note on the Text and Transliteration.

This thesis is based upon the Hebrew translation of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez by Samuel Yerushalmi (Jerusalem: Mosad Yad ^{c}Ezra, 1967). All references to the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez are to that edition unless stipulated otherwise. Biblical citations, translations and names are from the text prepared by the Jewish Publication Society (Philadelphia: 1917). The transliteration of Hebrew words and phrases follows the system of the Jewish Encyclopedia.

Chapter 1

In a Foreign Tongue: Jacob Culi and the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez

The circumstances surrounding Jacob Culi's early life are not clear, giving rise to a variety of opinion as to the year and place of his birth. The Encyclopedia Judaica gives a date of 1685, citing Jerusalem and Safed as two possible locations.[1] Samuel Yerushalmi, the Hebrew translator of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, suggests a date of 1688-9 noting the place simply as Erez Yisra'el.[1] Further evidence for the latter date comes from Solomon Rosanes who contends that Culi was born at Safed in the year 1689.[3] Culi's father, Machir Culi, was a wealthy Cretan businessman whose Spanish family may have its origins in France or the lands of Ashkenaz.[4] Because of unstable conditions on the island, Machir Culi left Crete for Jerusalem where a match was arranged with the daughter of Moses ibn Habib (1654-1696), the patriarch of a prominent Jerusalem family. A renowned legislator, ibn Habib was named Rishon le-Zion and served as the head of Jerusalem Jewry until his death.[5] Ibn Habib was an ardent traditionalist and a staunch defender of traditional Judaism against the challenge of Sabateanism in the latter half of the seventeenth century.[6] Scant information is available on Culi's early education. Rosanes maintains that young Jacob studied with his maternal grandfather until the age of nine, leaving Jerusalem for his father's home in Safed after the death of ibn Habib.[7] For lack of further documentation we may assume that Culi re-

ceived the remainder of his primary education in the schools of the mountain town.

A desire to publish the writings of his late grandfather motivated Culi to leave Safed in the year 1714 for Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire as well as a major center for Hebrew printing. In Constantinople, Culi completed his studies under Judah Rosanes (d. 1727) the chief rabbi of the capital,[8] further developing a close relationship with Rosanes as his secretary and a part of his household (ben meshek beto).[9] Like Culi's grandfather, Rosanes was a traditionalist and anti-Sabbatean.[10] It is likely that he saw in Culi one of kindred philosophy, for he appointed the young scholar as a dayyan and teacher of the community.[11] Culi began his literary career in Constantinople by publishing the works of Moses ibn Habib, Shammot ba-Arez (Constantinople, 1727) and ʿEzrat Nashim (Constantinople, 1731), both dealing with divorce and the problem of the ʿagunah. The latter work contained two of Culi's own responsa.[12] Following the death of Judah Rosanes Culi assumed the responsibility of editing and publishing the writings of his master. Culi oversaw the publication of Parashat Derakim (Constantinople, 1728) and Mishneh le-Melek (Constantinople, 1731), writing introductions to the works as well as adding notes.[13] Culi's own literary endeavors consisted of an unpublished halakic work, Simanim li-Oraita',[14] and his major work, the Meʿam Loʿez. Culi began the Meʿam Loʿez in 1730 hoping to cover the entire

Canon in his commentary. Culi did not realize his goal, however, as he died in Constantinople in the year 1732, having completed his commentary only as far as the portion Terumah (Ex. 25-27:19).[15]

The writing of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez grew out of Culi's concern for the preservation of the tradition he loved and saw threatened. In his introduction he observes that the people were no longer able to read nor understand Hebrew and thus had no contact with the traditional texts. Consequently, Culi laments, wisdom was on the wane, diminishing with each new generation.[16] Those texts which were available to the people were inadequate and therefore had minimal effect in reaching the common folk. Rejimento de la Vida (Oreh Hayyim), a part of the Shulhan ^{c}Aruk translated into Ladino by Moses Almosnino (1510-1580), was too complicated and was not readily understood by the people. Similar problems prevented the Ladino translation of Bahya ibn Pakuda's Duties of the Heart from winning popularity.[17] Because the vast majority of traditional works were inaccessible, the people had become estranged from the tradition and had forgotten much of what even the average Jew had known in previous generations.[18] In order to bring the tradition to the people, Culi undertook the task of providing an encyclopedic Ladino commentary to the Bible so that the people would be "fluent in the Torah."[19] To this end, Culi collected all the materials which were available to him: midrashic, legal and ethical. Culi envisioned his commentary as a guide to Judaism for the common people, providing all the laws needed

for daily life.[20] He stressed the fact that the work was not "original" but rather a compilation of traditional sources which he had translated for his readers. To underscore this he carefully listed his sources in the introduction[21] and cited them in the margin of his work.[22] As Culi notes,[23] the essence of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez is the laws and commandments which it explains. The biblical stories serve as the matrix into which the laws are woven, and hold a secondary position. Culi hoped that in reading the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez the people would recognize the importance of observing the commandments of the Torah and the avoidance of sin.

Implicit throughout the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez are the basic principles Culi saw as the foundation of the tradition as brought out in the Torah.[24] Firstly, and most importantly, God is the one and only overseer (mashgiah) of the world. He and He alone created the world ex nihilo and sustains it throughout history. Secondly, one must recognize that the Torah is God's law and accept it in all its aspects, written and oral. Thirdly, Jews should seek to get along with their fellows, because Jewish society must be based on unity and harmony. Factions and disputes should be forgotten and all should judge others as they themselves would be judged. Culi reminds his reader that one should "Love your neighbor as yourself," calling upon all Jews to seek the common good. And fourthly, it is incumbent upon all to keep in mind the day of one's own death; one must take all necessary pains to observe the commandments and repent before it is too

late. Study of the Me^cam Lo^cez provides one with the means to realize the basic principles of the Torah. Further, study will bring additional benefits to the reader.[25] One will learn about the miracles God performed for the Jewish ancestors, and realize that God cares about the Jewish people. Questions and apparent contradictions in the Bible are explained, enabling people to better understand the Bible. And, one can learn all the history of the world, making history books (with all their "lies") unnecessary. Study of the Me^cam Lo^cez also has many practical advantages. As an aid to businessmen, the Me^cam Lo^cez enables the Jew to know all the necessary laws of business contained in the Torah, helping him avoid mistakes due to ignorance of the law which might cost dearly. Above all, Culi reiterates, the primary purpose of the Me^cam Lo^cez is to teach that study of itself is not enough: one must learn to observe the commandments in all their particulars and avoid sin.

Culi saw his task like that of an emissary (shaliah) from the Land of Israel. Just as the emissary travels from city to city and from village to village bringing Jews news from the Holy Land, so does Culi travel from portion to portion and from verse to verse informing Jews about the Holy Book.[26] His mission, as he views it, lies in bringing his generation back to the traditional values of Judaism, repenting their sinful ways, and returning to a life devoted to the fulfillment of the commandments of the Torah.[27] He hoped to save Jews from the purgatory of Gehenna awaiting them as individuals and the tribulations

facing them as a people should they not heed the demands of their covenant with God.[28]

In writing the Me^{c}an Lo^{c}ez Culi drew upon a vast array of traditional texts. All in all he utilized some eighty different sources in the course of the commentary. The range of his major sources alone reveals the scope of Culi's learning and his acquaintance with a good deal of the material available in Constantinople in that period. A cross-section of his sources includes the Talmud as well as such midrashic collections as the Midrash Rabbah, Tanhuma, Mekilta, Sifra, Sifre, and the Yalkut Shimoni. He also cites the major medieval commentators; Rashi (France d. 1105), David Kimhi (Provence, d. 1235), Nachmanides (Spain, d. 1270), Bahya ben Asher (Spain, d. 1340), and Gersonides (France, d. 1344?). In addition, Culi referred to the Targum Jonathan, the Zohar, various legal works such as the Tur, Shulhan ^{c}Aruk, Yad ha-Hazakah, the Ta^{c}ame ha-Mizwot,[29] Sefer ha-Hinuk,[30] Dat we-Din,[31] and historical texts on the order of Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah,[32] the Sefer ha-Yashar,[33] and the Dibre ha-Yamim shel Shelomo.

In addition to the printed material available to him, Culi took advantage of his personal studies and experiences. Often in citing a source for a particular comment, Culi makes the annotation, "I heard" (kak shama^{c}ti), giving no other source. For example, in his commentary on Essau's selling of his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:31), Culi describes the custom of primogeniture. He notes that the custom was not

observed amongst the Jews as it had been in biblical times. However, he points out that the custom was still found in the land of the Franks, wherein the younger sons pay homage to the eldest brother as they would to their father. As a source Culi states simply, "I heard."[34] Culi made the same notation in reference to his comment on Gen. 47:20-21.[35] In this case, the famine which Joseph had predicted would last seven years ended after only two years had elapsed. Rather than suggest that Joseph was in error, or worse that he had lied, Culi maintained that because the Israelites had changed their place--from the Land of Israel to Egypt--they had thereby changed their luck.[36] Again, the source is listed as "I heard." Some of the material which Culi utilized draws upon his own observations of the modes and customs of his contemporaries. When describing Abraham's circumcision (Gen. 17:4f), Culi entered upon a discussion of the ritual as practiced in his own time. He even outlined the qualifications of the mohel and the certification of that office in Constantinople. He notes that without such certification the would-be mohel had no authority to perform any of the tasks associated with circumcision.[37] Culi also revealed in his commentary that the women of his period did not observe the commandments as scrupulously as did their forebearers in rabbinic times. He complains that women no longer even recited the grace after meals.[38] Culi's observations were not limited to religious practice and law, but drew upon other areas of his experiences in

his attempt to bring the Torah to the people. In Gen. 24:22-23, there is a description of the gifts which Eliezer presented to Rebecca in the name of his masters, Abraham and Isaac. The nezem or nose ring, was no longer in style, so to give the passage meaning in the modern idiom, Culi notes that "now" such rings are worn in the ear rather than in the nose.[39] It appears then, that not even the punctilios of ladies' fashion were beyond the purview of the commentary of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez.

The structure of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez is based upon the cycle of weekly Torah readings of the synagogue. This is in consonance with Culi's intent that the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez be read like the Torah, on Sabbaths and holidays. The portions themselves are broken into chapters according to the division of the portion as it appears in the Torah scroll. Thus the portion Genesis is divided into twenty-three chapters and the second portion, Noah, is separated into eighteen.

The methodology of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez employs devices which are common elsewhere in traditional Hebrew texts. In the verse-by-verse examination of the Torah, Culi utilizes many of the hermeneutics found in the midrash. We find explanations based on gematriya,[40] the expansion of the meaning of a verse on the basis of words which seem extraneous,[41] expansion by "extra" letters in a word or verse,[42] orthography,[43] significance of word choice,[44] and the import of symbolic or key words.[45]

In addition to the verse-by-verse style of commentary, the Me^cam Lo^cez is rich in the use of interlineary commentary. That is, Culi brings in whole sections of commentary, which are either extrapolations of the text or digressions, to introduce other traditional material, customs or law. On occasion Culi will cite whole incidents about the biblical figures which are not found in the Bible. For example, he quotes the stories of Abraham and Nimrod which are preserved in legend and midrash but not found in the text.[46] So too with the wars of the sons of Jacob against the sons of Esau. Culi remarks that these incidents were not included in the Bible because they were hidden miracles (nes nistar).[47] Specific messages or lessons which arise from the text may be expanded by a ma^caseh. The ma^caseh may take the form of a general parable or of a legend about a particular rabbi or other well known figure. The former is typified by Culi's comment on the importance of keeping vows (on Gen. 31:51-52).[48] Culi tells the story of a boy who agreed to save a girl who had fallen into a pit on the condition that she promise to marry him when they both came of age. The two vowed and returned to their homes. When the boy came of age he forgot his vow and married another. Because of his transgression, the boy, now grown, was punished until he remembered his vow, divorced his wife, and determined to make good on his promise to the girl. The ma^caseh teaches that the biblical example of Jacob keeping his vow to Laban holds true for all in every age. The latter type of ma^caseh

focuses upon some well known figure from the Bible or, more often, a famous rabbi. To illustrate the need for subordinates to respect superiors, as brought out in the story of Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 16:5f), Culi recalls a tale of Rav Huna taken from the Talmud.[49] According to the tale, Rav Huna wore a rope in the place of a proper belt. When his teacher asked why he explained that he sold his belt to obtain the funds to buy the wine necessary to celebrate the Sabbath. Blessing Rav Huna for his good deed, the teacher wished him great wealth. The blessing came to fruition but rather than pleasing the teacher, it angered him. He complained that out of respect, Rav Huna should also have blessed his teacher, "And thus also for my master." Needless to say Hagar's mocking of Sarah was an even greater breach of respect.

Legal material and explanation of customs and ritual also find their way into the text in the form of interlineary commentary. As part of the polemical or exhortative aspect of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez Culi stressed the importance of observing the commandments. He notes, for example, that many people absent themselves from evening prayers.[50] Therefore, in his commentary to Gen. 28:11 in which he states Jacob instituted the custom of evening prayer, Culi provides the reader with the laws and customs of the tefillah for the evening service. He notes that the time to pray is when one sees three stars in the sky, and that the service, being mandatory, must be made up by an extra morning tefillah when missed.[51] In his commentary to the circumcision of Abraham

(Gen. 17:6f) Culi delineates all the laws involved with the ritual of circumcision in all their particulars.[52] The same is done with other laws and customs such as visitation of the sick,[53] and mourning.[54]

Questions and novellae on the text are also found in the form of the interlineary commentary. Culi poses questions about problems found in the text and answers them using a combination of the various sources at his disposal. On Gen. 22, the binding of Isaac, Culi raises some twenty questions, such as why the story begins, "After those things....." and why God saw fit to test Abraham, he then proceeds to answer these questions explaining away any contradictions and problems.[55] He treats novellae in a like manner, such as those in connection to the rape of Dinah (which Culi points out was the consequence of certain sins of Jacob),[56] and the story of Judah and Tamar.[57]

By means of these methods of commentary, Culi weaves the various facets of the Me'am Lo'ez into a vibrant and exciting work which successfully captured the imagination of the people, and reintroduced them to the teachings of traditional Judaism.

Chapter II

The Jews in the Ottoman Empire

Jews were first incorporated into the Ottoman Empire when the Sultan, Urkhan (1279-1359), captured the city of Bursa in Asia Minor in the year 1326. Urkhan, the son of ʿUthman (1259-1326), the nominal founder of the Empire, granted the Jews the right to build a synagogue, engage in business without interference and purchase real property; rights which had been denied to them under the regimes of the Turkish Mamlukes and the Christian Byzantines. In exchange for these privileges the Jews payed a poll tax, the jizya collected by the elders on behalf of the community.[1] The next major event to affect the Jews of the Ottoman Empire occurred in the year 1453 when Sultan Mohammed II (1430-81), called "the Conqueror," marched at the head of his troops into the newly conquered city of Constantinople. As part of his program to integrate the city into the growing empire, Mohammed II officially recognized the Jewish community of Constantinople and conferred upon it the legal status of a millet. The millet status specified that the Jews were an official religious communal organization with autonomy in its internal affairs, giving wide authority to the community's religious leaders.[2] When the Sultan made Constantinople the capital of the Empire he began formally to encourage Jewish settlement in the city. Mohammed II continued to expand the borders of the Empire, and with each

new conquest he transferred the local Jews to the capital.[3] The new arrivals were given land in the city and promised official governmental cooperation and protection. Jews from all over the Empire came in response to Mohammad's promises that all would live in prosperity, everyone "sitting under his vine and under his fig-tree amidst silver and gold."[4] This encouragement was not divorced from ulterior motive; the Sultan had good reason for insuring a large and cooperative Jewish population. The Ottoman Turks, although able and courageous soldiers, were lacking in many of the skills necessary to sustain the growing economy of a rapidly expanding empire.[5] Indeed, there were others with the requisite commercial skills in the Empire, notably the Greeks and Armenians, but no other group but the Jews could be given full rein without question of faltering or conditional allegiance to the Sublime Porte.[6] The Greeks and Armenians, as conquered and subject peoples, might rise up against their Turkish masters or ally with their correligionists in the West in a campaign against the Ottoman. The Jews, on the other hand, knew only suffering and repression at the hands of Christian Europe and could be counted on to remain loyal tc the more benign rule of the Ottoman Turks.[7] Both parties had much to gain in a symbiotic relationship between the Jews and the Ottomans.

The relatively good relations with the Turks and the prosperity enjoyed by the Jews in the Ottoman Empire was a major factor in attracting the many Jews who were fleeing

from the sword of expulsion and fire of the Inquisition of the Iberian Peninsula. The expulsion from Spain in 1497 traumatized the Jews of those countries. Following the disruption of those Jewish societies there ensured successive waves of refugees who fled and regrouped in the safer climes of Western Europe, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. These emigres from the culturally advanced countries of the West were enthusiastically welcomed to Asia Minor by the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II (1447-1513).[8] Bayazid saw the influx of Jews into his empire as a boon, and he questioned the sagacity of the Spanish monarch, Ferdinand, who willingly impoverished his own country, thereby enriching the Ottoman Empire.[9] Rayazid made it very clear to his subjects and governmental officials that the Jews were to be welcomed and provided with aid in integrating into Turkish society. The Jews who had preceeded their Spanish and Portuguese bretheren made every effort to aid the newcomers upon their arrival to the Empire. Monies were raised to "free the captives" and to aid in their absorption. The chief Rabbi of the Romaniot[10] community, Moses Capsali (1420-1495), was instrumental in collecting funds from wealthy Jews on behalf of the incoming Sephardim.[11]

The Sephardic immigration consisted of three major waves. The first, in 1492, consisted of the victims of the Spanish Edict of Expulsion. These Jews were, in the main, those who refused to accept Christianity as a prerequisite to remaining in Spain, but chose instead to accept exile,

often leaving with few material possessions. The last two waves occurred in 1497 and 1498, and were comprised of Jews escaping the forced conversions and oppressions in Portugal. These Jews were different from those who had preceded them. In general they were wealthier than the Spanish immigrants and retained a Portuguese identity, founding their own congregations in the communities into which they settled.[12] In these latter waves of immigration came Jews who had undergone conversion to Christianity in Europe. These conversos presented a unique problem for the rabbis of the Ottoman Empire. As conditions for the conversos deteriorated in Europe, their numbers increased in the Ottoman Empire where most returned to the religion of their forbearers. There were questions raised as to the legitimacy of these marranos and many responsa were directed at their unique situation.[13]

The Spanish and Portuguese Jews settled in many of the cities of the Ottoman Empire. Large communities arose in Baghdad, Damascus, Jerusalem, Adrianople, Smyrna, Constantinople, and Salonika. Salonika witnessed the most dramatic development and grew into the major Jewish center of the Empire. By the sixteenth century Salonika boasted a Jewish population which was greater than that of its non-Jewish (primarily Greek) residents. The port of Salonika, an important shipping facility in the eastern Mediterranean, was so dominated by the Jews that all activity ceased with the coming of the Jewish Sabbath.[14] The refugee communities

grew and soon they outnumbered the older Romaniot residents.[15] Eventually Spanish and Portuguese culture came to dominate and became the tonal element.[16]

The fate of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire closely paralleled the growth and success of the Sublime Porte itself. During the ascendancy of the Empire, the Jews enjoyed prosperity and the encouragement of the sultans. As we have already noted, as the Sultans Mohammed II and Bayazid II spread the empire they helped Jews to settle in their dominions and treated their new subjects well. Bayazid II was succeeded by his brother Selim I (1462-1520), "the Grim". Like his predecessors, Selim I set out on a program of eastern expansion of the Empire. Campaigning against the Mamluk Turks, Selim brought Syria, Palestine and Egypt under Ottoman hegemony. The Sultan's successes resulted in no little measure from the superior technology his Jewish subjects brought to his armies. Jews from the technologically advanced West brought with them skills in the manufacture and use of ordnance. The cannon and artillery wrought through Jewish acumen gave the Sultan tactical advantage over his inferiorly equipped enemies.[17] The acme of the Ottoman Empire and the high-water mark of Jewish prosperity, were reached during the rule of Suleiman I, "the Magnificent" (1496-1566). Suleiman pacified the vast Empire, eliminating the last pockets of Mamluk resistance. As part of his design to fortify the eastern Empire, Suleiman built the now famous walls of

Jerusalem. Having solidified the Empire in the east, Suleiman the Magnificent set out in westward expansion across the Balkans to the doorstep of Europe. The defeat at the battle of Vienna in 1526 marked the most western movement of the Ottoman Empire.[19] As long as the Turkish troops were victorious and the star of the Empire was rising, the fate of the Jews was secure. The Sultan gave certain Jews the patent to serve as ordoujous following the armies providing the military with needed supplies.[20] Suleiman continued to serve as the benefactor of the Jews and included them in the capitulation agreements which he negotiated with Christian monarchs. These agreements delineated the rights of Christians in the Ottoman Empire and of Turks in Christian lands. According to the articles of the agreements Jews were given extra-territorial rights and were insured protection against attack on their person and property.[21] Thus the Sultan's commercial agents could carry on their trade and business dealings without threat. This was to the benefit of the Empire as well, since the revenues which it accrued from the success of Jewish enterprises were assured.

An indication of the acceptance enjoyed by the Jews in the Ottoman world was the appointment of Joseph Nasi to the position of chief counsel to the Sublime Porte.[22] Joseph Nasi, titled the Duke of Naxos by Suleiman the Magnificent, was a converso who followed his aunt Dona Gracia Mendes to the court of the Ottoman. Like his wealthy aunt and patron,

Don Joseph renounced his Christian past and rededicated himself to Judaism. From his position of authority, Joseph Nasi served the Porte with great skill as a diplomat and his people as an advocate at the Divan of the Sultan. Don Joseph lent much support to the cultural and commercial life of the Jews of the Empire. It was his dream to establish a thriving Jewish community near the city of Tiberias on the sea of Galilee. To stimulate the economic growth of the community, the Duke imported silk worms from the East in the hopes of introducing the silk industry. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of the Sultan's counselor, the enterprise was not successful.[23] However, the very fact that such an undertaking could even be contemplated, let alone attempted, demonstrates the advanced state of the Jewish condition under the sultanate of Suleman the Magnificent.

After the heights achieved under Suleiman I the tide of Jewish prosperity began to ebb. With the ascension of Suleiman's successor, Selim II (1524-1574), the Empire saw the start of military and economic reversals from which it would never recover. Under Selim II the expansion of the Empire ceased and the solidification affected under Suleiman showed signs of weakening. Further, despite the fact that Joseph Nasi was followed by the Jew Don Solomon ibn Yaish, as counselor to the Sultan, the fate of the Jews was about to undergo a marked turn for the worse.[24] The first obvious manifestations of decline became visible when Murad III (1546-1595), assumed the sultanate. The first signs

decay appeared in the army.[25] Loss of discipline in the ranks increased and the Sultan's janissary forces often went out of control, often sacking the Jewish community. Sensing a weakness in the Sultan's control of the Empire many revolts erupted. To quell the revolts and reassert his authority, the Sultan had to pacify the army to insure its loyalty and smooth functioning. The necessary measures required capital, and to raise the revenue the Sultan increased taxes.[26] Much of the burden fell upon the Jews who were forced to collect the funds in spite of worsening economic conditions which resulted from the troubles plaguing the Empire. Relations with the Sublime Porte also began to deteriorate. Symptomatic of the decline in status, the sultans Murad III and later Murad IV (1623-1640) promulgated a series of decrees directed against the Jews.[27] Jewish influence continued to diminish in the seventeenth century as the Empire suffered further setbacks. In an attempt to strengthen the Empire, Ibrahim I (1615-1648) attacked the island of Crete which was controlled by his archrivals for control of the eastern Mediterranean, the Venetians.[28] After a twenty-one year struggle the island passed under Ottoman control. In another move, Ibrahim transferred the capital of the Empire to Adrianople, and the Jews followed hoping to improve their lot.[29] Yet, the decline continued as the Empire began to wane. The loss of Hungary in 1683 marked the final turn toward the Empire's ultimate course. The strengthening of Europe

and the rise of Venetian economic influence precipitated the Empire's steady decline.[30] As the fortunes of Venice flourished, the Empire's Jews suffered from the loss of international markets, coincident with a decrease in domestic buying power which affected the whole economy. The Jews, who had been playing a significant role in the economic life of the Empire, were directly affected by the adverse economic climate and entered upon a period of cultural and economic decline from which they were never to recover. The suffering which resulted from their desperate condition encouraged the rise of heterodox ideologies which presented a challenge to the traditional forces in the society. In this world of decline and despair, Jacob Culi wrote the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez. He hoped to give meaning to the Jewish condition through the values of traditional Judaism; to win the people back from heterodoxy and give them some sense of security in times of trouble and distress.

The society to which Culi addressed the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez was made up of many disparate elements. The Jewish millet consisted of various small communities or kahals founded by Jews from a common background.[31] In Constantinople alone, there existed as many as forty-four individual kahals. Most were made up of Jews from a particular region such as Catalonia, Aragon, Castille, Apulia, and Portugal. In the larger cities some of the kahals were even identified with a city of origin, for example Lisbon, Cordova or

Granada.[32] As a rule, the Sephardim of the smaller towns founded a single Spanish (or Portuguese) congregation.[33] The kahal structure was adopted by all communities, the Romaniot, the Ashkenazim and the Spanish-Portuguese. The heterogeneous nature of the society persisted long after the new arrivals had settled in the Empire. Even in the late seventeenth century the differences among the Jews remained distinct. In the year 1682, a French Capuchin named Michel Febre who had lived in Constantinople for some eighteen years, remarked about some of the distinctions between the Sephardim and the Romaniot.[34] He pointed out that the two groups affected different styles of dress. The Romaniot wore turbans and dressed much in the same manner as their Christian neighbors. The Sephardim on the other hand clung to the fashions of their homeland, most notably hats in the Spanish mode of the period. He also makes the general observation that the two communities also had different customs and practices. Such differences defined the community as a tenuous union of autonomous kahals.

Each community retained a great degree of independence and had its own structures for internal administration responsible for the efficient functioning of the kahal. The individual kahal was served by a governing body consisting of directors (parnassim), a general council (anshe ma^{c}amad), tax assessors (ma^{c}arikim), tax collectors (gabayim), treasurers (gizbarim), and trustees (memunim). All social

services of the kahal were served by this organization. Religious matters were left to the rabbi (hakam).[35] The various kahals functioned as a unified Jewish community in matters of taxation and in relations with the Turkish authorities. In such instances the parnassim and hakamim met as a body to represent the greater Jewish community.

The Jews of the Ottoman Empire held a special status as a protected minority community of non-Moslems. Like many of the Christian sects, the Jews were designated as dhimmis. Turkish law was based exclusively on Islamic law and therefore only covered its Moslem citizens. The dhimmis, as non-Moslems, were not covered as individuals by Turkish law. Thus the government dealt with the Jews and other dhimmis as communities rather than as individual citizens. As we noted above,[36] the Jewish community was organized as a millet and as such had control over its internal legislation and organization. In this regard it followed closely the model of the Moslem institution of government.[37] Jewish society also functioned through a system of organization based on religious law. Wholly independent of the Moslem government, the Jewish authorities held sway over all matters not covered by the Ottoman administration. Thus the community had its own extensive bureaucracy of religious and lay leaders to deal with all the social and religious needs of the society. In matters of direct concern to the Turks, the Jewish community acted through a secular official called the kakhya, himself a

Jew, who represented the Jews at the Porte.[38] When Mohammed the Conqueror first recognized the Jewish millet he appointed a chief rabbi as its titular head. The first to hold the post was Moses Capsali, who also assumed the position of chief of the judges (dayyanim) of Constantinople.[39] The chief rabbi served as the religious leader of all the Jewish communities of the Empire. A tax, the akçesi was collected expressly for the privilege of maintaining a chief rabbi.[40] The post of the chief rabbi was never firmly established and problems arose shortly after Elijah Mizrahi (1455-1526) succeeded Moses Capsali. Mizrahi's problems lay in the fact that the number of Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the Empire was steadily on the increase. Mizrahi, a Romaniot, could not muster the support among the Sephardim that was necessary to serve effectively as the chief rabbi. The irreconcilable differences which existed between the Romaniot and the Sephardim resulted in the eventual discontinuance of the position shortly after the death of Mizrahi.[41]

Jewish self-government was based upon religious law, the halakah. The mechanisms of communal management were the communal agreements (haskamot) and ordinances (takkanot). These measures were promulgated by the parnassim in conjunction with rabbis and approved by a concensus of the kahal.[42] These measures were binding upon all members of the community and enforcement was insured through religious sanctions against transgressors. Sanctions consisted of the temporary ban (nidui) or the formal excommunication (herem).[43]

and resulted in the infractor being cut off from the community for a given period of time. Thus the culprit was "stateless" for the duration of the penalty.

The whole of Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire was grounded in certain theological underpinnings. These gave the Jews a sense of corporate identity, and legitimized religious law as the ultimate authority of the Jewish community. According to the operative theology, God created the world with a purpose.[44] His purpose is realized in the dynamics of history and therefore He takes an active role in events and acts as the overseer (mashqiah) of the world. Moreover, God takes a special interest in the Jews and has revealed His plan for them in the Torah, that is, in the Written Law and in the Oral Law. In turn, the purpose of the Jews in the world is to observe the commandments and all the particulars of the halakah. Observance will bring the Jews prosperity and well-being, neglect resulting in punishment both in this world and in the world to come. The rabbis serve as commentators and interpreters of the Law to the people and act as legislators to see to the implementation of God's Law on earth. Thus the rabbis and lay leaders of the community serve, not only the Turks and the Jews, but God as well.

With the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the old order of Jewish society was weakened and the people began to doubt the efficacy of the religious law, percipitating a major crisis in the community. The steady decline began

in the latter half of the sixteenth century, most dramatically under the sultans Murad III and Murad IV. The Jews suffered social and cultural decline in addition to their economic woes. They became the victims of the seemingly capricious anti-Jewish decrees which were designed to emphasize their inferior status. Some of the legislation began as early as 1559 when it was decreed that no Jewish dwelling was to exceed a Moslem's domicile in height.[45] In 1568 the Cadi of Constantinople complained to the Sultan that Jews were going about in finery to the disgrace of the Sultan's poorer Moslem subjects. In response he decreed that Jews could no longer dress in the Moslem fashion.[46] The Jews were forced to wear distinctive clothes called the ghiyar, consisting of special clothes, footwear and headgear.[47] In addition, Jews were not allowed to go about in gaily colored costume but had to assume a modest posture wearing only dark colors.[48]

As a result of the steady decline in the welfare of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire, the people became disaffected. They had followed the dictates of the old order, observing the commandments and recognizing the authority of the traditional communal leadership, yet in spite of their fidelity they suffered. The majority of the Jews practiced small trades[49] and were severly affected by the economic slump. And, all Jews suffered as a result of the anti-Jewish posture taken by the Turkish authorities. Disaffected, the people began to question the old values and

looked beyond the traditional systems for answers in their suffering. The most popular answers came from the mystical schools of theology which grew in the fertile environment of the Ottoman Empire shortly after the influx of the Jews exiled from Spain. With the first generation of exiles, the doctrines of kabbalistic speculation gained much popular support.[50] Kabbalistic speculation sought answers for the human condition beyond the confines of the mundane world. It developed into a formulation of mystical theology which had parallels in the Moslem theology of the period as well. The Moslems also suffered from the problems faced by the Empire and held similar concerns to those of the Jews, consequently there was also a rise in Islamic mysticism.[51] Mystical theology found its popular expression in the linking of esoteric kabbalistic concepts to the symbolic images of historical realities. Thus the kabbalah was no longer purely speculative; it began to serve a social function, interpreting history in light of mystical symbols.[52]

The trend toward mystical theology was spurred by the rise of the mystical schools. The most influential of all were those centered in the city of Safed. The Safed school reached its peak under Isaac Luria (1534-1572). Luria, also called the Ari (from the acronym Ashkenazi Rabbi Isaac), developed a method of kabbalah which gave a mystical interpretation of the exile and eventual redemption of the Jewish people.[53] According to the principles of Lurianic

kabbalah, the suffering of the individual was not without meaning. On the contrary, individual suffering contained within it a profound mystery. Suffering did not affect the individual alone, but the whole world, as it symbolized cosmic processes. Evil, the kelippah, has taken over the world and must be purged if the world is to be saved. Just so, the Jew must purge himself of evil and cleanse himself so that he too may be saved.[54] Moreover, the Jew can better himself and the world through a process of perfection called tikkun. Tikkun is the progressive separation of good from evil through the scrupulous observance of the halakah and all the commandments of the Torah.[55] This same doctrine of the mystification of the Law and the tradition is reflected in the Shulhan Aruk written by Joseph Karo (1488-1575) a contemporary of Luria and a fellow resident of Safed. The codification of the Law in the Shulhan Aruk is consistent with the belief that the observance of the Law was a mystical act. Karo set down the Law in all its minute particulars so that the observant Jew who sought salvation through tikkun, would be cognizant of all the ramifications and practical aspects of the commandments. In this light, the Shulhan Aruk serves as a guidebook to tikkun.

The Lurianic form of mysticism spread rapidly throughout the Jewish world. By 1650 it was so widely accepted that it was firmly entrenched in normative Jewish theology. Coincidental to the rise of mystical speculation there

emerged a renewed emphasis upon the ancient doctrine of messianic redemption. The reemergence of interest in messianism developed as an extrapolation of mystical theology, drawing upon elements of older doctrines of Jewish theology. In a sense, Lurianic kabbalah wedded messianism with kabbalistic theology.[56] It presents an image of the Jews in exile, corresponding to the sparks of the Divinity dispersed everywhere and held captive by the power of the kelippah evil. Only through the process of tikkun can the sparks be reunited to the Source. The Messiah serves as the "Divine Gatherer", collecting the sparks to be returned to God, the Source. The Messiah will replace the traditional structures of the society and introduce a "New" Torah. Unlike the Old Torah the New Torah will be spiritual in nature rather than material. In actuality, it is the same Torah but perceived in a new way through the concept of "messianic Torah."[57] It should be noted that these new concepts are still spoken of in traditional terms to which the people could easily relate. The new theology still spoke of Torah (albeit "New" Torah) and of redemption. The new messianic Torah promised redemption from the suffering of the world. So too did the materialistic Torah, yet as the Jews bore witness, it did not deliver on its promise.

The enormous popularity enjoyed by Lurianic Kabbalah set the stage for a unique manifestation of the doctrine of messianic redemption, the stellar rise of the self-proclaimed

Messiah, Shabbetai Zvi (1626-1676). Gershom Scholem points to five factors which contributed to the phenomenal success of Shabbetai Zvi. Firstly, the call of the new Messiah came from the Holy Land giving the movement prestige in the eyes of would-be-followers. Secondly, there was the appeal of the renewal of prophecy in the person of Nathan of Gaza who was followed by a succession of people who laid claim to the gift in witness to the authenticity of Shabattai's mission. The third reason for the success of the movement lay in the retention of traditional concepts and terminology. The Sabbateans drew upon popular apocalyptic beliefs and Nathan, the theologian of the movement, used traditional terminology in the transmission of doctrines, to which the people already held allegiance. The traditional concepts of God the overseer, the primacy of the Torah and the hopes of redemption were reinterpreted according to the messianic doctrines of the movement. Fourthly, Sabbateanism's call to repentence appealed to Jewish "nobility." And lastly, the fifth factor was the wide range of appeal of the movement. It cut across all class lines and had world-wide influence, due to the broad national character of the movement.[59] Sabbateanism held particular appeal for the unlearned Jews who were removed from the tradition and disaffected because of their sense of alienation from the dictates of Judaism. Even without knowledge of the tradition, Sabbateanism offered the unlearned the ability to find an explanation for suffering

and hope for redemption. The new movement explained that the suffering of the Jews would bring the Messiah and in turn, the Messiah would bring them redemption. Sabbateanism also won the support of authority figures in the upper strata of the society. Shabbetai shrewdly appointed rabbis and lay leaders as "kings" and "viceroys" of his messianic kingdom. These appointees corresponded to the kings of Judah and Israel. This tactic gained the support of persons in positions of authority and insured effective control over the broad-based constituency of the movement.[60]

The Sabbatean movement and the Jewish world in general was plunged into crisis when Shabbetai Zvi renounced his Judaism and became an apostate to Islam on September 5, 1666. In that year the movement had reached such proportions that the Turkish authorities recognized it as a real threat to the security of the Empire. To eliminate the threat, the Sultan, Mohammed IV (1641-1691), forced Shabbetai Zvi to convert on the pain of death. Shabbetai accepted the fez and it was hoped that his followers would take his lead and convert en masse to Islam.[61] The apostacy resulted in profound shock throughout the movement. The eventual collapse of the mass movement created a void in the spiritual life of the majority of adherents. The promised new world order of Jewish supremacy never evolved. Further, the old order was weakened and needed to reestablish its credibility by strengthening the traditional structures which had governed the society prior to the ad-

vent of the Sabbatean movement. Consequent to the formal breakdown of Sabbateanism, the Jewish society found itself divided into three factions. The first consisted of the staunch anti-Sabbateans, those Jews like Moses ibn Habib and Judah Rosanes who had consistently opposed the Sabbateans. The second faction was composed of those who remained Sabbateans even after the apostacy. In the Ottoman Empire, they were of two types: the Donmeh who followed Shabbetai into apostacy, but remained distinct from both Jews and other Moslems; and those Jews who did not convert but remained true believers. Those Jews tried to justify Shabbetai's apostacy by integrating it into their theological structure. They explained that the apostacy was part of the Messiah's mission; that he had to enter the realm of evil in order to save the world. This position was taken by Nathan of Gaza,[62] and elaborated upon by Abraham Miguel Cardoza (1627-1706/7). Cardozo, a former marrano, maintained that all Jews were doomed to life as marranos, except for the sacrifice of Shabbetai Zvi, the Messiah, who took this burden upon himself.[63] The apostacy was viewed by the Sabbateans as one of Shabbetai's "strange acts" and developed into a new theology based on the paradox of the apostate Messiah. They defended the new theology with evidence from the Bible, Talmud, Midrash and kabbalistic literature.[64] Interestingly, these diehard Sabbateans were never excommunicated as a group, but the movement still lost much of its former momentum.[65] Eventually the movement became entrenched as an underground movement existing

well into the eighteenth century even among the so-called traditionalists.[66] This faction was by far the largest. It encompassed the majority of Jews who found themselves in the middle of the crisis and the ones most affected by the void which it created. These were the uneducated common folk who were cut off from the tradition. Although they still believed in the tenents of the theology, such as God as overseer and the supremacy of the Torah (which were also utilized by the Sabbateans), they doubted the efficacy of the commandment system. Under that system they had expected to be rewarded for observing the halakah. Instead they only received suffering. Because they could not understand their plight, those who represented the tradition were obliged to provide answers to make life in an uncertain world bearable and indeed meaningful. These confused people are the target of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez in its attempt to answer the pressing problems faced by the Jews in the Ladino speaking world.

Chapter III

The Theological Approach of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez

In light of the intellectual and social climate of the early eighteenth century, it is significant that Culi chose a biblical commentary as the vehicle for his apologia on behalf of traditional Judaism. We have noted that the common folk questioned the traditional view of the commandment system because they felt that it could not provide relief from the sufferings of their desperate condition. Culi sought to importune the people to return to observance of that very system. To do this he had to convince the people that the halakah was still viable and that it could fulfill their needs, individually and collectively. Culi could not have written a code like the Shulhan ^{c}Aruk, as such an endeavor would not have been credible. The people had to be convinced to accept the authority of the codes that already existed. The Torah on the other hand, still had meaning for the people. Although they neither understood nor had access to it they still respected the Torah as the basis of Judaism. This was even acknowledged by the heterodoxies of Sabbateanism and Karaism which had made inroads into the religious life of the people in the past. As a biblical commentary, the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez legitimized its message through association with the Torah. That is, the polemic of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez was supported by the universally accepted truths of the holy text. Culi

noted that in reading the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez one perceived the greatness of the Torah and came to know the true path of Judaism, as all its laws were explained in its pages.[1] So close was its association with the Torah, that Culi maintained that the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez had the same weight as the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. According to Culi, one was obliged to recite the traditional blessings before and after reading the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez just as one would do over the Torah.[2] This would seem to imply that the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez is Torah; were it not, the recitation would constitute the commission of a sin: a wasted blessing (berakah le--batalah). In the form of a biblical commentary, the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez was able to deal with the problems of the society in terms that were understandable to the people. Culi utilized the elements of the old theological structure which still had meaning, and underscored beliefs already held by the people. Throughout, the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez remained consistent with the popular ideology. The fundamental premise of the work is that God is the overseer (mashgiah) of the world, that He has a special relationship with the Jewish people and that the Torah is the basis of that relationship. Few if any among the Jews in the Ottoman Empire of the period would contest this premise upon which the whole polemic of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez is based.

According to the ideology of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, God has been involved with the world since Creation. No other power is responsible for the world, even though our perceptions

of the world may suggest otherwise. Cule noted that for everything and for every action there is a ruler in heaven to control it.[3] Earthly occurances may be controlled by celestial bodies,[4] yet Culi stressed that the celestial bodies in turn are appointed by God and only act according to His will.[5] Some things may appear to happen simply because of the laws of Nature: everyday the sun rises, grass grows and water flows to the sea. These phenomena seem to have no extraneous control, subject only to the dictates of Nature, yet they too are the result of God's will and have no independence of action.[6] Because everything is under God's control, nothing is created unless it fits into God's plan for the world. Even things which ostensibly have no purpose, do indeed have their place in the order of things. Man's limited wisdom prevents him from perceiving the nature of all things, and to discern their purposes.[7] In this regard, even things which are harmful, that only seem to vex and endanger their fellow creatures, play a definite role in God's scheme. They, too, carry out God's will and serve to chastise the wicked.[8] Through their agency, the wicked repent their evil ways and return to the sure path upon which God directs them.

Man holds a unique place in Creation above all of God's other creatures. God takes special interest in man, creating all else to satisfy his needs. Everything in the world, indeed in the universe, was created by means of God's "word," only man merited the distinction of being created

by God's "hand."[9] God took infinite care in man's creation, taking a great deal of time to show how dear man was to Him.[10] Just as man was the most important of all of God's creations, the Jewish people was regarded as God's special concern among men. Only for the Jews does God alter the natural order of the cosmos. The only deviations from Nature are the miracles which God performs on behalf of the Jews, underscoring their value in God's eyes.[11] The theology of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez further asserts the centrality of the Jewish people by maintaining that the whole world depends upon the Jews for its very existence. The world-balance between order and chaos is kept through Torah. The Jews must continue to observe the commandments and halakah or the world would revert to primordial chaos.[12] No other people has this responsibility.

God controls the world, and intercedes in history because of His concern for the Jews. In fact, God manipulates history to serve the needs of the Jewish people to insure their ability to observe God's laws and maintain the cosmic order. The Bible itself is a chronicle of how God shapes events on behalf of the Jews. Culi cited the example of the Joseph story as evidence of this doctrine. He noted that all that happened to Joseph, his father and his brothers occurred as part of God's plan and was not the result of random chance. The actions of Joseph's brothers did not alter God's plan, on the contrary, unbeknownst to to them they furthered it.[13] The brothers sold Joseph to

the Ishmaelites, who in turn sold him to the Midianites. The Midianites brought Joseph with them to Egypt where they sold the young Hebrew to Potiphar. Then, according to the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, the Ishmaelites reappeared and claimed that the Midianites had stolen Joseph. To placate the Ishmaelites, Potiphar also paid them for the youth. This explains the apparent contradictions between Gen. 37:36 and Gen. 39:1, the former denoting the sale by the Midianites, the latter by the Ishmaelites. Culi contended that the whole story is so complicated that the events couldn't possibly be due to chance.[14] Later, while in prison, Joseph met the cup-bearer and baker of the king. Culi pointed out that they were innocent of any wrongdoing, but that they were sent to prison to serve God's purpose, so that they could meet Joseph.[15] Certainly, maintains the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, this serves as proof that God manipulates history to suit His purposes.

Bearing witness to God's action in history, Culi argued that the exile of the Jews from the Land of Israel was also part of God's plan. This is based on the principle that the actions of the ancestors of the Jews presage the history of the people. Thus, Culi likened the fate of the Jews in the exile to the life of the patriarch Jacob, the eponymous ancestor of Israel.[16] All that happened to Jacob will happen to his descendants. As Culi observed, it was the custom to read the portion wa-Yishlah every Saturday evening after habdallah because it alludes to the exile.

Further, it teaches us that to survive in exile we must conduct ourselves as Jacob conducted himself towards his brother Esau. Jacob survived through prayer; he pacified Esau with gifts, and kept his contacts with Esau at a minimum. So too should the Jews pray for relief, assuage the anger of the gentiles through gifts (bribes) and limit contacts with non-Jews.[17] This is brought out further in the story of Jacob's struggle with the angel (Gen. 33:23f). According to Culi, this account symbolizes the struggle between Israel and the descendants of Esau (that is, the gentiles). The story shows that Esau will rule over Israel, but that Israel can rule, only if the Jews observe the commandments as they are commanded to do by God.[18] Culi explained that the descendants of Esau ennumerated in Gen. 36:40-43 will rule over the Jews, each representing one of the four kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Edom. The last mentioned being the rulers in the exile of the Jews in Culi's time.[19] In the comment to Gen. 32:17, Culi tells us that Jacob, forseeing the exile of his descendants, prayed to God on their behalf.[20] He asks God to spare the Jews and that He not bring all the punishments of exile at once, rather little by little. Then, as Jacob descried Esau approaching in the distance, he prayed that the Jews be spared from the children of Esau during the exile.[21] Thus, even Jacob knew what fate lay ahead for the Jews.

Having explained that the exile was in fact part of God's plan, Culi went on to contend that even the suffering

which beset the Jews also served God's purpose. In his comment on Gen. 16:13-14, he noted that the exile, with all its suffering, was in fact the least of all possible punishments. According to the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, Abraham saw that his descendants would sin by transgressing the halakah. God gave Abraham a choice of punishments, either exile or the horrors of Gehenna. One version of the story has him choosing Gehenna; God overiding the patriarch's choice because it was too severe.[22] In spite of all the rigors of exile, it is better to suffer in this life than in the next for it is easier to endure and one may then find eternal rest in the world to come.[23] Moreover, God doesn't want the Jews to suffer, yet sometimes people themselves make it necessary. Even the sinful generation of the Flood was not beyond God's concern. God warned the people one hundred and twenty years in advance that a deluge was coming so that the people would be afraid and repent. However, the people were so befouled in sin that they didn't heed God's warning.[24] In spite of their intransigence God had mercy upon them. At the onset of the deluge only light rain fell, again serving as a warning to the people. As before, the people ignored God's caveat and the rains came in force.[25] God was reluctant to bring suffering upon even these vilest of sinners, and in the end it might be said that they brought it upon themselves. The theology of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez maintains that there is a reason for all suffering. Suffering is intended to bring repentance. One suffers so that

one will take heed of one's deeds and correct any flaws.[28] To emphasize this point Culi avers that because there was no suffering before the Flood people had life too easy. The lack of controls on conduct led to sin and necessitated the introduction of suffering as a curb to transgression. Thus, after the Flood sin was not so tempting and all actions were tempered by the fear of punishment.[29] In this light, suffering is not only inevitable, it is necessary. Suffering serves God in that it keeps people from sin and brings them to repentance.

The theology of the Me^{c}an Lo^{c}ez places the exile in a completely new perspective. Because God always acts on the behalf of the Jews, the exile, as part of his plan, is seen as beneficial to the Jews. The exile becomes a positive rather than negative experience. We have already noted that it was thought better to suffer in this world than in the next. This view is elaborated in the commentary to the Joseph story. Joseph's brothers had sinned because of their treatment of him and their cruel deception of Jacob. In return for their transgressions Joseph tormented them. When the brothers came to Egypt Joseph did not reveal his identity. Instead he tricked them as related in the incident of Benjamin and the chalice (Gen. 42-45). Culi comments that through this strategem Joseph hoped his brothers would atone for their past sins, suffering in this life rather than facing the more severe torments of the next.[28] In effect then, the exile forces the Jews to be

better people. Through all the suffering and adversity they are purified so that they can share in future rewards and fulfill God's plan for Israel. Culi likens this to the manufacture of fine paper. The pulp of fine paper is beaten and beaten until the material is of the best and purest quality. So too do the hardest rigors of exile beat upon the Jews until they emerge in all their greatness.[29] The dispersal of the Jews also benefits their neighbors as the gentiles are blessed by their presence.[30] And too, Culi argued, the scattering of the Jews in fact assures their very survival. In other words, God sent the Jews into exile to save them! The Jews knew from their own experience that they were subject to the periodic brutality of the gentiles; nowhere were Jews safe from persecution. Thus it was for their own good that they were scattered, as the whim of no one nation could threaten their corporate existence.[31] The Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez reaffirms that the Jews have not lost God's favor; He is not trying to destroy them through exile. Even at the times of greatest danger the Jewish people is protected by God's mercy and by the collective merit of the patriarchs (zekut abot). Culi noted that the merit which Abraham accrued, when he showed himself willing to sacrifice Isaac, was saved for the future to protect the Jews from the tribulations of exile.[32] Likewise the blessings bestowed upon Jacob by the angel (Gen. 32:30) were held in trust for the Jews to use against their

persecutors.[33]

Above the rationalizations which the Me^cam Lo^cez asserts to explain the exile is the hope of redemption which it offers the Jews. Commenting on Gen. 28. Culi stated that Jacob had a vision in which he saw the end of the exile. This is the well known story of Jacob's dream of the angels going up and down a ladder which reached to heaven. The commentary tells us that the angels represent the nations of the earth each going up to heaven to a set height. The height of ascent corresponds to the length of that nation's rule. Jacob saw that the angel of Edom climbed the ladder and came very near the top rung and this worried the patriarch. He was concerned that the angel would never return to earth, sealing Israel's fate forever in exile. However, God consoled Jacob and reassured him that He would also cause Edom to descend and then the angel of Israel would be free to ascend. At that time Israel would rule the world, and the angel would go all the way up the ladder, to the Throne of Glory itself, symbolizing that Israel's rule would last forever.[34] Also in connection to Jacob, when Isaac blessed him (Gen. 27), Jacob asked God that the blessings be deferred and saved for his descendants whom he knew would suffer in the exile. God answered that, although Esau would benefit from the blessing before Israel, Jacob's descendants would benefit in the future. God promised that He would redeem the Jews and make them great, and eventually rule over Esau and his descendants.[35] Even before the Jews

were sent into the Egyptian captivity God promised to redeem the Jews from Egypt and from galut aher (another exile). This term is tantalizingly ambiguous, referring either to the Babylonian exile or, more likely, the contemporary situation.[36]

The Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez assures the Jews that once they are redeemed from the exile their condition will change markedly. No longer will they be subject to others, nor will they suffer at the hands of the gentiles. Jacob will inherit the earth forevermore. In the commentaries on Gen. 22:15-18 and Gen. 26:22, Culi alluded to the building of a Third Temple in Jerusalem. The Third Temple symbolizes Israel's hegemony over the world and it, unlike the Jewish kingdom represented by the First and Second Temples, will never be destroyed.[37] The whole theology of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez addresses itself to the aspirations of the Jews as much as to their depressed condition. It is designed to give the Jews a sense of self-worth and dignity. Culi exhorted them to follow the tradition and observe the halakah because God cares about what they do. Despite their present condition, regardless of their suffering and denegration, they are important to God.

Chapter IV

The Program of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez: Societal Goals

Culi directed the polemics of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez at the problems besetting Ottoman Jewry in the eighteentn century. The community remained divided by the rifts persisting in the wake of the Sabbatean challenge leaving the society unstable and weakened. As part of his societal goals, Culi focused his attack upon the ideological premises of the Sabbatean heterodoxy. Proving them to be false, he would then be in a position to sway the people by his arguments in favor of traditional Judaism. Interestingly, the identity of the dissident religious element serving as Culi's dialectical target is not clear from the text of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez of Genesis. Nowhere did Culi identify the movement explicitly by name, suggesting that he did not want to aggravate an already tense situation by acknowledging the existance of anti-traditional movements. However, Culi's allusions and indirect attacks present a composite picture pointing most convincingly to the Sabbateans and their sympathizers.

Culi developed an involved argument against "those who believe the Messiah has already come," an obvious attack at those who claimed that Shabbetai Zvi was the Messiah. He described those who held such beliefs as misguided, and contended that they misinterpreted the Torah to support their heresies. To demonstrate this, Culi pointed to Gen. 49:8-10,

a verse often quoted to support the argument that the Messiah has already come. Identifying Shiloh with the Messiah, those who held to this doctrine claimed that Judah had already lost kingship (shebet) because of the dispersal of the Jews in exile which could happen only with the advent of the Messiah. Thus they concluded that the Messiah had already arrived. However, the correct interpretation, according to Culi (citing Rashi, Ramban, and others), suggests that Judah will receive eternal dominion. This implies that these events are to happen in the future, when the Messiah will come.[1] Moreover, Culi argued, the Torah itself proves that the Messiah had not yet come. Primary evidence comes from allusions in the Creation narrative. Culi noted that each of the six days of Creation corresponds to an age in the history of the world. The first day corresponds to the age of the first man, Adam; the second to the age of the Flood. The third day symbolizes the period of history up to the end of the fourth millenium; the fifth to the contemporary period. The sixth day alludes to the Messianic era suggesting that this period has not yet come but lies in the future.[2] Still further, Culi contended that the events predicted would take place with the advent of the Messiah, have not yet happened. Most notably, the end of the exile for which the Jews awaited so long had not yet come to fruition. The Jews were still dispersed in the Galut Edom, the exile foretold in the Book of Daniel. That book predicted the rise of four kingdoms: Babylonian,

Persian, Greek and Edomite, each of which had hegemony over the Jews. The last, the Edomite kingdom, corresponded to the contemporary period of exile ending when the Messiah appeared.[3] Further, when the Messiah came the fortunes of the Jews would take a dramatic turn and Israel would rule in this world and in the next.[4] Based on this evidence, Culi concluded that the Messiah had not yet come, and those who believed that he had were wrong or at least misled. Culi maintained that we have no way of knowing the time of the Messiah's arrival because it is simply beyond our ken. Indeed, if we did know the exact time we should all go crazy from the pain of waiting for certain deliverance; a day would seem like an eternity and we would not be able to endure. As it stands, we may find some comfort in our uncertainty, for as bad as things get we can always hope that the Messiah will come at any moment.[5] According to Culi, the only ones who could know the exact moment of the advent of the Messiah were those counted among the completely righteous (zaddikim gemurim). The Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez comments that Jacob wanted to tell his sons the time of the Messiah's coming, so that they would not lose faith, but wait patiently for him. Culi reasoned that Jacob did not tell his sons because the sons, although righteous, were not completely righteous (zaddikim gemurim) and therefore could not be told.[6] To extrapolate, if the sons of Jacob himself were not considered worthy of being privy to such information, how much the more so Culi's contemporaries. We have already

noted that Culi lamented that each new generation diminished in wisdom and righteousness, how then could the Sabbateans claim to know the time of the Messiah's coming? He stated that if we knew we could better withstand the rigors and suffering of exile.[7] If we knew, Culi told his readers, but we don't know and that is why the Jews feel the pangs of suffering of exile so acutely. Culi concluded that the Messiah had not come and that we don't know exactly when he will come. We have no timetable in spite of the popular mystical speculation that foretold Shabbetai Ẓvi's supposed Messianic mission.

Having disproved any claim of the Sabbateans that the Messiah had come in the person of Shabbetai Ẓvi, Culi underscored this ideological point by calling upon the people to incorporate this doctrine into their liturgy. Culi urged his readers to pray for the "true" Messiah (Mashiah ha-amiti). He even described how the patriarch Jacob himself had made such a supplication. In reference to the blessing of Dan in Gen. 49:18, Culi commented that Jacob saw through the spirit of prophecy, that Samson would descend from his son Dan. The vision revealed that Samson would be a great hero and this led Jacob to believe that Samson was the Messiah himself. However, Jacob then learned that Samson would die, removing the possibility. Fearing that others would make the same mistake as he, Jacob prayed for the coming of the "true" Messiah.[8] This seems an obvious allusion to the misconceptions of the Sabbateans. To Culi they, like Jacob, had

wrongly identified the person of the Messiah. Further, Shabbetai Zvi, like Samson, was naught but a mortal and could not possibly have been the foretold Savior of the Jews. Thus the Jews, like Jacob before them, should pray for the appearance of the "true" Messiah. To this end Culi took special note of two specific prayers. The first consisted of a special meditation said before the Shema[c] and recited on Rosh Hodesh Elul and on the eve of Rosh ha-Shanah.[9] The second prayer was found in the service for the ritual of circumcision.[10] In reciting these prayers the Jews would make a de facto declaration that the claims of the Sabbateans were totally false.

Culi considered those who did not hold to the doctrines of traditional Judaism as heretics who practiced idolatry ([c]abodah zarah). They were sinners and viewed as bastards (mamzerim), cut off from association with other Jews.[11] These wicked people had foresaken their souls and therefore considered as if they were dead. Commenting on Gen. 21:1 Culi suggested that Terah, Abraham's father died, but only spiritually because he practiced idolatry and worshipped Nimrod the King instead of God.[12] Such heretics presented a threat because they deceived their fellows and drew others into idolatrous practices.[13] Culi likened them to the demons created in the last moments of Creation. These demons pretended to be good Jews, reading Torah and observing the commandments. However, in reality they only serve to confuse their fellow Jews who innocently come under their

influence.[14]

Given these allusions in light of social realities in Culi's time, we might speculate with some degree of certainty that Culi directed his diatribe at the Sabbateans. We have only to note the thrust of Culi's Messianic polemic and compare it to the main tenent of Sabbateanism, that Shabbetai Ẓvi was the Messiah. By the eighteenth century much of the activity of the movement had gone underground and, although seemingly traditionalists, many still clung to heterodox doctrines. It is not unreasonable to conclude that Culi might view their activities as "demonic", and subject to attack by ardent traditionalists such as he. He referred to an allegory of the descendants of Enosh which seems to allude to the deleterious affect the Sabbateans had on the common folk. Like the simple Jews who followed the Sabbatean movement, the descendants of Enosh practiced idolatry all the while believing that they did God's will.[15] Those who deceived them are the wicked ones; they only misled victims. Thus did Culi appeal to the common people. They could redeem themselves by returning to the tradition and scrupulous observance of the halakah as legislated by the community's traditionalist lay and religious leaders.

Culi had good reason to discredit the Sabbateans. As long as they held any credibility they continued to act as a devisive force in the community. The resultant factions weakened the authority of the rabbis and lay leaders of the community. Even as an underground movement, the

Sabbateans represented a threat to the rabbinic bureaucracy and the traditionalist social structures which enabled the community to function. As long as there existed elements in the society holding that the authority of the halakah was temporary, effective only until the immediate advent of the Messianic era, the traditionalist forces in the society found their functioning impaired. Only when all factionalism disappeared could their hold over the community be secure. Culi had vested interest in the traditionalist structure and, in the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, served as its popular spokesman. His whole background points to Culi's position in this regard. Culi's grandfather was an ardent opponent of the anti-traditionalists, and the fact that Culi published his works and expressed such respect for him suggests that he shared ibn Habib's religious views.[16] Further, we have also pointed out that Judah Rosanes, Culi's mentor and patron in Constantinople, was also an anti-Sabbatean. As we mentioned above, he brought Culi into the traditional authority structure by appointing him a dayyan of the community.[17] Culi sought to discredit the Sabbateans in the eyes of the common people to cause a loss of credibility and weaken the center of their power. He hoped that the people would see that the Sabbatean ideology based itself on false premises. Thus they would also lose faith in the leadership of the movement. In this way the Sabbateans would lose all political leverage against the traditionalists retained after the debacle of Shabbetai Zvi's apostasy some sixty years

earlier. The remnants of the shattered movement would then have the option of coopting into the traditionalist authority structure or leave the Jewish community completely as did the Donmeh. In either case the traditionalists would regain effective control over the society.

Even if the traditionalists proved successful in discrediting the Sabbateans and other dissident elements in the society they still faced the task of reuniting the society. As a millet, the Jews comprised an autonomous community in the Ottoman Empire. For the Turks, all Jews regardless of their ideological leanings, were represented by the authority structure of the community, in turn responsible directly to the Porte. Any divisions would sharply limit the effectiveness of control, making the society dependent upon internal unity to insure its autonomy and integrity. To maintain this, all of the problems which arose in the community had to be solved from within. Any attempt to appeal disputes to the Turkish authorities created the threat of Turkish intrusion into communal affairs. In such a case, Jewish autonomy would be at stake. The main concern of the Turks was the maintainance of an ordered society. As long as the Jews succeeded in insuring the internal order of their community, their autonomy remained secure. Should they not prove successful, the Turks had to step in to impose order, often by means of their military arm, the janissaries. Deepening ideological rifts in the society had the effect of increasing bitterness and rivalries between the factions, creating

the possibility of societal break-up. Therefore Culi felt it necessary to stress the importance of intra-communal co-operation. He cautioned the Jews against inviting the Turks to mediate disputes. To illustrate this point Culi told a parable about Rav Kahana'. It seems that he came upon two Jews in the midst of a dispute when one threatened to seek satisfaction from the gentile court. Rav Kahana' warned him not to, to which the Jew responded that he didn't care about Jewish Law (Din Torah) but only wanted satisfaction. Rav Kahana' became enraged and killed the Jew. The parable concludes that all disputes should remain within the community, and adjudicated by means of communal structures. Those who contest this, warrant death for their rebelliousness.[18] Culi also condemned Terah who worshipped Nimrod, for having turned his son Abraham over to the gentile authorities for studying Torah.[19] This suggests that Culi feared that an internecine religious struggle would present cause for Turkish intervention into the Jewish community. This fear that Jews might side with the Turks against other Jews also spilled over into the economic realm. Thus Culi roundly condemned Jews who took money from fellow Jews to give to gentiles. So foul did Culi consider these actions that he suggested that those responsible have their eyes put out. Such a person, according to Culi, would have no place in the world to come and was banned from the Jewish community.

Culi suggested two ways to eliminate the sources of

community dissention: ostracism and repentant reconciliation of dissenters. Regarding ostracism, Culi cited the example of Lot and the Sodomites. In arguing that dissidents should be removed lest they contaminate the society, Culi noted that Lot lived among the wicked Sodomites and himself came under the influence of their actions.[21] Lot should have avoided sinners and remain untainted. Culi pointed out to his readers that we are commanded to avoid dissidents (minim). He recalled a parable of Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Eliezer. According to the story, the Romans in the midst of carrying out their vicious program to eliminate rabbinic authority, attacked and killed the Jewish sages. Due to the situation, Rabbi Eliezer was most aggrieved and looked to his own deeds to find some blemish which would explain his suffering, but he could find none. He brought his dilemma to Rabbi Akiba who asked him if he had had contact with any heretics (minim), to which the sage answered that he had. To this Rabbi Akiba noted that we are commanded to avoid any contact with heretics for fear that we may be influenced by them as Lot had been deliteriously influenced by the abominations of Sodom.[22] Ostracism would cut the dissidents off from the society. Thus they could not live among the Jews, unable to do business or share in any of the benefits or protection of the millet. In light of the structure of the Ottoman government, the infractor would in fact be a stateless, or more accurately, community-less individual, legally in limbo. As a result, the dissident

would have two practical choices. The individual or group in question could leave the community and join another. Or, as an alternative, the dissidents could return to the structures of the traditional society. In either case the dissidents would no longer pose a threat to the community or to its traditionalist authorities. Their return would be affected through the repentance and reconciliation of the dissident elements.

Repentence is a common theme in the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez and it probably had a great deal of influence upon the common folk who looked to Sabbateanism for redemption but who now sought reconciliation with the tradition. Culi assured the people that their former allegiance to the Sabbatean movement did not represent a serious obstacle to their return to the traditional values of Judaism. The door remained open through repentance. Culi counseled his readers that all could return. Further, traditional Jews were obliged to know how to answer and confront dissidents (apikorsim) to prevent them from sinking deeper into heresy.[23] In other words, the traditional Jews should not avoid the heretics. This view is explicated in Culi's comment on Gen. 13:13.[24] Culi noted the example of Abraham and Lot. According to the text Abraham separated from Lot and went his own way. The commentary suggests that the separation came about because angels complained that Abraham should not have stayed in the company of one the likes of Lot. They claimed that Lot was wicked and therefore Abraham should avoid him, thus the two

parted. When God learned of their separation he was angered. He chastened the angels, telling them that Abraham should have kept Lot close to him so that his nephew might be exposed to his exemplary life and good deeds. God explained that under Abraham's influence Lot would have repented. However, as it stood, Lot exposed himself to the wickedness of the Sodomites and himself became wicked. Culi's comments reflects a tension which must have existed between proponents of the two options of ostracism and reconciliation. The conclusion here, as brought out in God's argument, is that the latter means was preferable. This option makes the most sense when we examine the social realities of the period. The fact remains that a vast number of Jews had followed the Sabbateans or their sympathizers. If Culi and the traditionalists had taken a severe stance, they would have faced the possibility of alienating a majority of their constituency, precipitating their own disenfranchisment. The reconciliation of the dissidents and their return to the traditionalist fold made the most sense from a social and political point of view. To this end, Culi stated specifically that even traitors (bogdim) could be readmitted into the community should they show true repentance. This point comes out in Culi's commentary on Gen. 27:27.[25] Culi, following the Talmud[26] played on the Hebrew words reah begadayw (the scent of his garments), reading begadayw (garments) as bogdayw (his traitors), Culi suggested that Jacob had a vision that all Jewish traitors would

repent, that "they would smell good," implying that they should be accepted back into the community. Those who remained traditionalists should not wish evil to befall their wicked brethern, rather they should pray that the misguided ones repent. Culi illustrated this point with two stories. The first story tells of how Rabbi Meir in a fit of pique, prayed for the wicked people who tormented him to die. Beruriah, his wife, protested, arguing that wickedness, not the wicked, should be eliminated. For, if we dispose of the evil inclination (yezer ha-ra^{c}), wickedness would disappear. Berurian counseled her husband that he should pray for the wicked to save them from Gehenna.[27] The second story, similar to the first, involves Rabbi Hilkiah and his wife. The sage praised his wife for having chastized him for seeking the destruction of his wicked neighbors. His wife prayed for their repentance and their contrition bore witness to the wisdom of her counsel.[28]

Culi observed that unity was of utmost importance to the Jewish community. He called upon all Jews to avoid dissention and charged them to be of "one heart." All should seek the good of the whole community and avoid disputes which threatened the integrity of the society. An essential element of Judaism, he contended, is unity.[29] The Jews had to present a unified front to the Turks by preserving the internal order of the community. Then and only then, could they insure autonomy of the Jewish community. Once the society was unified, holding allegiance to a common

ideology, the bureaucracy could function efficiently and its authority figures, the rabbis and lay leaders, would once again enjoy the respect of their constituency.

To further secure their control over the community, the traditionalist authority figures, represented by Culi, sought to limit the areas of contact between Jews and the Turks. By minimizing contacts the communal leaders hoped to encourage an interdependancy among the Jews and foster cohesion in the community, making their control over the community easier. The fewer the contacts, the less likely that the common folk would appeal to the Turkish authorities or contest the authority of the communal leadership. In effect, they would have no access to any communal, judicial or political structures other than those of the Jewish community itself. They had to depend on the Jewish bureaucracy, as for them it was the "only game in town." Culi sought to achieve this end by demonstrating to the people that they should avoid contact with the Moslems because they were different from the Jews and not to be trusted. Culi's deprecation of the Moslems could not take the form of a pointed attack at the Ottomans as this would jeopardize his whole enterprise should the Turkish authorities find out about such attacks. Culi did not write a secret tract, so obviously such discovery would be inevitable. Rather, Culi directed his polemic at gentiles in general and at the Moslems by means of elliptical references to the Moslem ancestors. That is, he attacked his con-

temporary Moslems by casting aspersions on Ishmael, their eponymous ancestor. For example, Culi claimed that Ishmael was not worthy to be Abraham's heir because he and his mother were tainted. In the commentary to Gen. 16:5, Culi noted that Hagar showed disrespect to Sarah her mistress because she had a son, Ishmael, and her lady remained barren. In her anguish Sarah prayed to God and He told her that she too would bear a son, Isaac, and that Abraham would then have no need for Hagar or her son. Culi went on to explain that Hagar was tainted because she was the daughter of Pharoah and the granddaughter of Nimrod, Abraham's arch enemy. If Hagar's descent was tainted, then so was Ishmael's.[30] And, we may extrapolate from this comment, if Ishmael bore a taint so too do his descendants, the Moslems. In another comment, on Gen. 49:31-32, Culi went so far as to state that Ishmael could not even be considered a real son of Abraham. According to Culi, Ishmael claimed the right to burial in the cave of Machpelah, the resting place of the matriarchs and partriarchs. But, the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez counters that Ishmael had no such right as Abraham only considered Isaac a son, not Ishmael or the children of Keturah.[31] What is more, Culi argued elsewhere, Ishmael and his descendants, were wicked and guilty of practicing idolatry. Concerning Gen. 21:12, Culi noted that Abraham worried about the fate of Ishmael, but that God consoled him and explained that Ishmael would sire a great nation. However, Ishmael was not to be considered Abraham's son because he practiced

idolatry.[32] By disavowing any connection between the descendants of Ishmael (the Moslems) and the descendants of Isaac, (the Jews), Culi set the Moslems squarely in the position of gentiles in their relations with the Jews.

Underlying any relations between the Jews and gentiles was the belief, emphasized by Culi, that gentiles hate Jews. Culi argued that the gentiles hate all who show favor to the Jews and exalt all those who do them harm.[33] This seems to imply that there is no hope of conciliation and that the Jews can never expect decent treatment from the gentile (here Ottoman) authorities. The individual Jew's only refuge it would seem, lay within his own community. To drive a wedge between the Jews and Turks, Culi reminded his readers of other times in Jewish history when the Jews found themselves dispersed amidst the gentiles, but maintained their communal integrity and kept themselves apart from their non-Jewish neighbors. As the banner example Culi alluded to the period of the Jewish domicile in Egypt. Culi explained that Jacob charged his sons to avoid the Egyptians during their exile. He told them not to follow the customs of the Egyptians as this would lead to spiritual contamination and offense to God's majesty.[34] True to Jacob's command, the Israelites set themselves apart and eschewed any form of fraternization with the Egyptians. Culi noted that the Israelites became shepherds in Egypt to emphasize their separatness. They herded and slaughtered the rams which were the objects of Egyptian devotion.[35]

To insure against any assimilation of the Jewish community, felt it necessary for Culi to stress the differences between Turk and Jew. Appearances may deceive, and so Culi cautioned the Jews that even though Moslems may have similar rituals and customs, they did not have the same religious import as Jewish practice. This was especially the case in regard to circumcision. Both Moslems and Jews circumcised their sons, and, to the uneducated, the similar custom might imply a similar ideology. Culi countered that there was a fundamental difference in the custom as practiced by the two peoples. He supported this view in his commentary on Gen. 23:4, wherein Abraham's servant swore an oath upon the patriarch's thigh. Culi observed that Abraham regarded the sign of the covenant as a holy object and therefore a worthy symbol on which to swear. However, assuming that the servant was also so marked, why did he not swear on his own circumcision? Culi pointed out that the servant was not part of God's covenant. Therefore his circumcision did not constitute a holy symbol, whereas the Jewish ritual was a holy act.[36] Culi concluded that even though gentiles might be circumcised they are considered <u>ᶜarelim</u>, uncircumcised, for their customs was not done in God's name.[37] We might wonder how the unlearned Jews viewed these arguments. Certainly they must have questioned the validity of Culi's arguments, for they could see that their position in the world was subordinate to the Moslems'. Their overlords in fact claimed that they were

the keepers of the true faith and that the Jews were misguided. Culi countered that the Jews did indeed have the true religion and moreover, it was the gentiles who were deceived. Culi recalled a legend about Alexander the Great and certain Jewish sages to illustrate his argument. In the legend, Alexander asked the rabbis why the Jews think they have the true religion (ha-dat ha-amitit) considering that gentiles rule the world. The rabbis answered that Satan had deceived the gentiles. From a short-sighted perspective, the gentiles might appear to enjoy an exalted position in the world, but in reality, the Jews are the beloved of God and do indeed have the true religion.[38] Thus, Culi argued that it was in the best interests of the Jews to remain aloof from the gentiles amongst whom they lived.

Culi sought a closed Jewish society. In such a situation, the individual Jew would have only the most limited of contacts with the Turks, specifically the Ottoman authorities. This goal was facilitated by the social barriers already in existence and which Culi encouraged in the pages of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez. The structures of Ottoman control, based on the millet system, defined many of the limits of contact. We have already noted that Turkish law did not recognize dhimmis as individuals, only as members of a particular community. Beyond this, many cultural barriers separated the Jews from other peoples in the Ottoman Empire. We have mentioned above some of the religious differences which Culi stressed in his polemic, but there also existed a very basic

cultural barrier between the Jews and the Turks, language. Not only were the Jews illiterate in Hebrew, they also had extremely limited ability to speak Turkish. Although they could communicate in the language of the Empire, their limited command of Turkish clearly marked them as "foreigners". Culi alluded to this fact in his comment to the Joseph story. Culi observed that Joseph spoke haltingly to Pharaoh's steward. He explained this by noting that Joseph spoke very little Egyptian and was not at all comfortable in that language. Culi likened this to a Jew trying to speak to a Turk in his own time. This explanation suggests that the Jews as a whole spoke little Turkish themselves.[39] All these barriers created a climate of distrust of the Turks among the Jews, and it appears that this was exactly what Culi intended. Culi sought to establish the clear impression that the Turks, as gentiles, hated the Jews and could not be trusted. He saw that the leaders of the community could control the mistrust to insure the insularity of the Jewish community. Culi accomplished this by rooting his polemic to the ideology of the people through the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez commentary on the symbol of the ideology par excellence, the Torah. Culi counseled his readers as to how the individual should deal with the gentiles, drawing upon the example of Jacob's relationship with his brother Esau. We have already observed that Culi maintained that all events in the exile were foretold in the story of Jacob. In line with this, Culi saw in Jacob's actions a guide for

the Jews in their relations with the alleged descendants of Esau. The Jews should follow Jacob's lead, relying upon God, and praying for His protection. Further, they should placate the gentiles with gifts. Culi uses the term "to close their mouths" (listom pihem), which may imply the giving of bribes. And, Culi adds, it is of the utmost importance that Jews make every effort to avoid the gentiles to escape their capricious anger.[40] It was not in the best interest of the community for individual Jews to oppose the gentiles, the Turks. Rather, survival demanded that the Jew be like reeds bending in the wind, not like cedars which break. Culi cautioned that the Jews must humble themselves as long as they are in exile so as not to incite anti-Jewish action.[41] In fact, in the troubled times of the eighteenth century, when the Jews lived at the mercy of the changeable whims of the Sultan, such advice must have rung true. As Culi noted, the Jews had to play up to the gentiles because it was the only way to live among them.[42] The Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez reveals a curious contrast in relations with the gentiles which makes sense only when viewed within Culi's historical context. On the one hand Culi argued that the Jews had to bribe the gentiles in order to survive. As his proof text he cited the example of Esau taking the potage from Jacob.[43] On the other hand, Culi went into some detail to emphasize the necessity of dealing honestly with gentiles in any and all personal contacts. In business contacts it was of the utmost importance that all accounts were just and that any

mistakes be corrected, even though it was theoretically permissable to take advantage of the mistakes of gentiles. Culi impressed upon his readers that they should be even more scrupulous in their dealings with gentiles than with Jews as their conduct reflected on the Torah.[44] Upon examination both these points become complementary. Bribes were a necessary and useful part of life in the Ottoman Empire. However, for the good of the community, bribes had to be controlled and handled by the Jewish authorities. Individuals should take care in all their dealings with the Turkish authorities. No Jew should attempt any action that would jeopardize the community. Thus the people had to depend all the more upon the communal authorities. By so totally subordinating the people to the communal leaders in all dealings with the Turkish authorities, Culi hoped to solidify their hold over the community. Then, the Turks would have to deal only with the leaders of the Jewish community and thereby give de facto recognition to the rabbinical bureaucracy. The turks used the bureaucracy to control the Jews in the Empire with a minimum of effort on their part. In turn, Turkish recognition and support of the lay and rabbinic leaders of the community insured the allgeiance of the people. They would recognize that the Jewish bureaucracy was the only effective means of dealing with the Turks. Only a very few influential Jews could successfully deal with the Turks on an individual basis, the community as a whole would stand squarely behind the traditional communal

structures.

Culi had yet another societal goal, perhaps of the greatest interest to him personally: the legitimation of rabbinic authority. After the debacle of the Sabbatean movement's challenge to the traditional leadership, the rabbinic leaders found themselves in the position of having to reestablish their own credibility. Shabbetai Ẓvi, Nathan of Gaza, Abraham Miguel Cardozo, and many of the other leaders of the Sabbatean movement were not rabbis nor did they directly hold allegiance to the rabbinic tradition. On the contrary, despite substantial support from some segments of the rabbinic community, the Sabbateans constituted a direct threat to rabbinic authority. In order for the society and the bureaucracy to function efficiently, Culi had to convince the common folk that the rabbis were the legitimate interpreters of the law and the recongized heads of the community. In the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, Culi alluded to the benefits accrued by the community from support of its rabbis. In his comment on Gen. 28:10, Culi likened Jacob to a ẓaddik, the righteous person who is the glory of the community.[45] Culi explained that the ẓaddik sets an example of conduct for the people, keeping the peace within the community and teaching Torah to all. Should the ẓaddik leave or be ignored, all these benefits disappear and the community suffers. The objective of this comment seems obvious. The rabbis functioned as the religious role models of the community, they also had the responsibility for maintaining

order, and it was they who taught and interpreted Torah. In Culi's time the people no longer held the rabbis in as high esteem as in times past. Culi and his colleagues tried to reverse this trend. This theme is also reflected in the book of "The Ethics of the Fathers" to the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez written by Isaac Magriso in the same period. Magriso explained to his reader that the people were like the meat of a nut, and their rabbis like the shell. The rabbis, he went on, protect the community and support of rabbinic authority has direct benefit to the people. Without the rabbis the community would be in jeopardy.[46] To underscore the importance of rabbis, Culi argued that the people should support the rabbis for very practical reasons. The community, as a millet, was governed according to halakah, if the people did not heed the rabbis they might transgress the law and subject themselves to dire consequences. The laws of the Torah controlled all aspects of religious and secular life, and ignorance of the Law could result in serious loss. For example, a business transaction might prove invalid according to the Law, nullifying a contract or other dealing. Lest the people think that they could master the laws themselves, Culi pointed out that there are just too many fine points in the Law to be mastered by anyone not thoroughly versed in all aspects of halakah, that is the rabbi. Thus, Culi recommended that all consult the rabbi (hakam ha-^{c}ir) before doing business.[47] Culi emphasized the point that the rabbi was the sole legal authority in the community and

therefore had to enjoy popular support. In his introduction, he cited Deut. 17:11:

> According to the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt not turn aside from the sentence which they shall declare unto thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.

He suggested that this verse refers to the minuties of the halakah. The average person could not understand all of the Written Law as it was too general. The people had to heed the rabbis as they were the only recipients of the "true" explication of the commandments. That is not to say that dependence on the rabbis freed the common folk from studying Torah; on the contrary, Culi encouraged them to study so that they might know what questions to ask the rabbi.[48] Should the people not consult the rabbi, Culi warned, they would not know how to act and risk sinning. Yet, it might be argued, certainly one could discern the Law through reason. Culi countered this argument by pointing out that not all the laws of the Torah arise from reason, but that people are still responsible for their transgressions. We all must account for our actions on the Day of Judgment.[49] In his commentary on the laws dealing with the fasts for certain dreams (diney ta^{c}anit halom) Culi explained that God reveals in advance all that the future holds. In days of old the instruments of revelation were the prophets of Israel. However, although prophetic revelation ceased with the end of the prophetic period, God still makes His will known. As we might expect, Culi contended that in his own time, God re-

vealed His will through the rabbis (hakamim). Interestingly, Culi stated that revelation through the rabbis was even preferrable to prophetic revelation.[50] So vital is the role of the rabbis that they are needed in every generation to clarify the Torah and to keep the people from forgetting the tradition.[51]

To clarify the legitimacy of rabbinic authority, Culi detailed its evolution as an integral part of the Torah tradition. He accomplished this by providing his readers with a descriptive "chain of tradition" (shalshelet ha-kabbalah).[52] Culi stressed that the history of the tradition which he presented was designed to show his readers how the tradition developed and why all Jews had to follow the commandments.[53] Upon analysis, the history reveals itself to be a polemic in support of rabbinic authority as well as a chronicle of the tradition and halakah.

Although Culi began his formal discussion of the history of the Jewish legal tradition with the revelation to Moses on Sinai, elsewhere in the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez he alluded to a legal tradition which ante-dated Sinai. Culi recalled a tradition in which the patriarch Abraham compiled a book of laws called the Sefer ha-Yizirah which he passed on to his descendants, Isaac, Jacob and Levi.[54] According to Culi's legal history, in the year 2448 of the Creation of the world (1311 BCE), Moses received the Law on Sinai. The revelation to Moses encompassed all aspects of the Law in all its details.[55] That is, Moses received the complete Written

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and Oral Torah. Culi explained that God revealed the Oral Torah because He did not want to make the written Torah completely clear in itself. As it stands, the Written Torah is too general and needs explanation. For example, the Torah commands the Jews to make fringes for their garments (Nu. 15:37-41), but doesn't give any details about how this is to be done. This is found in the Oral Torah.[56] To preserve the dual character of the Law, God commanded Moses that the Written Torah was not to be recited from memory nor could the Oral Torah be committed to writing. The Oral Torah, consisting of all explication and all material not found in the Written Torah, had to be handed down from master to disciple (ehad le-shenI).[57] Because the Written Torah was so abstruse, the people had to ask for clarification in order to avoid transgression. This clarification, provided by Moses, set a clear precedent for future rabbinic authority, or so Culi might have us believe. Culi observed that before Moses died he gathered the people to him to teach them the Oral Torah and answer any questions that the people had; as Culi noted, they had many.[58] Moses passed the whole Torah, in all its aspects, to Joshua who in turn passed it on to the first prophets (nevi'im rish'onim). The first prophets transmitted the Torah to the men of the Great Assembly who were the first to permit the writing down of the accents and vocalization, lest they be forgotten.[59] Culi then described the legal history of the Mishnaic period when Judah the Prince brought together the greatest sages

of his generation from all over the Jewish world. From each he collected the laws (halakot) and legal decisions (dinim) which they had learned from their masters. Judah wrote down this collection of the Oral Torah even though he knew it was forbidden to do so. He rationalized that it was necessary to write down the Oral Torah because the people forgot more as they became estranged from the tradition. Thus the Mishnah came into existence as the codification of the Oral Torah.[60] Again alluding to rabbinic precursors, Culi noted that Judah the Prince, like Moses, had the ability to explain the Torah and provide short, clear answers to difficult problems.[61] The process of codification of the Oral Torah continued into the Talmudic period. Rav Ashi followed the example set by Judah the Prince. He too collected all the legal knowledge of the sages of his generation and wrote down the Gemara. The Gemara, based on a concensus of the rabbis of the period (according to Culi's history), contains all the legal material from the time of Moses. This compendium of Jewish Law was the definitive authority on matters of purity and impurity (tahor and tame'), on what was obligatory (hayyab) and optional (mutar), and what was fit (kasher) and unfit (pasul). Culi viewed the Gemara's legal injunction as so authoritative that no evidence contradictory to it could be considered valid.[62]

Despite the existence of the Gemara, wisdom and understanding of the tradition continued to diminish. Even

though the Gemara was written in vernacular Aramaic and relatively easy to understand, the people became steadily more estranged from the tradition of their ancestors. Significantly, Culi attributed much of the decline to the waning number of rabbis.[63] In response to this situation, God sent great new sages to instruct the people in the Law. Culi identified these sages as the geonim, who functioned in a variety of locales such as Israel, Spain and France as well as Babylonia. It is interesting to note that here Culi agreed with Maimonides.[64] He suggested that the geonim met twice per year to study together and confer on various legal matters. Culi maintained that this process went on until 1177 CE, the time of Maimonides (1135-1204), much later than the time usually denoted as the Geonic period. At these conclaves the sages compiled compendia of legal decisions and novellae (sifre dinim we-hidushim). But again, in time these legal aids became too difficult for the people and there soon arose the need for further explanation of the Law.[65] The light which illumined the legal gloom was Maimonides. Culi glorified Maimonides as the familial and spiritual descendant of Judah the Prince. Like his ancestor, Maimonides codified all the available legal material to make it readily accessible to the people. His Yad ha-Hazakah contained all the mandatory laws that a Jew needed to observe to protect him from the pitfalls of transgression. In this endeavor, Maimonides was followed by Joseph Karo who also collected all laws and commandments and codified them in his Shulhan ᶜAruk.[66]

Through his legal history Culi emphasized the fact that there were rabbis (hakamim) in every age to guide the people, to teach them how to observe the commandments, and to keep the traditions of the Torah from being forgotten. Thus, even though the people themselves did not understand the Torah they could rely upon the rabbis to help them.[67] Culi argued that in the past the people had some contact with the Torah through Rashi, the Midrash and the Shulhan ᶜAruk, yet in his own time even these sources had become all but lost to them. Culi underscored the need for support of the rabbinic authorities in his own time by maintaining that the rabbinic institution was consistent with the history of the Jewish tradition. The rabbis, he claimed, fulfilled the same role as their illustrious predecessors: Moses, Judah the Prince, the geonim and Maimonides. Because the people were no longer fluent in the Law, the rabbis assumed even greater importance and deserved the peoples' highest respect. But, as Culi lamented, this was certainly not the case in his own time. He complained that his fellow Jews only respected appearances. They only respected the rich and powerful. However, Culi adjured his readers, the rabbis and "ones of good soul" should be the objects of honor. He illustrated this point by likening the rabbis and "ones of good soul" to the Bible. The "body" of the Bible consists of laws (dinim) and ordinances (mishpatim), the stories which contain them serve only as the "dressing" for the "body". Just so, the rabbis and cognoscenti (baᶜale daᶜat) are the

body of the Jewish community. They are the ones who study the Law and become experts in its observance. The rabbis deserve the people's support because they explore the secrets of the Torah and make them known, to the benefit of the people. Through the agency of the rabbis the people come to an understanding of the Law so that they can observe it in the proper manner and thereby live their lives in the fulfillment of God's will.

Chapter V

The Program of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez: Individual Goals

In times of social unrest the life of the individual is always subject to instability. As we have already observed, the Ottoman Empire and its Jewish community underwent a period of decline in which social conditions and the religious life of the people suffered dramatic change. Many of the problems faced by the Jewish community are dealt with in the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez. Culi sought to secure the Jewish community and mold it into a stabilized force based upon the doctrines of traditional Judaism. He addressed himself to the psychological and spiritual needs of the society and individual Jew in order to realize his goal.

The composite picture of the Jewish community arising from the pages of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez reflects a society of individuals adrift in a changing world. This picture is suggested in part by Culi's repeated emphasis on the commandment of providing for the wayfarer (haknasat orhim). Because Culi placed so much stress on the observance of this commandment one may conclude that a great number of Jews lived as rootless wayfarers dependent upon the hospitality of their coreligionists. Culi went into some detail in describing the patriarch Abraham as the host par excellence, scrupulously observing this commandment. In the commentary to Gen. 18:2, Culi noted that Abraham went to great lengths to accept all

guests who came his way. He sent his servant Eliezer out to seek wayfarers, and if the servant returned alone Abraham himself went out to the road to look for passers-by.[1] Culi's explication of the next chapter argues to the same point. Culi maintained that Lot escaped the fate of the other Sodomites because he observed the commandment of hospitality. As a reward for his observance God allowed him to flee to Zoar and thus spared his life.[2] The abuse of travelers was a cardinal transgression of the Sodomites and a major cause of their destruction. Not only did they condemn Lot for observing the commandments, they even attempted to prevent him from doing so.[3] Providing for the homeless traveler was so important, Culi argued, that if one failed to observe the commandment he could be forced to do so. The courts could legally compel the fulfillment of this obligation under the same conditions governing the giving of charity. Helping the wayfarer was not a voluntary act or simple "good deed," it was an obligation. Each Jew had to provide for the traveler to the extent that he was able.[4] When the individual could not afford to observe this commandment the responsibility devolved upon the local community. Culi noted that Jews often banded together to provide communal facilities to service the needs of guests. However, observance of the commandment must not have been consistent. Culi reacted against such negligence, warning the people of the possible social repercussions of their laxity. He warned that if the Jews did not establish the mechanisms necessary to pro-

vide for the transient elements of the society, the wayfarers would suffer to the point that they posed a threat to the rest of the society. Should the Jews push travelers from place to place without refuge, they would certainly vent their bitterness and disaffection against the settled elements. They would direct their frustration against their fellow Jews and disrupt the society. Culi alluded to the alienation which the uprooted must have felt. He pointed out that the unsettled would look upon their fellow Jews as foreigners and compare them to the Sodomites. The frustration and disaffection could even lead to violence, and Culi warned that if the uprooted saw that the settled elements neglected them they would be unable to restrain their anger and rise up against their fellows.[5]

The tenor of Culi's remarks denotes his concern for the preservation of social order. The social situation did not improve markedly, threatening the very integrity of the Jewish community. The waning of the Ottoman Empire's political influence coincided with a decline in its economy. As the Ottomans lost control of much of the Empire, their international markets dried up. The rise of the Venetian and European economic powers only aggravated the situation. Culi's awareness of the problems associated with the economic breakdown is reflected in his stress on the importance of having a trade. In the comment to the portion Lek Leka,[6] Culi argued that the essence of life lay in the acquisition of a trade. Interestingly, he maintained that even the high-

born and wealthy should learn a skill, because of the uncertainty of the world situation. The precarious economic conditions made it necessary for all to prepare for reversals. Those who were rich one day might well be poor the next. Without a trade one stood the risk of starving.[7] In the same comment Culi cited Psalm 126:6:

> Though he goeth on his way
> weeping that beareth the
> measure of seed,
> He shall come home with joy
> bearing his sheaves.

Culi explained the verse in light of the present argument. No one should be too proud to learn a trade, those too proud to work are certain to starve. Culi observed that the first part of the verse applied to the highborn, those too proud to have a trade. Their end was starvation for want of a livelihood when times are bad. The latter half of the verse alluded to those willing to go out and work, even at menial tasks. They were rewarded for their labors and were valued by God.[8] Judging by Culi's comments and the thrust of his polemic at this point, we may infer that the economic conditions were far from stable. Even the wealthy were not secure and had to prepare for sharp reversals. The loss of economic security, reflected in the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez, suggests that the Ottoman Jews in the eighteenth century were in the midst of a period of economic depression or recession. Such being the case, it is likely that the situation hit the common folk quite severly. Most of the people engaged in small

trades and existed on a small financial margin; in any economic downtrend they would be hit the hardest. Under such circumstances we may postulate that many lost their meager sources of income, forcing them to look for further economic opportunities. The strain would be most acute in villages unable to support a large idle population. As a result, many people would be obliged to travel about in search of a livelihood. This view is consistent with Culi's adjuration of the people to provide for the uprooted elements of the population and to protect their own livelihoods. In this way, Culi sought to minimize the adverse effects of the economic slump and secure the integrity of the community.

The factors contributing to the sense of insecurity mentioned above also brought strain upon family unity. The Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez contains a forceful argument encouraging the establishment of strong families. Culi stressed that a good marriage keeps one from sin. In his commentary to Gen. 37:12 Culi noted that Joseph's brothers went off to find themselves wives. According to Culi, Joseph complained to Jacob that his brothers coveted foreign women. Consequently, they decided to seek wives to still Joseph's voice and to show that they were more pious than he, for he remained single.[9] The underlying purpose for marriage was fulfillment of the requirements of God's injunction to Adam to be fruitful and multiply. In this vein, Culi went into a long and detailed discussion on the laws of marriage and marital purity and the need to insure "good seed."[10] The

thrust of the argument pointed to the need to create a strong, secure family unit founded upon the principles of traditional Judaism. He focused upon the need to sire many children to insure many dedicated Jews to observe the commandments and thereby help their parents reach the next world.[11] Implicit in this argument lies the need for continued dedication to the commandment system and the tradition. This is the primary reason for raising a family and the rewards are great: one will enjoy the benefits of the world to come. Culi realized that the hard times and precarious situation facing the Jews were a deterent to the establishment of strong families. He responded to this problem, stating that one should not refrain from establishing a family and having children for fear of what might happen to them in an uncertain world. He illustrated this point in his commentary on Gen. 4:23. According to Culi's explanation, the wives of Lamech refused to bear children because of a prophesy that the seed of Cain was destined to disappear. They feared that their children would perish. To solve the problem, Lamech appealed to Adam, who told the women that they must bear children. Adam reasoned that God would do as He chose, but that it was incumbent upon all people to have children.[12] We can apply this analogy to Culi's own time when the Jews feared that their situation was desperate and may have refrained from having children because of their concern for the future.

To reinforce the weakened family structure Culi urged upon his readers guidelines to marriage derived from the well-

springs of the Jewish tradition. Having established that it was everyone's responsibility to get married, Culi went on to explain that the best age for a man to get married was eighteen. Moreover, he observed, in rabbinic times if a man did not marry by age twenty the sages forced him to choose a bride. However, as Culi complained, in his own time such rebels would not even listen to the rabbis. But, all "good" Jews still tried to marry at the proper age.[13] It was also considered important that one marry a suitable partner, lest one's progeny be spoiled for three generations.[14] Culi advised that one marry a woman of slightly lower social status so as to insure that she would honor her husband and not look down upon him.[15] Nor should one marry an uneducated dolt (ʿam ha-arez). It was most desirable to marry the daughter of a learned Jew (talmid ḥakam), to make sure that one's children will be good Jews and follow the tradition.[16] To insure domestic well-being, it is incumbent on the husband to respect his wife. Culi noted that Abraham honored Sarah and received many blessings because of her. He commented on Gen. 12:16 that Abraham derived much benefit from Sarah during their sojourn in Egypt. Culi suggested that this alludes to the good that comes from a proper Jewish household. It is a sin for a man to abuse his wife and should he do so he is to be chastised and made to desist as this is an affront to Jewish sensibilities.[17]

Culi realized that a strong family unit was a vital factor in the maintainance of a stable society. It served as

an incentive to limit excessive movement, alleviating some of the strain on the community. Culi's concern about the relation between the uncertain economic conditions and the stability of family life is reflected in his comment on Gen. 13:13. In discussing why Abraham should have remained with Lot, Culi argued that it is necessary for one to remain with one's family, even if they are poor and circumstances dictate that one leave. It was of the utmost importance that families remain intact. To underscore this point, Culi pointed out that God became angry when Abraham separated from his nephew because he broke up their family.[18]

The reestablishment of a stabilized society depended upon more than structures like the family unit. It was also necessary for Culi to deal with the ideological underpinnings of the society. We have already discussed the nature of the theological approach of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez. We now turn to the mechanisms which Culi advocated to actualize the abstracts of the theology and integrate them into the life of the individual Jew. The means by which the Jew lived the theology consisted of studying the tradition and observing the commandment system and the halakah as interpreted by the rabbinic authorities of the community. Culi hoped to reintroduce the individual to the tradition to overcome feelings of estrangement and ensure loyalty to the traditional authorities. Only when the people felt an intimacy with the tradition could it be secure against the challenges of heterodox ideologies. The Sabbatean movement

had been most successful among Jews cut off from the tradition. Thus Culi sought to reverse the trend toward alienation which he saw as the major threat to the integrity of the Jewish community. In the commentary to Gen. 1:2, Culi echoed the traditional view that Torah gives form to the world. Study of Torah preserves world order, neglect of Torah brings on the calamitous return of primordial chaos.[19] Everyone is required to study; whoever does not is responsible for the destruction of the world and must answer for his transgression on the Day of Judgment.[20] Culi spoke to the people in the emotional terms which they understood. Their study of Torah was important. If they failed to do so they would be punished. Study is so vital, Culi expounded, that it must be an integral part of the day's activities. One shouldn't go to bed without studying Torah, for to do so would be a sin and the punishment great. Even the humblest Jew should make sure to study his lesson before reciting the Shema[c] of bedtime.[21] Culi cajoled the simple Jew, telling him that study of Torah sets him above the rest of the world. He explained that study gives the Jew a soul (neshamah) and makes him holy. But, if one neglects study, the soul is lost and one becomes no more than an animal.[22] So high is the value of studying Torah that it surpasses riches. Culi illusrrated this point in a parable about Rabbi Yose ben Pazzi. Ben Pazzi came to Rabbi Yohanan and asked to study Torah with the sage. However, he had one condition: the study of Torah had to make him wealthy.

Even under this strange condition Yohanan admitted the young scholar to his academy. The other students began to call ben Pazzi "the Rich One" because of his strange desire, in spite of the fact that he remained a poor student. He complained to his master, but still continued his studies until he too became a sage. At that time a wealthy man came to Rabbi Yohanan protesting that his wealth meant nothing when compared to the value of Torah study. He told the master that he wanted to give his wealth to a sage as a token of his respect for learning. The wealthy man gave his fortune to ben Pazzi on the advice of Rabbi Yohanan. Thus the sage's promise was fulfilled. Yose became a rich man, living up to his name, Pazzi, which means "pure gold." Ben Pazzi, now wealthy, returned to his studies. However, the more he continued to study the more he saw that his desire for wealth was folly. He came to the conclusion that reward in this world was meaningless, only the rewards of the next world really deserved one's attention. Study of Torah for its own sake is far more valuable than the pursuit of wealth. Wealth can only be of benefit in this world, whereas Torah brings us the riches of the world to come.[23] The brilliance of Culi's argument becomes obvious when we recall to whom he addressed his polemic. Culi spoke to the poor common Jew who had no hope of bettering his meager lot, let alone aspire to riches. Culi promised these humbled individuals the hope of a better future in the next world if they hearkened to the tradition and studied Torah. Even the low-

liest Jew could take pride in the fact that allegiance to the Torah gave him value and set him above the rest of the world, even above those who oppressed him. Culi accurately saw that to persuade the common folk to be loyal to the tradition he had to give them a sense of purpose. Further, he realized that the first step to observance of the halakah lay in acceptance of the commandment system as the legitimate expression of Torah. Culi knew that he spoke to simple people unable to understand the subleties of the Torah. He fully expected the common folk to be confused in their study. Yet he realized that their recognition of the centrality of Torah to their lives would lead to a de facto acceptance of rabbinic authority and the commandment system. After all, the rabbis could fathom the depths of Torah and make it understandable to the common folk. It was the sages who represented the commandment system and the halakah to the people. Culi explained that by studying the Torah and reading the wonders of Creation, the people would realize that they could not hope to understand the mysteries of the Torah. The only thing that they could rightly expect from their studies was an understanding of their obligations (hovot).[24] Thus, Culi concluded, everyone must study, for without study one will never know what is expected of one. Without knowing how to observe the commandments one will inevitably fall into sin. Not everyone could study everything that people need to know of Torah and halakah; either they have no time or they are not wise enough. Yet study of Torah enables one

to know enough to discern how and what to ask the rabbi. One could always go to the rabbi to ask for clarification of the Law and seek advice on the particulars of observance of the commandments.[25]

Culi reasoned that since intensive study of Torah was not accessible to all, the community should support the few able and willing to spend their time in contemplation of the Law. In other words, Culi called for maintainance of a cadre of legal specialists, the rabbis. He offered as an example the model of Zebulun and Issachar. Culi noted that in Jacob's blessing (Gen. 49:13-15) Zebulun is mentioned before his older brother Issachar. We would expect the older brother to deserve the honor of mention before Zebulun. Culi explained this curiosity by pointing out that Zebulun merited honor because he supported Issachar while the elder brother studied. Although he had to make a living and therefore had no time to study, he deserved great distinction because he made it possible for his brother to devote time to the Torah.[26] Culi's message is obvious, the people would accrue much honor and benefit to themselves if they supported the rabbinic authorities.

To secure popular support for the rabbinic authorities and the tradition, Culi saw that he had to restore the peoples' confidence in the commandment system. Because of the harsh conditions and the suffering brought on by the decline of the Ottoman Empire (but attributed to the exile), the common folk began to doubt the efficacy of the tradition-

al commandment system. According to classical rabbinic theology, performance of the commandments was rewarded by prosperity and security, neglect punished by poverty and suffering. However, the Jews saw their own lives filled with insecurity and physical hardship in spite of their scrupulous obersvance of the halakah. Explaining their suffering simply in terms of the realities of the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire could not restore the people's faith in the old system. The common folk needed new incentives to observe the commandments that would take into account their situation and give meaning to the commandments in light of their condition. Culi addressed himself to this problem in the polemic of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez. He argued that this world was designed for one purpose, to serve man and aid him in observing the commandments.[27] That is, the benefits of this world enable man to observe the commandments preparing him for the world to come. The observance of the commandments in this world serve as "provisions," ensuring one's enjoyment of the world to come. According to this formula, the greater the observance of the commandments in this life, the greater the reward in the next. Culi added, it is only in this life that one gathers the necessary "provisions"; there are no commandments to benefit us in the next world.[28] Lest his readers think that observance of the commandments were an excessive burden, Culi explained that performaning the commandments is quite natural for man, in fact he was created for just that purpose. He noted that God created man on the

sixth day just before sundown so that his first act would be the observance of the Sabbath, the most important commandment of all.[29] In the commentary on Gen. 2:15, Culi pointed out that the verse called for Adam to work and protect the Garden of Eden. But, the garden, by its nature, did not require any care. Culi suggested that the words "work for" (le-ᶜobdah) and "care for" (u'le-shomrah) allude to worship of God (ᶜabodah) and observance of the commandments.[30] Moreover, one should not expect reward for observing the commandments simply as a matter of course. It might be said that the Garden of Eden itself was the reward, bestowed upon man before he began to observe the commandments. There is no quid pro quo involved here.[31] However, one does derive benefit from observing the commandments. Attention to the commandments makes the body holy. Culi demonstrated that this concept arose from the symbolism of the six-hundred and thirteen commandments. The number corresponds to the two-hundred and forty eight sinews and three-hundred and sixty-five organs. Each commandment contributes to making the body holy and their observance makes one dear to God and gives life importance.[32] This is the essence of Culi's polemic: what his readers did in their lives had significance. One's very nature demands the observance of the commandments. This is the goal of free will. Culi interpreted Gen. 3:22 in light of this view. Man is like one of the elohim, whether one chooses to translate this word as gods or holy beings: he knows the difference between good and evil. This

implies that man has the choice to be good (zaddik) or evil (rasha^{c}).[33] Culi compared man to two kinds of animals. Celestial animals (cherubim, seraphim and the hayot ha-kodesh) look toward heaven, earthly animals look to the earth. Man looks both ways and therefore can choose to be good ("heavenly") or evil ("earthly").[34] This underscores the doctrine that man is not predestined. Culi noted that the phrase "And it was good," in Gen. 1:31 does not apply to man. Because man has free will it was not sure that he would be good.[35] According to Culi, free will is of the utmost importance. If man did not have free will, being good would be instinctual and then man could not earn the rewards of the next world.[36] In the commentary to Gen. 28:10 we learn that the commandments must be observed by free will if they are to have any value. Culi explained to his readers that Jacob, by choice, neglected certain commandments. For example, he passed Mount Moriah and did not stop to pray there as had his predecessors, Abraham and Isaac. The Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez explains that Jacob received no direction to pray from heaven. He had to do so on his own volition, or else he would lose all benefit. Heaven does not help one begin the performance of a commandment. It comes to man's aid only after he has begun.[37]

Some might argue that man is prevented from observing the commandments by his evil inclination (yezer ha-ra^{c}), which is also a part of his nature. To this Culi responded that even the evil inclination serves God's purpose. The

evil inclination tests one's loyalty to the commandments and ultimately, to God.[38] Culi illustrated this point with a parable. A king has a son whom he loved very much. He gave his son a command that he avoid strange women at all costs, or suffer banishment from the king's palace. The son readily agreed to his father's wishes. Then the king decided to test his son's loyalty and sent a temptress to seduce him. True to his vow, the prince withstood the test. The king's love for his son grew even greater as the result of the prince's fidelity, and he rewarded his son with many precious gifts.[39] The evil inclination like the temptress, acts at the bidding of God, the king. Man's responsibility is to withstand the lure of the evil inclination. As Culi argued, one should not sin at any cost, even on the pain of death. He offered the example of Abraham who was even willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac, rather than transgress God's command.[40] Observance of the commandments is not meant to be easy, if so, the reward would not be so great.

Culi also counseled his reader as to how the commandments should be performed. He noted that observance brings rewards only when done with proper intention, free of ulterior motive. Reward is not a valid motive for performing one of the commandments. Indeed, should one follow a commandment in the hopes of receiving a reward in this world, one risks punishment in the world to come. Observance of the commandments should be for the sake of heaven alone.[41] Here, Culi spoke directly to the condition of the Jews in

the Ottoman Empire of the eighteenth century. Their lot was such that they naturally hoped for reward, that is, relief in this world. Culi told them that they should not expect to improve their lot by observing the commandments. But at the same time, this was the sole hope for the Jews. In other words, the Jews should observe the commandments but not expect the kind of rewards that were beyond their due. This tension between the need for reward and the realities of their lives is the key to Culi's approach to the commandment system. He saw that the people needed more than vague and tenuous promises of reward to observe the commandments. Culi exhorted his readers to be diligent in their performance, that in fact they should actively seek commandments to fulfill. In his commentary to Gen. 20:1, he explained that Abraham left Hebron after the destruction of Sodom because there were no longer wayfarers whom he could entertain. Rather than neglect this commandment he went off to find a place to resume the practice.[42] One should not be passive with regard to observance. It is not enough to perform those commandments which are convenient, for one who does so is considered wicked.[43] Moreover, because each commandment is important, one must see the deed through to completion. Again, Culi drew upon the example of Abraham. In Gen. 12:1 God commanded Abraham to leave his home and go to the land of Canaan. Culi noted that Abraham's father, Terah, was also given the same charge but did not complete it, having stopped in Haran. Abraham went on to complete the command-

ment.[44]

Culi realized that he had to offer more than the promise of reward to secure popular support of the commandment system. He argued instead that the commandments had intrinsic value: one could accrue self-worth through their observance. The hope of reward persisted, albeit relegated to the next world. The real value of the commandments lay in the knowledge that one did God's will and that thereby God cares about the individual, regardless of social status or condition of life. Even in their suffering the lives of the Jews could have meaning in God's scheme of things. In this light, performance of the Commandments was its own reward. Culi cited a parable about Rabbi Hiyya' to illustrate this view. The sage posed a problem. An observant Jew died. In spite of his exemplary life he remained childless and had no one to say the Kaddish prayer for his soul. Rabbi Hiyya' asked what would happen to such a Jew in the next life, would he reach Paradise without a Kaddish? To this he answered that through good works and scrupulous observance of the commandments the Jew would indeed warrant the blessings of the next world. As the sage maintained, good deeds and performance of the commandments are the truest children.[45] Thus, Culi told his fellow Jews, satisfaction comes with the observance itself, for in so doing, the Jew helps to keep the world together.[46] No exile, no suffering, could diminish the importance of the Jew who observed the commandment system.

Culi saw that only through the individual Jew could he reassert rabbinic authority in the aftermath of the Sabbatean debacle. Consistently, the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez coaxed the common Jew to return to the tradition and support the traditional authority structures of the community. Culi's success is evidenced in the overwhelming response of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire to the message of the Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez. For generations Jews in Ladino speaking countries gathered in their tertulias (circles) to study the tradition it presented. Culi's inspired mission as the emissary of the tradition to the people was a success.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Jacob Culi."
2. Samuel Yerushalmi. "Introduction to the Hebrew Translation of the Me'am Lo'ez, by Jacob Culi, p. 5.
3. Solomon Rosanes. Korot ha-Yehudim be-Turkiya w'Arzot ha-Kedem. vol iv p. 13.
4. Yerushalmi, Introduction, p. 5.
5. Ibid. pp 5-6.
6. Ibid. p. 8.
7. Rosanes, Korot, vol iv p. 13. Yet this does not agree with the date Rosanes gives for Culi's death, as this would suggest a date of 1687, assuming that ibn Habib died in 1696.
8. Ibid. vol iv p. 200.
9. Ibid. vol iv p. 206-7.
10. Ibid. vol iv p. 206. Judah Rosanes was one of the signatories to the excommunication of Nehemia Hiyya Hayyon a famous Sabbatean. Also, of Encyclopeida Jûdaica: 14:262-3.
11. Encyclopedia Judiaca s.v. "Culi," 4:1154.
12. Ibid. 4:1154
13. Ibid. 4:1154
14. Ibid. 4:1154
15. Ibid. 4:1155
16. Jacob Culi, Me'am Lo'ez, p. 14.
17. Ibid. p. 14.
18. Ibid. p. 15.
19. Ibid. p. 4.
20. Ibid. pp. 4:28.
21. Ibid. p. 17.
22. Cf. 1730 Constantinople edition published during the author's lifetime.
23. Culi, Me'am p. 19.

24. Ibid. p. 9f.

25. Ibid. p. 17.

26. Ibid. p. 23.

27. Ibid. p. 19-20.

28. Ibid. p. 23.

29. Menachem ben Benjamin Recanti, Const. 1543-4. A highly mystical work.

30. Venice, 1593. Originally written in Spain, probably in the thirteenth century.

31. Eliezer ben Nissim ibn Shangi, Const. 1726. A biblical commentary and responsa.

32. Gadaliah ibn Yahya, Venice 1587.

33. A midrashic haggadah also known as Toldot Adam and Dibre ha-Yamim be-ᶜAruk, Naples 1552. Const. 1728.

34. Culi, Meᶜam, p. 525.

35. Ibid. p. 789.

36. This may refer to a popular Sephardic proverb: "Aboltar cazal, aboltar mazal." cf. Lazar, Moshe, The Sephardic Tradition, N.Y., 1972, p. 144. The Hebrew equivalent is found in the Talmud, R.H. 17b.

37. Culi, Meᶜamp. 333.

38. Ibid. p. 354.

39. Ibid. p. 489.

40. Ibid. p. 409. Here, Culi examines the symbolism of the name Yizhak on the basis of the numerical value of the component letters.

41. Ibid. p. 694. Gen. 37:24, "The pit was empty, there was no water in it." The last half of the verse appears redundant. Culi, citing Rashi, suggests that it implies that, although empty of water, the pit was full of snakes and scorpions.

42. Ibid. p. 727. Gen. 41:1, "wa-Yehi mikez shanataim yamim, u-faraᶜoh halam...". The waw in this verse (u-faraᶜoh)

seems to be superflous. Culi, following Genesis Rabbah, maintains that this device is used to suggest that Joseph, as well as Pharaoh dreamed.

43. Ibid. p. 671. Gen. 37:12 points to the significance of oddities in the Torah script. In this verse the word et appears crowned by three dots. Rashi and Genesis Rabbah note that this tells us that the brothers did not really intend to watch their father's sheep as one might suppose from reading the verse as it appears. Rather, their true intention was to plot against Joseph. Thus Culi interprets.

44. Ibid. p. 679. That is, the reason for using one word over another. Gen. 37:8 uses banu instead of ʿaleynu. According to Culi, banu implies that Joseph will rule over his brothers only with their consent, whereas the more logical ʿaleynu would refer to absolute rule.

45. Ibid. p. 298. Culi notes that the word wa-Yehi presages calamity unless the texts states explicitly otherwise.

46. Ibid. p. 255f.

47. Ibid. p. 662.

48. Ibid. p. 598.

49. Ibid. p. 321.

50. Ibid. p. 148.

51. Ibid. p. 555f.

52. Ibid. p. 325-28.

53. Ibid. p. 145f.

54. Ibid. p. 823-34.

55. Ibid. p. 429-30

56. Ibid. p.630-31. Jacob's sins were pride, letting Dinah go unchaperoned, cheating Laban, etc.

57. Ibid. p. 696. Culi points to three novellae: 1) God showed mercy to Tamar by making her son, Perez, the ancestor of the kingly Messiah: 2) the story shows that Jacob's sons had to find their own wives; and 3) that all is repaid in kind (here because Judah deceived Jacob vis á vis Joseph's alleged death. Tamar deceived Judah).

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire" by Yaacov Geller and Haim Z'ew Hirschberg.

2. A.J. Arberry, Religion in the Middle East, p. 186. In a paper presented to the Association for Jewish Studies, Benjamin Braude questioned the legitimacy of designating the Jewish community as a true millet, especially in regards to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. He suggests that the millet system at that time was a tenuous structure, supported by internal rather than external forces. Cf. AJS Newsletter (18) Sept. 1976

3. Encycllpedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

4. Moses Lattes, Likkutim de-Bei Eliyahu. p. 7.

5. Morris Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey in the Sixteenth Century, p. 118.

6. Cecil Roth, The House of Nasi: Dona Gracia, p. -8.

7. Joseph Hakar, Ha-Haverah ha-Yehudit be-Empirah ha-^{c}Ottoma'ni be-Me'ah ha-16-17. pp. 224-235. Cf. the letter of Isaac Zarfati to the Jews of the lands of Ashkenaz, urging them to escape the repression of Europe for Turkey. This letter was written in 1456; also cited in Graetz, History of the Jews, vol. IV, pp. 271-73.

8. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

9. Ibid. Lattes, Likkutim, p. 12-13.

10. The term Romaniot refers to those Jews who lived in the Empire prior to the immigration of the Sephardim from Spain and Portugal and the Ashkenazim from Europe.

11. H. Graetz, History, IV p. 364; Lattes, Likkutim, p. 13.

12. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

13. A.J. Arberry, Religion, P. 148, and for responsa of Hakar, Megurshe Serfarad we-Ze'aze'hem be Empirah ha'^{c}Ottomanit be-Me'ah ha-16, p. 223cf.

14. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

15. Originally they founded 10 synagogues. This number soon grew to 36. See Danon, Révue des Études Juives (REJ) 40 (1900) pp. 206-7.

16. Goodblatt, Jewish Life, p. 61.

17. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Abraham Galante, Documents Officiels Turcs Concernant Les Juifs de Turquie, p. 132f.

21. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

22. For a detailed account of the role played by Joseph Nasi and his aunt, Dona Gracia Mendes, cf. Roth, The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos, and Roth, Dona.

23. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. The island of Crete was a vital position in regards to the effective control of the Levant Sea which was a military and economic goal of both the Turks and the Venetians.

29. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

30. Palmer and Colton, A History of the Modern World, pp 189-9o.

31. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

32. Roth, Dona Gracia, p. 92.

33. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

34. Febvre, Michel, Theatre de la Turquie, 1689. Cited in REJ 20 (1890): and in Rosanes, Korot, vol III p. 347.

35. Danon, REJ 40 (1900). p. 213.

36. See above p. 12.

37. H.A.R. Gibb, Islamic Society and the West, pp. 211-12: Albert Lybyer, The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Sulaiman the Magnificent. p. 37.

38. Ibid. p. 227. Interestingly, it was the appointment of this secular official which contributed to the discontinuance of the post of chief rabbi of the Empire. See Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

39. Arberry, Religion, pp. 184-85.

40. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

41. Arberry, Religion, p. 187.

42. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"; see also Goodblatt, Jewish Life, pp. 91-92.

43. Danon, REJ 40 (1900) p. 230. Note the responsum calling for the ban of excommunication against those who took civil litigation to Moslem courts.

44. This reflects the traditional theology of the Jews and is represented in the classical commentaries on the Torah. For example, cf. the commentaries of Rashi and Nachmanides.

45. Galante, Documents, p. 124f.

46. ibid. p. 114.

47. Arberry, Religion pp. 150-51; Roth, Dona, pp. 103-4.

48. Arberry, Religion pp. 155-57; Galante, Documents, p. 112f.

49. The majority of Jews were not wealthy merchants and international traders but poorer "industrial" workers, suppliers of export goods, as well as small traders and peddlers. These people, working on small margins, would be most severly hit by an economic slump. See Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire"

50. Our purpose here is only to give an outline of the development of mystical trends. For a detailed analysis see G. Scholem, Sabbatai Zevi, Chapter I.

51. Gibb, Islamic, p. 241. This is most noticable in the rise of Sufi Mysticism.

52. Scholom, Sabbatai Zevi, p. 23.

53. Arberry, Religion, pp. 164-65; see also G. Scholom, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 244-86.

54. For a more detailed analysis see Scholem, Sabbatai, p. 44.

55. Ibid. p. 42.

56. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Shabbetai Zevi" by G. Scholem.

57. Scholem, Sabbatai, p. 320.

58. For a detailed analysis of Shabbetai Zvi and his life see G. Scholem, Sabbatai Zevi"

59. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Shabbatai Zevi"

60. G. Scholem, Sabbatai, p. 427-28.

61. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Shabbetai Zevi"; Arberry, Religion, p. 169.

62. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Shabbetai Zevi"

63. Arberry, Religion, p. 169.

64. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Shabbetai Zevi"

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 28.

2. Ibid. p. 36

3. Ibid. p. 560.

4. For example, Mars controls war and dissention, and Saturn controls killing, poverty and destruction. See Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 64.

5. Ibid. p. 65.

6. Ibid. p. 80.

7. Ibid. p. 88.

8. Ibid. p. 77.

9. Ibid. p. 150

10. Ibid. p. 151.

11. Ibid. p. 122.

12. Ibid. p. 121.

13. Ibid. p. 679.

14. Ibid. p. 698.

15. Ibid. p. 716.

16. This parallel was by no means original to Culi, but was a common theme in the traditional literature. G. Scholom quotes, from the Sefer ha-Peliah, an author living in Rhodes in 1495:

> I think that the troubles that befell the Jews in all the kingdoms of Edom from the year 1490 to the year 1495 are a succession of visitations for Jacob from which salvation will come to him; they are the birth pangs of the Messiah.

Cited in Arberry, Religion, p. 161; and Scholom, Sabbatai p. 18 n. 13.

17. Culi, Me^{C}am, p. 603.
18. Ibid. pp. 517;615.
19. Ibid. p. 656.
20. Ibid. p. 612.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid. p. 315.
23. Ibid. p. 545.
24. Ibid. p. 206.
25. Ibid. p. 219.
26. Ibid. p. 269.
27. Ibid. p. 230.
28. Ibid. p. 761.
29. Ibid. p. 520.
30. Ibid. p. 562.
31. Ibid. pp. 286-87; 562.
32. Ibid. p. 444.
33. Ibid. p. 619.
34. Ibid. p. 563.
35. Ibid. p. 551.
36. Ibid. p. 781.
37. Ibid. pp. 446;530.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 807. The comments of Rashi and Nachmanides on this verse seem to suggest that their arguments are directed against the Christians. Given Culi's context in an Islamic environment and the juxtaposition of the Sabbateans, it appears most likely that Culi's comment is directed against the followers of the messianic pretender, Shabbetai Zvi.
2. Ibid. p. 136.
3. Ibid. p. 314.
4. Ibid. p. 551.
5. Ibid. p. 535.
6. Ibid. p. 804.
7. Ibid. p. 316.
8. Ibid. p. 812.
9. Ibid. pp. 16-17.
10. Ibid. p. 335.
11. Ibid. p. 413.
12. Ibid. p. 265.
13. Ibid. p. 172.
14. Ibid. p. 92.
15. Ibid. p. 195.
16. Yerushalmi, Introduction to Me^{c}am p. 8; Culi, Me^{c}am p. 8.
17. Cf. Chapter I n. 10.
18. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 472. Cf. Danon, REJ 40 (1900) p. 217; REJ 41 (1901) p. 112; and Goodblatt, Jewish Life, pp. 87-88. All these examples represent responsa calling for excommunication to be imposed upon those who take civil disputes to the Moslem courts.
19. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 258.

20. Ibid. p. 72.
21. Ibid. p. 293.
22. Ibid. p. 709.
23. Ibid. p. 33.
24. Ibid. p. 286.
25. Ibid. p. 541.
26. Sanhedrin 37a.
27. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 309.
28. Ibid. p. 516.
29. Ibid. p. 48.
30. Ibid. p. 322.
31. Ibid. p. 816.
32. Ibid. p. 413.
33. Ibid. p. 561.
34. Ibid. p. 816.
35. Ibid. p. 786.
36. Ibid. p. 484.
37. Ibid. p. 635.
38. Ibid. p. 32.
39. Ibid. p. 729.
40. Ibid. p. 603
41. Ibid. p. 314.
42. Ibid. p. 622.
43. Ibid. pp. 524-25.
44. Ibid. p. 750.
45. Ibid. p. 553.
46. Isaac Magriso, Me^{c}am Lo^{c}ez: Abot, p. 21.
47. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 19.

48. Ibid. p. 10.

49. Ibid. pp. 268-69.

50. Ibid. p. 722.

51. Ibid. p. 13

52. Culi's source for this history was most likely the Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah by Gedaliah ibn Yahya. See Chapter I n. 32.

53. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 9.

54. Ibid. p. 263.

55. Ibid. p. 9.

56. Ibid. For examples see: Nedarim 25a; Menahoth 436.

57. Ibid. p. 10.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid. pp. 10-11.

61. Ibid. p. 10.

62. Ibid. p. 12.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid. Cf. Maimonides' legal history in the Introduction to the Yad ha-Hazakah.

65. Culi, Me^{c}am, p. 12.

66. Ibid. p. 13.

67. Ibid. pp. 13-14.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Culi, Me^{C}am, p. 349.
2. Ibid. p. 378.
3. Ibid. pp. 375-77.
4. Ibid. p. 419.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. pp. 266-70.
7. Ibid. pp. 267-68.
8. Ibid. p. 268.
9. Ibid. p. 671.
10. Ibid. pp. 92-110.
11. Ibid. p. 95.
12. Ibid. p. 191.
13. Ibid. p. 93.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. p. 502.
16. Ibid. pp. 483-84.
17. Ibid. p. 279.
18. Ibid. p. 286.
19. Ibid. p. 39.
20. Ibid. p. 36.
21. Ibid. p. 558.
22. Ibid. p. 109.
23. Ibid. p. 27.
24. Ibid. p. 42.
25. Ibid. p. 269.

26. Ibid. pp. 209-10.
27. Ibid. p. 88.
28. Ibid. p. 48.
29. Ibid. p. 90.
30. Ibid. pp. 162-63.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid. p. 179
34. Ibid. p. 91.
35. Ibid. p. 121.
36. Ibid. p. 179.
37. Ibid. p. 555.
38. Ibid. p. 120.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid. p. 427.
41. Ibid. p. 294.
42. Ibid. p. 399.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid. p. 266.
45. Ibid. p. 210.
46. Ibid. p. 121.

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