

A Critical Examination and Discussion
of the Hebrew Documents
bearing on the Khazars,

together with

A Sketch of the Life and Activities of
Chasdai ibn Shaprut

Thesis submitted by
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TO
MIRIAM

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Chasdai ibn Schaprut

Europe, in the tenth century, was plunged in darkness. Two great forces, the authority of the Church and the tyranny of feudalism, held the continent in their grasp. Like thick mists, these forces settled upon the soil and befogged the mind of man. The black night of horrible ignorance and terrifying intolerance had come. The Dark Ages had set in.

There was one country, however, where the general gloom did not prevail. Spain, under the Mohammedan Caliphs, was a gleaming beacon-light of cultural and intellectual activity. The Andalusian monarchs vied with the rulers of the eastern Caliphate in making their country a center of science and art. Motivated by the desire to have Cordova become a greater city than Bagdad, poets and scholars were generously patronized by the Omayyads. These princes and men of wealth set the example for all noblemen in providing sustenance for the darlings of the Muses. Cordova became the "Jewel of the World"¹ and "a successful poem was celebrated more than a victorious battle."² Especially brilliant was the reign of Abd-er-Rahman III (912-961). He was a powerful ruler, but he used his power intelligently. He was tolerant and benevolent, and he attracted talented men of various faiths to his court. Among these men, whose services were utilized by the wise Caliph, there was a gifted Jew, through whose endowments and high position the culture of the Spanish Jews was founded-- Abu Yussuf Chasdai ben Isaac ibn Shaprut.

Chasdai's Ancestry

Chasdai's family was very conspicuous in the Jewish community in Cordova. His ancestors had come from Jaen and

his father, Isaac ben Chasdai, called the Nasi, was the chief of the Jews, without doubt occupying a position similar to that of the Resh Galutha in the East.³ Being himself very opulent, he imitated his ruler, Abd-er-Rahman, by patronizing learned Jews. Among others, he caused a family by the name of Saruk to migrate from Tortosa to Cordova, because a young son of that family, Menachem ben Jacob, displayed great talent in the field of languages. Menachem became his secretary and personal poet, and his father and brothers enjoyed Isaac's munificence.⁴ It is this Isaac whose praise was sung by the poet, Al-Charizi, in the following words:

"Isaac it was, the prince who gave
Rich gifts to all who came to crave."⁵

As Luzzatto pointed out,⁶ Charizi did not make a mistake and write Isaac ben Chasdai instead of Chasdai ben Isaac, for in truth the father was far more liberal and benevolent than the son. Indeed, when Isaac died, lamentations, composed in his honor by Menachem, were recited by the Jewish population during the entire period of mourning.⁷

Chasdai's Character and Training

Isaac, the patron, was a "man not destitute of learning."⁸ He gave his son the opportunity to acquire a good secular as well as a distinctly Jewish education. Thus, Chasdai knew Hebrew and Arabic well, and he also knew Latin. He received a medical training and achieved a measure of fame as a physician. He inherited not only his father's wealth but also the latter's good heart, and his numerous philanthropies together with his diplomatic skill made his name a favorite theme with the poets. Even Menachem ben Saruk, whom Chasdai wronged, said of him: "Among men, Chasdai is like a rose among thorns."

He is lovely in every respect, perfect and flawless." ⁹ Chas-
dai's generosity may be attributed to his deep religious nature.
He never regarded his wealth or rank as something which he
himself had achieved, but merely as indications of God's bound-
less Providence. Thus, he wrote to the King of the Khazars
as follows: "The King (Abd-er-Rahman) showed favor to me and
graciously turned his heart to me, not by virtue of my own
righteousness but because of God's mercy and for the sake of
¹⁰
His covenant." In this same letter, Chasdai adds that he is
communicating with Joseph not for self-aggrandizement or per-
sonal glory, but to know the truth. Indeed, were it true that
there was a Jewish kingdom, then he would despise his glory,
forsake his position, abandon his family, and travel there--
and when he would see that kingdom, he would praise God." ¹¹

Chasdai's Career in the State

*How young he
was to be
in such
high office*
Chasdai was born in Cordova in the year 915. His train-
ing in literature, languages, and medicine made it possible
for him to win the favor of Abd-er-Rahman, whom he served in
the capacity of advisor and physician. "The Caliph, who stood
in diplomatic relations with the small Christian countries
of northern Spain, perceived Chasdai's value and usefulness
and appointed him as interpreter and diplomatist, (940)." ¹²
Chasdai proved himself indispensable to the interests of the
Caliph and the latter rewarded him with honors and promotions.
Just what his official title was, is not clear (Graetz insists
that he had no official title), though his duties were many
and varied. In writing of the extensive commerce of the Cali-
phate, Chasdai mentioned that he has complete control over mer-
cantile transactions that yield Abd-er-Rahman a yearly revenue
¹³
of 100,000 gold pieces. This income was derived from tolls

levied on ships coming into the ports as well as from the duties on imports. In discharging the duties of this post, Chasdai was actually filling the office of a minister of trade and finance, but Chasdai also testifies that it was his task to receive embassies and gifts of foreign rulers and to give them gifts in return.¹⁴ Thus, he actually carried the portfolio of the minister of foreign affairs, and it was through this office that he became famous. In the middle of the tenth century, the Byzantine empire found itself in dire straits. It was oppressed on all sides and it looked longingly for help to the powerful Caliphate in Andalusia.¹⁵ The Emperor Constantine VIII, endeavoring to ingratiate himself with the monarch in Cordova, sent an embassy in 949 with very costly gifts, among which was a copy of a Greek medical work by Dioscorides, which the Caliph and his medical college were very eager to obtain.¹⁶ The work proved worthless to the Arabic physicians and naturalists because it was written in Greek, a language with which they were unacquainted. To make the book accessible to them, the Emperor sent a monk, Nicolaus, who translated it from the original into Latin. Since Chasdai understood Latin, he was requested by the Caliph to retranslate the work into Arabic, which made it available to the Arabs.¹⁷ It is supposed that Chasdai was the author of works on medicine, which supposition was based on an Arabic account of this circumstance and rests on a misconception.¹⁸ Likewise, the statement that Chasdai discovered a universal panacea, called "Al-Farak,"¹⁹ is open to question. All we can say with certainty, about Chasdai's achievements in the field of medicine, is that he is mentioned in the work of Wenrich, p.217, as the first of the savants engaged in rendering from Greek into Arabic the names of medicinals enumerated

in the work of Dioscorides.

Another situation in which Chasdai proved his value to the great Omayyad prince, Abd-er-Rahman, developed in the Christian kingdom of Leon. The king, Ramiro, had died in 951, and a war of succession broke out between the two half-brothers, Ordone III and Sancho the Fat. While the Christians were battling with each other, the Mohammedans wrought heavy destruction in their lands and in 955, Ordone III had to sue for peace. Abd-er-Rahman himself was eager to have the hostilities end, and in 956 he sent two ambassadors to Leon, Mohammed ibn Husain, and "the learned Jew, Chasdai ibn Shaprut, Inspector-General of the Customs." They negotiated for peace and a treaty, wholly ²¹ advantageous to the Caliph, was ratified.

Ordone III died in 957 and Sancho the Fat succeeded him. The latter, however, was deposed and he went to Pamplona, where his uncle Garcia lived. While the election of a successor was taking place (Ordone IV, son of Alfonso IV, was elected), Sancho told his ambitious grandmother, Theuda, of his misfortune. The aged lady, who still dominated the politics of Navarre, vowed to restore the crown to her grandson. Two things were necessary: 1) a strong political ally, and 2) the removal of Sancho's "unfortunate obesity." Theuda turned to Cordova, where she knew she could find a mighty army and a capable physician. In asking for the Caliph's assistance, Theuda was swallowing her pride. It was no easy task for the haughty Christian queen to ask for aid of the despised infidels. But Theuda loved her grandson. She sent an embassy to Cordova and Abd-er-Rahman listened gladly to their cause. He dispatched Chasdai to Navarre, and we shall let Dozy continue with the story. "The Khalif could not have made a better choice. Chasdai united in his

own person all the qualities necessary for such a mission: he spoke the language of the Christians fluently, and he was at once a physician and a statesman. Praises of his judgment, his talents, his erudition, and his vast ability were in all men's mouths. Upon his arrival at Pamplona, the Jew soon gained Sancho's confidence by personally undertaking his treatment and promising him a speedy cure. Chasdai had also been instructed to extort Theuda's consent to visit Cordova, accompanied by her son and grandson. To make a journey to Cordova would be, indeed, a greater humiliation for the Queen than that to which she had already subjected herself in entering into friendly relations with her inveterate foe. This was accordingly the most delicate and thorny part of Chasdai's mission: even to make such a proposal, still more to induce Theuda to agree to it, required extraordinary tact and ability. But the Jew justified his reputation of being the adroitest of men. The haughty Queen of Navarre was subjugated 'by the charm of his words, the ripeness of his wisdom, the power of his cunning and his manifold wiles'--to use the words of a contemporary Jewish poet--and she consented to undertake the proposed journey.²² Theuda, Garcia, and Sancho came to Cordova, and Sancho, cured by Chasdai of his corpulence, renewed his promise and ceded ten fortresses to the Caliph.

Not long before this, Chasdai had won an enviable reputation for himself through his dealings with the German embassy. Abd-er-Rahman had sent a messenger to the Emperor Otto I, with a letter in which the Caliph had made disparaging references to Christianity. The emperor, therefore, kept the ambassador waiting for several years before granting an audience. Then Otto sent an embassy, headed by the Abbot John of Gorze,

and a letter containing uncomplimentary remarks about Islam. The Caliph, suspecting the nature of the letter, did not wish to grant the Abbot an immediate audience. He, therefore, asked Chasdai to find out the contents of the letter. Although the Abbot was very clever, Chasdai was even shrewder and he succeeded in his mission. The ambassador, himself, testified that he had never met a keener²³ or more subtle master of diplomacy than Chasdai. Abd-er-Rahman made the German envoy wait a whole year and would have kept him waiting longer if Chasdai had not persuaded Gorze to get an unobjectionable document from Otto (956-²⁴959).

When Abd-er-Rahman died, in 961, he was succeeded by his son, Hakim II (961-976). The son was an even more zealous patron of science and poetry than his father. He too discerned Chasdai's talents and employed him as an important state official and advisor.²⁵ Chasdai retained this position until his death, in 990, thus also serving under Hisham II (976-1009).

Chasdai's Relations to the Jews

Chasdai's personal fortune and his high position in the service of the state enabled him to be of tremendous worth to his co-religionists. His intimacy with the Caliph engraved in the ruler's mind a very favorable impression of Jewish character and personality. Yet, there were times when the Jews were in need of a champion. Chasdai proved to be such a bulwark of comfort and deliverance. As Menachem wrote, whenever Chasdai left Cordova the Jews would become like slaves, oppressed by word and deed of the Mohammedans, but

*Menachem's disciples
Lownitz misunderstood authorship. Cf. Stern
22 v 2000 paper, p. 4, l. 3.*

when he returned their lot became bright again and Chasdai²⁶ would be to them as a stream of cool water in a desert.

Indeed, "Chasdai was, to some extent, the legal and political²⁷ head of the Jewish community of Cordova," a fact to which both Menachem and Dunash testify. In their poems Chasdai is addressed as the ²⁸ **כאש כלה**, a title which Graetz contends was given to him by the Babylonian school in honor of his²⁹ many contributions.

Chasdai was liberal with his wealth. He was deeply interested in Hebrew scholarship and he became the patron of scholars and poets. He gave generously of his fortune for the support of Jewish learning everywhere. At home, Chasdai surrounded himself with poets and scholars and they made him immortal in their poems and works. Chasdai's life was a fertile subject for poetic inventions. His position, his diplomatic achievements and his constant munificence inspired the poets to artistic endeavors. They wrote extravagant encomiums and panegyrics of their idol, and through their praises they made the Hebrew language more supple and elastic and susceptible of development. What Chasdai did at home, he likewise did abroad. He wrote to Dunash ben Tamim, physician to the third Fatimide Caliph, and asked him to write a work³⁰ on the Jewish calendar. He also corresponded with Saadya's son, Dosa, and asked him for a biography of his distinguished³¹ father.

Chasdai was particularly instrumental in establishing a great Talmudic school in Cordova. There was a school there, though not an outstanding one, and the dayyan was Rabbi Nathan. It was to this school that the recently redeemed

captive, Rabbi Moses ben Chanoch, came as a ragged observer. While listening to Rabbi Nathan interpret a difficult passage in Yoma, Moses was able to display his tremendous scholarship. He explained the difficulty which was puzzling Nathan, and the latter relinquished his office of his own free will, and Moses became the ³³dayyan. Chasdai became the patron of the Jewish scholar. Undoubtedly, he had donated liberally to the fund for the redemption of Jewish captives. Further, when the admiral learned of Moses' scholarship and had demanded a larger ransom fee, it was Chasdai who voiced the appeal of the Jews to Abd-er-Rahman, and the Caliph, realizing that Moses' presence in Cordova would remove the dependence of his Jewish subjects upon the schools in the East, prevented the admiral's action. Under Chasdai's patronage and Moses' instruction the school in Cordova became the center of Jewish learning. Chasdai gave orders for copies of the Talmud to be brought at his expense in Sura and these were distributed among the Andalusian scholars. The school grew rapidly. Many pupils were attracted to it and national learning among the Jews was readily diffused. ³⁴

When Moses died, his son, Chanoch ben Moses, wanted to succeed him. Chasdai exerted his all-powerful influence in favor of Chanoch and the latter became the Rabbi of Cordova. ³⁵ After Chasdai's death, however, there was great dissension in the Jewish community. A quarrel took place between the Jewish leaders. This quarrel does not interest us here. What is interesting, for us, is that "during Chasdai's life-time there was no man who could dispute Chanoch's claims." ³⁶ We need no more positive indication of Chasdai's influence, nor any greater proof of his power. He was, unquestionably, the temporal head

of ~~the~~ Jewish group. He was the Nasi par excellence; his word was regarded as ex cathedra.³⁷

The Stain upon Chasdai's Life

Among the talented Jews whom Chasdai patronized, there was the famous Menachem ben Saruk. As already stated, Menachem had come from Tortosa to Cordova to serve as the personal poet of Chasdai's father, Isaac. After the latter's death, Menachem had returned to his home. When Chasdai attained his high position and encouraged literary and poetic activity by bestowing lavish gifts to those who sought his patronage, he also invited the favorite of his father to come to Cordova.³⁸ Menachem accepted the invitation and became Chasdai's court poet and secretary.³⁹ He became warmly attached to his patron and extolled his virtues in many verses. Displaying marked ability in philology, Menachem was encouraged by Chasdai to pursue the study of the Hebrew language and he composed the Machbereth (about 955), a Hebrew dictionary containing some grammatical rules.

It was the appearance of this work that precipitated certain events which produced a stain upon Chasdai's life. Among others invited to Cordova by the affluent Nasi, there was Dunash ben Labrat. Dunash had come from Africa and when Menachem's book appeared, he wrote a scathing criticism of it, along with a poem of didication to Chasdai.⁴⁰ Evidently, Dunash had perceived Menachem's failure to grasp the trilateral-
ality of the Hebrew roots. Dunash's criticism, correct though it was on scientific grounds, was biting and stinging on moral grounds and it proved very detrimental to Menachem's welfare.⁴¹ Moreover, the poem of dedication was a direct overture to Chasdai, almost an explicit request to have Chasdai

remove Menachem from his favor and put Dunash in his stead. It is surprising that the wise patron was so vulnerable before flattery. Chasdai's admiration for Menachem fell at once, and he looked with greater favor upon Dunash. It is amazing that he should have withdrawn his favor as soon as Menachem was denigrated so outrageously. He seems to have lost suddenly the qualities of mercy and justice and to have forgotten completely the unselfish services which Menachem had rendered for many years. When the slanderous accusation against Menachem reached his ears, he did not investigate the matter to see if Menachem could produce witnesses to dis-⁴²prove the vicious charges. Chasdai pronounced an unfavorable judgment, without any deliberation whatsoever, and his servants rushed to Menachem's home at once, though it was the Sabbath. There they found the unfortunate poet and they proceeded to tear the clothes from his body and to pluck the hair off his head. They then demolished his house.

In this entire matter, Chasdai's conduct was unpardonable. Menachem wrote a letter to his former patron, asking why he merited such treatment. Chasdai's answer could have come from an unconscionable scoundrel only. He wrote to Menachem as follows: "If you were wrong, then I have punished you; if you were wronged, then I have caused you to share the future world."⁴³ Chasdai's stand was inexcusable. His treatment of Menachem had been shabby; his letter, exonerating himself, was a flagrant abuse of power and self.

Menachem wrote a second letter, addressed from⁴⁴ prison, to Chasdai. He asked his patron to read the entire letter, fearing that he would not.⁴⁵ In this letter, Menachem

does not reprove God for his troubles, but expresses the
confident hope that eternal justice will return. ⁴⁶ He berates
Chasdai for having passed judgment upon ~~him~~ when, in the
first place, he could not probe the hearts of men and, in
the second, had not even examined him. ⁴⁷ He reminds Chasdai
of the night that Chasdai's mother had died and how at mid-
night the patron had come to him to have him compose a funeral
sermon and an elegy in her honor, and how he had found Mena-
chem already engaged in the task (before having been asked),
and how Chasdai had taken an eternal oath never to forget
Menachem. ⁴⁸ And now, Chasdai has forgotten that vow. Menachem
continues, in the letter, to remind Chasdai that he had
written elegies and lamentations at the death of Isaac ben
Chasdai, that he had written numerous poems in praise of
Chasdai, ^{and} that though he has received no reward and has, in
fact, been mistreated, still he continues to praise Chasdai
with all his strength and all his soul. ⁴⁹ Of the goodness of
Chasdai's father he writes, "If not for the kindness of your
father who was gracious to me and protected and honored me
and sheltered me under his roof, then I had perished in my
affliction." ⁵⁰ One can picture Menachem's pain as he wrote,
with a sorely afflicted heart, "If not for thy kindness, I
would not have spoken," and he continues to ask the Nasi to
judge his case wisely and impartially. ⁵¹

Chasdai's response to Menachem's letter is not
clear. In truth, even the charges lodged against Menachem are
ambiguous. In dedicating his work to Chasdai, Dunash wrote,
"I have composed this book as a refutation of that interpreter
who distorts all beautiful words (that is, Rabbinic teachings)
by grouping them badly." It would thus seem that Menachem

was accused of being a Karaite. There are other indications, as Luzzatto points out, that confirm the supposition that Menachem's guilt was not a crime of commission but a matter of belief. In Menachem's letter, the only suggestion of a charge against him can be noticed in his challenge to Chas-dai, where he says, "Can you search the innermost part of a man, or see the working of his mind, or know his hidden thoughts?"⁵³ Moreover, it is difficult to understand how Chas-dai would have permitted his servants to act in so high-handed a manner and demolish Menachem's home, especially when in doing so they violated the Sabbath, unless the charge was one of heresy and it was to be regarded as a "time in which to act for God's sake."⁵⁴ ~~One~~ supposition is further substantiated by Menachem's complaint that he has been deprived of the opportunity "to cleave unto the inheritance of God."⁵⁵ And as final p~~ro~~of of the nature of the charge, it may be remarked that the destitute condition of Menachem, who was surely famous enough to find some support, can be accounted for only if he were regarded as a heretic. That label would have prevented him from getting either a patron or pupils.⁵⁶

We cannot, however, overlook Chas-dai's conduct because, again as Luzzatto points out, these charges were not true.⁵⁷ In the first place, Chas-dai, by supporting Moses and Chanoch, showed himself to be a staunch Rabbanite and he, undoubtedly, would not have invited Menachem, were he a Karaite, to partake of his bounty. Then again, Menachem mentions⁵⁸ Saadya with great respect and reverence, something which he could not have done were he a Karaite, for Saadya had written vitriolic polemics against that sect. Moreover, if Menachem were a Karaite, Dunash's statement that Menachem had given

misleading interpretations would have been pointless. And finally, Menachem's inclination toward the literal meaning of Scripture can hardly be regarded as Karaitic, else we would have to brand Rashi and Rashbam too as Karaites. We can see, therefore, that the accusation was false and unfounded.

What, then, can have been the underlying motive behind Dunash's charge? Obviously, it was the malicious plotting of an envious contemporary. Menachem was Chasdai's favorite and Dunash coveted the position. As Menachem wrote, ⁵⁹ "They have pursued me with their envy." Thus, unless there was another motive in Dunash's heart, a motive which might have been born of a grudge and which historical research has not as yet revealed, we can only conclude that the bitter attack was prompted by professional jealousy. Dunash succeeded easily, for Menachem was without guile, a meek and humble person, who was extremely tender even when he discussed authorities who contradicted him. Before the savage and ruthless tactics of Dunash, he was helpless.

It is difficult to determine the exact outcome of the accusation. We know that the dispute between Dunash and Menachem was carried on by their disciples. Luzzatto contends that Chasdai must have become convinced of Menachem's entire innocence, else it would be difficult to comprehend how the Machbereth became so popular among all the Rabbanites, ⁶⁰ and was even used and quoted by Rashi. Had Menachem been found guilty, surely his book (charged with containing heretical writings) would have been suppressed. History is silent on the matter. That Menachem's letter was not widely circu-

lated may be an indication of its failure to have met with contemporaneous approval, or else it might point to a successful policy of suppression on the part of Chasdai.

Even if Chasdai did not hearken to Menachem's second letter, we must not forget that he did act indecently. He let justice run amuck by condemning, with a snap judgment and without a trial, a man who had been faithful to him and had served him well. This lapse in an otherwise fruitful and benevolent life is a dark blemish upon his bright career. But let us not be guilty of Chasdai's fault. Let us remember his glorious deeds, his diplomatic triumphs, his constant philanthropies, all of which made a truly astonishing career, and we shall also remember that "to err is human, to forgive divine."

Chasdai's Interest in Other Jewish Groups.

Chasdai's interest in his coreligionists was not, as has already been indicated, limited to his own country. He was always solicitous for the Jews everywhere. As he himself wrote to the King of the Khazars, whenever ambassadors from foreign countries would come to the Caliph, he would inquire of them regarding the welfare of Jews dispersed throughout the world. Of these embassies, he would ask for news of the deliverance of Jews, earnestly looking out for any report⁶¹ of their liberation from world-wide enslavement.

The position of the Jews in Spain, tolerated though they were, must have been truly irksome to the Nasi. Feeling himself a part of a separate nation, it was unsatisfying for him to feel that he was expending his efforts for and contributing his gifts to the glory of a foreign people. Moreover,

the taunts of the non-Jews must have been painfully irritating. Consequently, any sign of Jewish emancipation would be grasped as a hope of eventual redemption. It would serve as a tonic in the face of foreign gloatings that "every other people has a kingdom, but the Jews have no memorial on earth."⁶²

*01007
p. 10
Exemption
the king*

The report of a Jewish kingdom of the Khazars must have been just such a tonic. Chasdai claimed that he had read of the Jewish kingdom in the books of the Jewish sages.⁶³ He would not place credence in the statement, though two Jews from Spain, Juda b. Meir b. Nathan and Joseph Haggaris, had been there. According to his letter to Joseph, Chasdai wanted to communicate with the inhabitants of the country, but the distance and the perils of travel hindered him from establishing any contact and from verifying the report.⁶⁴ When the ambassadors from Chorassan (in Persia) came to Cordova and testified to the existence of the Kingdom of תל כסא, Chasdai would not believe them, but suspected them of an attempt to ingratiate themselves with him and to win his favor.⁶⁵

However, the report was confirmed by the ambassadors from Constantinople, who said that there was such a kingdom, which was a distance of fifteen days of sea travel away from Constantinople. The kingdom was ruled by a king, Joseph, and its inhabitants not only carried on an extensive trade in fish and skins with the people of Constantinople but also maintained a friendly alliance with the Byzantine state.⁶⁶

*For you
didn't
bring
out
the underlying political situation*

Chasdai was thrilled at the news. He dispatched a messenger immediately to establish contact with the Jewish kingdom, but the messenger, Mar Isaac b. Nathan, was detained at the Byzantine court for six months and then sent back to

⁶⁷
Cordova. Chasdai did not abandon hope. He considered sending a letter to Jerusalem, for certain men there had vouched to relay the letter from Jerusalem to Nisibis, to Armenia, to Berdaa, ⁶⁸ and thence to the land of the Khazars. While considering this proposal, the ambassadors of the King of Gebalim (Sclavonia) ⁶⁹ came to Cordova. With the embassy, there were two Jews, Saul and Joseph. These men promised Chasdai that they would take his letter to their monarch, and that they would guarantee its safe arrival in the land of Khazars by relaying it through the lands of the Hungarians, ⁷⁰ Russians, ⁷¹ and Bulgarians. ⁷² Chasdai welcomed the offer.

Chasdai's letter reached Joseph through a Jew named ⁷³ Jacob ben Eliezer of Germany and the king, in his answer, unfolded in detail the story of the conversion of his people to Judaism. It is to a consideration of this conversion of the Khazars and to the Hebrew documents involved that we shall now turn.

Chapter II

Ha-Levi, ibn Daud and the Conversion

For a long time, the only report of the conversion of the ~~Khazars~~ to Judaism was contained in Juda Ha-Levi's philosophic work, *Kitab al Khazari*. This book was written about 1140 and was translated from Arabic into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon about 1167. Through the translation, the work has become known as the *Cuzari* or *Kosari*.⁷⁴ The book itself is a philosophic exposition of Judaism in the form of a dialogue between the King of the ~~Khazars~~ and a Jewish rabbi, but imbedded within the dialogue is the account of the conversion of all the ~~Khazars~~ to Judaism.

repeated

In the historical sections of the *Cuzari*, Judah Ha-Levi tells us the following story: "This reminded me of something I had once heard concerning the arguments of a rabbi who sojourned with the King of the Khazars. The latter, as we know from historical records, became a convert to Judaism about four hundred years ago. To him came a dream, and it appeared as if an angel addressed him, saying: 'Thy way of thinking is indeed pleasing to the Creator, but not thy way of acting.' Yet he was so zealous in the performance of the Khazar religion that he devoted himself with a perfect heart to the service of the Temple and sacrifices. Notwithstanding this devotion, the angel came again at night and repeated: 'Thy way of thinking is pleasing to God, but not thy way of acting.' This caused him to ponder over the different beliefs and religions, and finally become a convert to Judaism together with many other Khazars."⁷⁵

At first, the king inquired of a philosopher con-

cerning his religious persuasion, but though the latter's words were convincing, they did not correspond with what the king wanted. ⁷⁶ So the king said to himself: "I will ask the Christians and Moslems, since ^{one} of these persuasions is, no doubt, the God-fearing one. As regards the Jews, I am satisfied that they are of low station, few in number, and generally despised." He invited a Christian scholastic and one ^{of} the Doctors of Islam and after questioning them about the theory and practice of their faiths, both of them failed to satisfy him. However, they both testified to the truth of Israel's Torah. Then the King said, "Indeed, I see myself compelled to ask the Jews, because they are the relic of the children of Israel. For I see that they constitute in themselves the evidence for the divine law on earth." He then invited a ⁷⁷ Jewish rabbi and asked him about his belief.

Ha-Levi continues: "After this, the king, as is related in the history of the Khazars, was anxious to reveal to his vizier (*IXIX 76*) the secret of his dream and its repetition, in which he was urged to seek the God-pleasing deed in the mountains of Warsan. The king and his vizier travelled to the deserted mountains on the sea shore, and arrived one night at the cave in which some Jews used to celebrate the Sabbath. They disclosed their identity to them, embraced their religion, were circumcised in the cave, and returned to their country, eager to learn the Jewish law. They kept their conversion secret, however, until they found an opportunity of disclosing the fact gradually to a few of their special friends. When the number had increased, they made the affair public, and induced the rest of the Khazars

to embrace the Jewish faith. They sent to various countries for scholars and books, and studied the Torah. Their chronicle ~~also~~ also tells of their prosperity, how they beat their foes, conquered their lands, secured great treasures; how their army swelled to hundreds of thousands, how they loved their faith and fostered such love for the Holy House that they erected a Tabernacle in the shape of that built by Moses. They also honored and cherished those born Israelites who lived among them. While the king studied the ^Torah and the books of the prophets, he employed the rabbi as his teacher." ⁷⁸

The rabbi stayed for some time, and as a result of his teachings, the king said: "Thou hast gratified me a great deal and strengthened my belief in tradition." ⁷⁹ Later on, the rabbi wanted to leave for Palestine. The king tried to dissuade him from going, but finally let him depart and gave him his blessing. ⁸⁰

In this account, there are several matters to consider. Ha-Levi says that the conversion of the King of the Khazars took place about "four hundred years ago," which since his book was written about 1140, would be about 740. The conversion was brought about by a repeated dream in which an angel said to the king: כִּנְתָּךְ כִּזְיָה אֶלֶל הַכּוֹרָא אֶבֶל מַנְשֵׁךְ אִיִּם לְצִיִּם Before the conversion took place, the king examined a philosopher, a Christian, and a Mohammedan on their respective beliefs. His only satisfaction lay in the fact that the latter two testified to the truth of Israel's Torah. Only then did the king summon a rabbi and question him concerning Judaism. After this, the king told his dream to his vizier and these two went to a cave in the Mountains of Warsan, in which cave certain Jews

kept the Sabbath. The king and his vizier became Jews and were circumcised and at first kept the matter secret, but later they induced the rest of Khazars to become converted. Accepting the account on its face value, we notice that certain ingredients are essential to the conversion. These elements are a dream, a quasi disputation, and a cave. Ha-Levi did not tell us the source from which he drew his knowledge. He does mention the *ספר חזקוני*, the *ספר חינוך* and

ספר חזקוני (the books of the Khazars), but it is immediately apparent that these are only general names. Where, then, did Ha-Levi get his knowledge?

It was thought by many people that no such conversion of the Khazars to Judaism ever took place and that Ha-Levi simply invented the story as a plot of a framework around which he could construct his theologico-philosophical work. Jost (Geschichte der Israeliten, p.1200) wrote: "We'd be doing Ha-Levi an injustice if we attributed to him the view that he was repeating an historical event; rather did he take his views or the views of his time and put them in a pleasing framework to hand them down to posterity." And this belief was maintained despite the corroborative evidence for the conversion which Abraham ibn Daud gave in *Sefer HaKabbala* (c.1161). In writing of the extensive Jewish settlements, ibn Daud said, "You find communities of Israel scattered from the West through Africa and Egypt and Arabia and Persia and *אשכנז* and *אשכנז* and *אשכנז* up to the river *אשכנז*, for there there were the Khazars"--I continue with the original:

Darlam

Corrected for Stil

שהז שם גוים כח"ל שנתגירו ויוסף מלכם שלח
ספר לכב חסדאי הנשי' ב"ר יצחק בן שפרוט
והודיעו שה' על דעת רבנות וכל עמו וראינו
בטליטלה מבני בניה תלמידי חכמים והודיעונו
שיאריהם על דעת רבנות וכן בכל הגוים שבים
יון מאכץ ובקרי וגגנת עד קסטנטניה ורומי הגדולה... 81

This statement of Ibn Daud tells us explicitly that the Khazars were converted to Judaism and that Joseph their king sent a letter to Chasdai ibn Shaprut in which he maintained that not only he, but all the Khazars, practiced Rabbinic Judaism. Ibn Daud also says that he actually saw in Toledo descendants of these Khazars. Here we have the testimony of an eyewitness; he had seen descendants of the Khazars. He must have got his knowledge about the conversion from the communication of Joseph. The likelihood is that Ha-Levi too must have been acquainted with that communication in which the conversion of the Khazars was reported, and that it was this report, and not his own invention, which Ha-Levi utilized in his work. But where was that letter? As long as it was hidden, the whole report could be doubted and the conversion could be relegated to the realm of fable.

It was, therefore, of tremendous historical significance when "Isaac b. Abraham Akrish, known as a collector and publisher of books, recovered in his travels between Constantinople and Egypt (?), in the sixteenth century" a correspondence between Chasdai ibn Shaprut and Joseph, King of the Khazars. Akrish tells of his meeting with a Jew, whom he met in 1562 and who had told him extraordinary things regarding Jews ruling in Abyssinia. On the same trip he got the letters. 82

Isaac b. Abraham Akrish
Egypt
Abyssinia
country
in 1562

Akrish's discovery was published in 1577 in Constantinople under the name **קול מושר**, appearing in a little volume called, **מעשה ב'ת לז**. It consists not only of the communication of Joseph, to which ibn Daud unquestionably referred, but also of the letter of Chasdai which elicited Joseph's answer. Even a cursory reading of these letters shows that both Ha-Levi and ibn Daud must have known their contents. Yet a new problem arose. Were these letters authentic, or were they forgeries fabricated by Akrish in the period of intense Messianic yearnings? Johann Buxtorf, the son, printed the letters together with the text and a Latin translation of the Cuzari in 1660, in Basle; he regarded the letters and the entire history of the Khazars as fable. Basnage, Calmet, and Baratier also looked upon the matter as the child of idle fancy. Then, some scholars (Suhm, Frähn) thought that Chasdai's letter was genuine, but not that of Joseph. But new information from Russian and Arabic sources proved the basic contents of the letters--that there had been a conversion of the Khazars to Judaism. Only the authenticity of the letters, per se, remained to be questioned. A new edition of Joseph's answer, with different readings and new material particularly of geographical nature, was published by A. Harkavy in **ד'תרנ"ז חסד**, number 8, from a St. Petersburg manuscript brought by Firkovitsch from Egypt in 1870. It is to a consideration of these letters that we shall now turn. In our sketch of Chasdai's life, we have already mentioned the letter which Chasdai sent to the King of the Khazars. Now we shall consider both letters from the point of view of the conversion. In studying the letters we have availed ourselves

of the following copies: that of Akrish in קול מבשר; that of Buxtorf in his edition of the Cosari; of Funk, in his edition of the Cuzari, Wilna 1904; of Harkavy, in Zifrinowitsch's edition of the Cuzari, Warsaw 1911, and of A. Cahana in the ספרות ההסתויה הישראלית vol. 1. In referring to them, we have spoken and shall speak of Akrish, Buxtorf, Wilna, Harkavy, and Cahana, but we have retained the pagination of the Wilna edition for the sake of uniformity. We shall now consider the letters.

Chasdai's Letter

Chasdai's letter to King Joseph begins with an acrostic which reads

אני חסדאי בר יצחק בר עמרם בי שפירא
83
סיון ינחם בן סיון

This acrostic is a jubilant psalm⁸⁴ singing the praises of the kingdom of the Khazars, and of the might of the King and his army. The troops of the king have crushed all his foes, "his soldiers dart out like flames, one of them is enough for a hundred of the foe, and two for a myriad."⁸⁵ The poem recites the former glory of Israel and tells of the subsequent fall^{and} of the long period of suffering and dispersion. It ends with the hope that Israel will become supreme again and "spew forth her foes as she herself was spewed."⁸⁶

This acrostic was written evidently by Menachem ben Saruk. From the fact that the acrostic is attached to the letter, it may be argued that the letter was written by the same person who composed the poem. When it is further pointed out that there are similarities between the style of the letter and that of the Machbereth,⁸⁷ and when we bear in mind that Menachem served as Chasdai's poet and secretary, we can safely

conclude that the letter too was written by Menachem at the behest of the Nasi.

The letter of Chasdai is evidently part of a correspondence addressed to a king. The salutation runs: "From me, Chasdai ben Isaac ben Ezra, of the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Spain, a servant of my lord, the King,"⁸⁸ and there are many other proof that the letter is intended for a king. Chasdai goes on to say that he prays that God may prolong the life of the king, and then he apologizes for having been so bold as to write to that royal person. He explains that he is a member of the Jewish remnant living in Spain and that they are "servants of my lord, the King."⁸⁹ And there are many other instances, as for example, "Let it be known to my lord, the King";⁹¹ "your servant knows that the least of the courtiers of my lord, the King, is greater than the wisest of our land;"⁹² "I shall also tell my lord, the King;"⁹³ "to know the peace of my lord, the King;"⁹⁴ "I wanted to send a letter to my lord, the King, from Jerusalem;"⁹⁵ "and now if it pleases the King--let him command his scribes to write an answer;"⁹⁶ And "now I have dared to write this letter to my lord, the King, and I pray that it will not be too burdensome for him to answer me"⁹⁷--all of which examples show that the letter was addressed to the King of the Khazars.

In the letter, Chasdai goes on to say that the country in which he lives is Spain (which the Mohammedans call Andalusia) and the capital city is Cordova. Chasdai then goes on to describe the extent of the city and the location of the country with relation to the Mediterranean Sea and the Great Ocean (Atlantic Ocean).⁹⁸ It seems, however, that Chasdai's

knowledge of the exact geographical position of the country of the Khazars is erroneous for he claims that the Mediterranean Sea leads to it, which was not so. Chasdai then goes on to say that he had learned from the books of the sages that the length of the land of ⁹⁹ **אֶרֶץ כּוּז** is four astronomical degrees or 266 miles. Chasdai continues to point out the great distance of the kingdom from Spain, thus explaining why news of that Jewish kingdom had been slow in penetrating his country, though he had heard that two Spanish Jews (Judah and Joseph ¹⁰⁰ **Haggaris**) had been there.

Chasdai continues with the name of his ruler and with a list of the Omayyad kings. The ruling king is Abd-er-Rahman b. Muhammed b. Abd-er-Rahman b. Hakim b. Hisham b. Abd-er-Rahman; all these ruled in succession except Muhammed who ¹⁰¹ died during the life-time of father. In presenting this ¹⁰² dynasty all the older texts are wrong. Both Harkavy and Cahana have inserted between the names Abd-er-Rahman and ¹⁰³ Muhammed, the names Muhammed I and Abdallah. We thus have a line of eight rulers. But the following words: **וְעַכְשָׁיו**

אֶלְרַחֲמָן הַשְּׁמִי הוּא הַבָּא אֵינָן כְּפִיר are perplexing. Harkavy thinks that Abd-er-Rahman the Eighth refers to Abd-er-Rahman the First, taking **הַשְּׁמִי** to mean the eighth backwards. But P. Cassel (Der Chazarische Königsbrief, p.85) says that there is no need to agree with Harkavy; in the first place, Abd-er-Rahman the Third was also called the Eighth among the Arabs, and in the second place **אֶלְרַחֲמָן** should be corrected to **הַשְּׁמִי**. Thus Harkavy would translate the section: And Abd-er-Rahman the Eighth (i.e., the First), came to Spain when the Abassids, their kinsmen who ruled in Shinear, usurped their throne. According to Cassel it would

be: And Abd-erRahman is the eighth of those who came to Spain, etc. It would seem that Harkavy's interpretation is more reasonable, but when we read further: **ועבר אלחמין יה השמיני הפונה אין ספרך בקום עליהם בני אלעבעסי קיא בן מעריא בן השאם בן עבר אלמלך יה הנקנא אמיר אלמומנין ושמו ידוע מהתעלה ולא היה כמוהו במלכים אשר היו לפניו**

then we see that there is something wrong with ~~the~~ text. The

קיא makes no sense; **מעריא** is obviously a mis-¹⁰⁵take for **מעויא**, the name of Abd-er-Rahman I's father.

Both Harkavy and Cahana have **הוא** for **קיא**, but even Harkavy retains **מעריא** and Cahana alone corrects it.

Cassel suggests that the words **ועבר אלחמין יה השמיני** be stricken out of their present position, and be placed after

אלמלך עבר, for it was Abd-er-Rahman III and not Abd-er-¹⁰⁶Rahman I who was known as the "Emir al Mumemin," as the letter continues with **ממלכת עבר אלחמין והאמיר אלמומנין**.

A mistake, perhaps one of repetition, has been made in our text but the meaning is clear. The ruler in Spain is Abd-er-Rahman III. He is the eighth in line from Abd-er-Rahman I (b. Muawiya b. Hisham b. Abd Al Malk) who came because of the Abassid persecutions, and he liberated Spain and accepted the title of Emir al Mumenin.

Chasdai then tells of the extent of the kingdom, saying that it is 1100 miles, a rather probable figure for the periphery of the country. He then continues with a description of the fertility of the country and with an enumeration of its natural products and mineral resources. All the editions, except Wilna, include gold in the list, and whereas the Wilna edition has **אגני הפיך** (stibium or antimony), Akrish

and Buxtorf have **אבני היסוד** (of questionable meaning), and Harkavy has **אבני היסוד** (jewels of the mart). Then, Chas-dai speaks of the extensive trade and his connection with it. 107

It is in connection with the various embassies which came to Cordova and which we have already discussed in the chapter on Chasdai, that Chasdai, so he writes, heard that the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars was a distance of fifteen days of sea travelling from Constantinople, but that on land there were many nations between the two places. Chasdai then recites his efforts to communicate with the Khazars which we have also discussed. Chasdai then asks the king to answer him and tell him how the Israelites came to that place and how the kingdom became Jewish.

Chasdai states that "our ancestors have told us that in the beginning of their settling there the place was called Mt. Seir; but my lord knows that Mt. Seir is far from the place where my lord dwells, and our elders say that formerly the place was called Mt. Seir." In explaining this section, Cahana says that evidently Chasdai is calling by the name Seir a section of Caucasus called in Arabic, Serir. 108 Cahana gives the Hebrew translation of the Arab historian, Al Bakri: "You travel from the land of the Khazars twelve parasangs in the desert (steppes) until you reach a high mountain which you ascend for three days until you reach the fortress of the King of Serir." Chasdai continues with the tradition that the Israelites suffered many evils and persecutions until they settled in the place where they now dwell. Then, because of their faithlessness, a persecution broke out against them by the **ד'ש'ש'ש'**. This name has been translated "Chaldeans", 109

but Harkavy takes it to mean the
called "Kasdim" in Russian.

ש"ס'ק'ס' who were

110

Because of that persecution, Chasdai continues, they hid the Torah and the sacred writings in a cave, wherefore they pray in that cave, and for the sake of these books they taught their children to pray in that cave morning and night. A long time elapsed, and though the descendants maintained the old custom and prayed in the cave, they did not know the reason for their action. Finally, an Israelite wanted to know the reason and he entered the cave and found it full of books. He brought the books out and the people resolved to study the Torah. This, Chasdai maintains, is the tradition which has come down to him.

Chasdai then sets forth a list of questions which he would like the Khazar ruler to answer. From which tribe are the Khazars? What is the rule regarding succession; is the rulership limited to a tribe or a family, and does a son succeed his father? What is the extent of the country? How many open and fortified cities are there? How many soldiers, regiments, and generals does he have? Over how many provinces does he rule? What is the amount of the tribute? Is the country fertile? Does the king always stay in the royal city, or does he travel about? Are any of the neighboring islands Jewish? What are the functions of the king? Does he judge alone, or does he appoint judges? How does the king go to the Temple? With which nations does he wage war? Does war set aside the observance of the Sabbath? Which nations surround him? What are the names of these peoples and their countries? What are the names of the cities near his kingdom; that is, the cities of Charassan¹¹¹, Berdaa,

and Bab al Abwab? ¹¹² How do traders get there? Chasdai also asks for a chronological list of the kings and the length of their reigns and wants to know the language they speak.

Inserted at this point in the letter is a reference to a wise man of the tribe of Dan who had visited Spain and ¹¹³ who showed a remarkable knowledge of Hebrew. Chasdai then asks if they have any reminder of the computation of "the end of the wonders", which would usher in the period of Jewish redemption. Chasdai writes that he had watched yearningly for news of a Jewish kingdom and how anxious he is to verify the report. Chasdai then exalts God piously, and begging a thousand pardons for having taken up so much of the monarch's valuable time, he ends his letter with an extravagant prayer for the peace and long life of the king.

The authenticity of Chasdai's letter was doubted for a long time. The statement of the Nasi that the Jews are ridiculed because they have no kingdom and the question at the end regarding "the end of the wonders" made scholars think that it was a product of a period when Messianic speculation was rife in Israel. But the abundance of internal evidence not only stamped the letter as authentic, but also dated it for us almost exactly. The contents of the letter are, for the most part, literally true and can be confirmed by historical testimony, as we have shown. The facts about Spain, the dynasty of the Omayyads, Chasdai's position in the state, the embassies which came to Cordova, the resources of the country--all these cannot be challenged. The writer was accurately informed. He had to be a person who knew the twists and turns of his country; Chasdai was such a person. Another

bit of internal evidence is the reference to a cave, in which sacred writings had been stored and in which the Jews prayed. Where Chasdai got this information, it is hard to say. The

which he mentions cannot be identified, nor
 can the **אגרות דר' שית שלום**, to which Joseph refers,
 be found. Saadya knew of the Khazars and in his long commen-
 tary to Parasha Terumah wrote: "Just as the king of the Arabs
 is called Caliph, and every king of the Khazars (**כחל**)
 is called Chagan (**חאגאן**),.....so every king of Tyre is
 called Hiram." ¹¹⁴ Japhet b. Ali, in his commentary to Deuter-
 onomy, chapter 23, has the following: "And it is approximate
 to saying that they are the Khazars who embraced Judaism at
 the time of the exile." ¹¹⁵ If these two contemporaries (Saadya)
 was a bit earlier) knew of the Khazars, then it is quite
 likely that Chasdai should have heard of them. That he
 mentions the cave proves that the cave played some part in
 the conversion, and we may safely assume that Judah Ha-Levi
 utilized this element in his Guzari because it was funda-
 mental in the conversion. Another proof, though not in it-
 self conclusive, of the authenticity of the letter is the
 poem which accompanies it and which was written by Menachem
 ben Saruk. It contains Chasdai's name and his own name and
 its theme is the bravery and might of the Khazars. It is
 not likely that a poem by Menachem, honoring Chasdai, would
 be attached to a letter written by somebody else. Furthermore,
 if certain resemblances in style between the Machbereth and
 this letter can be established indisputably, then the genu-
 iness of the letter is also established. As to the date of
 of the letter, we can say, with almost complete certainty,

that it was sent about 960. Mention is made of Otto's embassy which lasted from 956-959. So, 959 would be our earliest date. This letter was answered before 965, for Joseph does not mention the invasion of the Russians nor the capture of Sarkel which took place in that year. The latest date possible for Joseph's answer would be 965. Since much time was consumed in travelling back and forth, we can date Chasdai's letter about 960.

Chapter Three
Joseph's Answer

The answer of King Joseph begins, in the older versions, with the words: "This is the answer of Joseph, the King of the Togarmi, to Rabbi Chasdai, the Exilarch (מלך אשכנז),

b. Isaac b. Ezra, the Spaniard who is dear to us and honored among us." Harkavy's version, however, has a longer heading.

Here, Chasdai is addressed as the מלך אשכנז, and Joseph is called ben Aaron. In addition, Joseph is exalted as a courageous warrior; he fears God; he is wise and honors the sages; he is humble and charitable; he chooses the way of the Torah and seeks to obey God's will. It is obvious, as Cassel points out,¹¹⁶ that the shorter heading rings more true. It is simple and direct and we must therefore look upon it as original, while that of Harkavy is ornate and so we regard it as a later fabrication.

Joseph then acknowledges Chasdai's letter¹¹⁷ which he says contained the dimensions of Chasdai's country, the genealogy of Abd-er-Rahman and the account of his capture of the East and the statement that Chasdai would not have heard of the Khazars if the ambassadors from Constantinople had not come to the Caliph's court. In Harkavy's version, Abd-er-Rahman's subjugation of the East is stated rather as a hope than as an accomplished act and it is followed by the words, "even as they belonged to his ancestors"; there is also a brief enumeration of the difficulties which Chasdai encountered in sending his letter, viz., the distance, the cutting off of traders and the general doubt with respect to the whole matter. Cassel maintains that Harkavy's insertion seems to have been added later than Chasdai's letter.¹¹⁸ Indeed,

it is apparent that Harkavy's insertion is an interpolation that aims to make Joseph's answer dovetail and interlock nicely with Chasdai's letter.

Joseph then goes on to repeat the questions which Chasdai had asked regarding the Khazar kingdom, the genealogy of the kings, the manner in which they had embraced the Jewish religion,¹¹⁹ the surrounding nations, and the possibility of having messengers come to Spain from the Khazar kingdom and thus serve as a tonic to Jewish hearts in the face of foreign ridicule. Joseph then promises to answer point by point and with regard to what Chasdai had written¹²⁰ of his own country, Joseph says that his ancestors had already heard of it by means of letters, exchanging peaceful greetings,¹²¹ and that the matter is preserved in their records. (In the Harkavy version, there is an added verse to the effect that Joseph hears continually of Spain and of the greatness of the Caliph and he asks that God return to the Caliph the kingdom of his ancestors in the East. This statement by Harkavy is altogether different from the older versions of the Answer of Joseph, which speak of the subjugation of the East by Abd-er-Rahman as a fait accompli. The writer of Harkavy's ~~version~~ ^{version} had access to the history of the time and he knew that this had not taken place; therefore, he changed the preceding statement of fact into an expression of hope and, at this point, inserted an additional expression of hope. This is what we mean by a conscious correction of the text. This extra sentence of Harkavy's adds nothing to the content of the letter, except a correction in the light of historical information, and can be regarded, as Cassel points out, as

superfluous. ¹²²) Joseph then states that he will renew ¹²³ that in which his ancestors had anticipated him, and will go on to answer the questions.

It is increasingly clear that Joseph's Answer purports to be an answer to Chasdai's Letter. Moreover, there is at this point a bit of internal evidence which shows that it is the communication of a superior person to one of lesser rank. In continuing with his answers, Joseph says

אנתן לע כי which would be an abrupt manner of address unless we remember that it is a royal person who is talking. Harkavy has here מירי אנ' לך which is also an indication that a monarch is writing, especially when we remember that Chasdai always spoke of the person to whom he was writing as "my lord."

Joseph then relates the genealogy of the Khazars. He states: "We are the descendants of Japheth and of ¹²⁴ Togarmah, his son." Harkavy's version, evidently on the basis of Gen. 10:3 where Togarmah is the son of Gomer and the grandson of Japheth, reads קינע תיגמא . Joseph then states that Togarmah had ten sons: אגיק, תירוש, אור, אגין, ביל, תנא, כזר, זנו, בלנור, and סאין . ¹²⁵ His people are descended from the seventh son, כזר .

As for the manner of their conquest, Joseph writes ¹²⁶ that in the time of כזר , his ancestors were few in number but God strengthened them and they waged war against many mighty nations. They drove these nations out of their country and inherited their lands, and pursued them until they ~~had crossed the great river Don.~~ Until this day they border on the river Don and are close to Constantinople, and the Khazars inherited their land. All the older versions are

alike in presenting this account, but Harkavy has an insertion to the effect that formerly the Wenenter lived in the country¹²⁷ but they were driven to the banks of the Don by the Khazars.¹²⁸ Harkavy regards the Wenenter as Bulgarians,¹²⁹ but Kutschera thinks they were Slavs. Cassel regards the additional¹³⁰ ~~xxx~~ comment of Harkavy's version as an apparent interpolation. We know that the Khazars subjugated the Bulgarians in 679 and at that¹³¹ time extended their sway west of the Don, and it seems that the writer of Harkavy's version of the answer has availed himself of this information in order to correct and modernize the communication. Just as certain names in the list of Togarmah's sons are corrected, and even as ~~ISX~~ is changed to ~~SYX~~ (see note 126), so here too we can detect a conscious attempt to correct an older version.

Joseph then continues with the account of the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism. Generations passed until one king reigned whose name was Bulan. He was wise and God-fearing and he exterminated the charmers and idol-¹³²aters.¹³³ An angel appeared to him in a dream and said, "Bulan, the Lord has sent me to you saying: 'I have heard your prayer and supplication, and behold I have blessed you and multiplied you, and I shall establish your kingdom until the end of generations, and I shall commit your enemies into your hand; and as for you, get up in the morning and¹³⁴ pray to Me.'" He did so. The angel appeared a second time and said, "I have seen your ways and I have found favor with your deeds, and I know that you will follow Me with all your heart, and I desire to give you commandments, statute, and and judgment, and if you will keep My commandments and My judgments, I shall bless you and multiply you."¹³⁵ Bulan then

answered the angel and said: "My Lord, You know the thoughts of my heart, and You have searched my reins and know that I have put my trust in none but You--but the people over whom I rule are unbelievers; I do not know if they will believe me. Therefore, if You will be merciful, reveal yourself to

¹³⁶ **שְׁכִינָה וְהָיָה ה' עִמָּךְ** and he will help me in this matter." God acted according to his will and appeared to

¹³⁷ **לְשֵׁךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ** in a dream, and when the latter got up in the morning he told the king. The king summoned all his princes and servants and people and told them all these things. The matter pleased them so they accepted the religion and entered under the wings of the Shekinah. At this point, there is in Harkavy's version the statement that this happened 340 years ago. (Since the date for these letters of Chasdai and Joseph is generally agreed upon as¹³⁸ about 960, Harkavy's date for the conversion would be 620. We shall discuss this point later.) The angel then appeared to him (to Bulan) a third time and said: "The heavens and the heavens above cannot con-
¹³⁹tain Me, yet you build a house for Me." He answered: "O Lord, I am greatly ashamed, for I have neither silver nor gold to do this as I wish." Whereupon God told him to strengthen himself, muster his troops and march against **כּוֹשָׁדִים** and

אַרְדִּי. He would conquer these, find two treasure-houses of silver and gold, and then could return home and build the temple for God. (The names, as given in the Wilna edition, are corrupt copies of the older version, which have **כּוֹשָׁדִים** and **אַרְדִּי**. Harkavy's text has correctly **כּוֹשָׁדִים** (Dariel) and **אַרְדִּי** (Ardebil)). Bulan trusted in God and went out to war. He was victorious¹⁴⁰ and returned in peace and then

he built a tabernacle, ark, candelabrum, table, altars, and sacred vessels, all of which, Joseph claims, are still in his possession.

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answ
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Bulan's fame spread, and when the Byzantine emperor and Mohammedan Caliph heard about it they sent messengers with numerous gifts to win him to their religions. ¹⁴¹ The king, being wise, called for a דברי חסד and he examined them; then he put them together to clarify their religions, but they contradicted each other and could come to no agreement. ¹⁴² When the king saw that they had reached an impasse ¹⁴³ he dismissed the Christian and Mohammedan representatives and told them that he would send for them on the third day. The king was wily and resorted to a ruse. The next day he called the Christian monk and said, "I know that the Christian ¹⁴⁴ king is greater than the others; his is an honored religion-- but tell me, of the other two, Judaism and Mohammedanism, which is the better?" He answered, "O, my Lord, there is no religion in the whole world like Judaism, for God chose Israel from among all nations; called them 'My first born son'; worked great miracles for them; brought them out of Egypt from Pharaoh's servitude; led them through the sea; drowned their pursuers; rained down manna upon them; and brought forth water for them from a stone; and gave them the Torah out of the midst of fire; caused them to inherit Canaan; and built the Sanctuary for them to dwell in their midst. But they have sinned, therefore God has cast them from Himself and has scattered them to every wind. If not for this, there ¹⁴⁵ would be no religion like Israel's in the world." The king replied, "You have spoken well and I shall honor you." The

next day the king sent for the Mohammedan Kadi¹⁴⁶ and asked him which of the other two religions¹⁴⁷ was the better. The Kadi replied, "Judaism is better, and all of it is true, and the Jews have God's Torah, statutes, and righteous judgments, but because of their sin's God has delivered them to their¹⁴⁸ foes." The king dismissed him and on another day he summoned all the representatives and said to them in the presence of his princes, servants, and people, "I want you to choose for me the best of the religions." They started to speak but could not substantiate their words until the king asked the monk, "Which is better, Judaism or Mohammedanism¹⁴⁹ Christianity?" The monk answered, "Judaism is better." The king asked the Kadi, "Which is better, Judaism or Christianity?" The Kadi replied,¹⁴⁹ "Judaism is better." Thereupon the king said, "Behold you testify with your own mouths that Judaism is the best and truest religion, and I have already chosen the religion of the Jews, which is the religion of Abraham", and professing faith in El Shaddai and spurning their rich gifts the king¹⁵⁰ told them to return to their own countries. Bulan then circumcised himself and his servants (Harkavy's text adds "The attendants and all his people"), and sent for a Jewish scholar who interpreted the Torah and arranged the command-¹⁵¹ments. Joseph goes on to say that from that time his people have been faithful to the Jewish religion and God has made them victorious over all their foes.

Joseph then goes on to state that after these things, one of Bulan's direct descendants, the pious Obadiah, became king. He renewed the kingdom, established the religion, built synagogues and schools, and got together many Jewish scholars

and paid them to explain the Bible, Mishna, and Talmud, and
all the prayers. After Obadiah, there ruled in succession
Hezekiah, Manasseh, Hanukah (Obadiah's brother), Isaac,
Zebulun, Manasseh II, Nisi, Menachem, Benjamin, Aaron,
and Joseph (the writer of the answer.) Joseph goes on to state
that all these rulers were in direct line and that no stran-
ger could occupy the throne.

Joseph continues with a description of the location
of his country. It is, he writes, on the banks of the river
which empties into the Caspian Sea. Along this river there
are numerous peoples and countless hamlets, towns, and forti-
fied cities. There are nine nations which are tributary
to him. From there, the boundary turns toward Georgia
and all the inhabitants of the seacoast for the distance of
a month's travel are tributary to him. On the southern side,
fifteen mighty nations up to Bab Al Abuab, who dwell in
the mountains and in the countries of Bassa and Tagat
up to the Sea of Constantinople are tributary to him.
From there, the boundary turns to the North up to the great
river Juzag; they live in unwalled towns and occupy the
whole steppe as far as the boundary of the Jugrians, for
a distance of a four months' journey, and pay tribute to
him.

Joseph further states that he dwells at the mouth
of the river (i.e., Volga) and does not permit the Rus-
sians who come in ships to pass into their country. Similar-
ly, he does not permit any of their enemies (i.e., of his
tributary countries) to attack ~~him~~ them. He has to wage
fierce wars constantly with them, else they would lay waste

to the whole Mohammedan country as far as Bagdad.

There are three royal cities. In the first, the Queen lives with her maids and attendants. Its extent together with the suburbs and adjacent hamlets is five square parasangs.¹⁷⁰ Jews, Mohammedans, Christians, and pagans live there. The second city is eight square parasangs. The third is the residence of the king, his courtiers, servants, and ministers. It is three square parasangs and the river flows between its walls; they stay in the city through the winter and in the month of Nisan each man goes out to his field and garden. Every family has its own hereditary estate to which ~~it~~ goes and settles there with joyous songs. A truly blissful condition obtains there. The king, his servants, and princes, travel twenty parasangs until they come to the river Arsan.¹⁷¹ Then they follow the river until they come to the extent of the province.¹⁷² Joseph describes his country as being none too frequently watered by rain but possessing many rivers which are heavily stocked with fish. The land itself is fertile and rich and has abundant orchards, fruit gardens, and vineyards. Joseph then gives the dimensions of his country. It stretches twenty parasangs to the East to the Caspian Sea,¹⁷³ thirty parasangs to the South, forty parasangs to the West,¹⁷⁴ and thirty parasangs to the North.¹⁷⁵

As for the question regarding "the end of the Wonders", Joseph writes that "our eyes are to God, and to the sages of Israel, to the academy in Jerusalem and the academy in Babylon." He has heard that because of the many iniquities, the computations have become erroneous and thus they know nothing, but he hopes that God will fulfill his promise (Mal.3:1) and

"suddenly come to His Temple." He has nothing but the prophecy of Daniel and he hopes that God will speed the redemption and gather together the scattered ones of Israel.

He then states that Chasdai had spoken in his letter¹⁷⁶ of his desire to see him. He says that the feeling is mutual and that if the meeting could be arranged Chasdai would be to him as a father and to his people as a revered advisor. With the greeting, "Much Peace," the answer of Joseph comes to an end.

This answer of Joseph has been declared spurious by many scholars. Even A. Cahana has said that it is difficult¹⁷⁷ to regard it as an historical source; he claims that it does not answer the letter of Chasdai regarding the manner in which the Jews got into the country, nor does it explain the legend of the cave, nor does it treat the genealogies, wars, and lists of tributary countries in a satisfactory manner. He further claims that its utilization of the supernatural dream, its use of general terms--e.g., $\gamma\omega$ and $\gamma\omega\gamma$, and its many arabisms, e.g. $\gamma\omega\gamma$ $\gamma\omega$ for $\gamma\omega$ $\gamma\omega$ etc., lead us to believe that Joseph's letter is a presentation, worked out in the form of a letter attributed to Joseph. Its writer, he says, had access to Arabic histories regarding the Khazars and therefore employed arabisms. The letter suffered from accretions and deletions at the hands of subsequent editors, and in this way we can account for Harkavy's fuller version. In our comments, both in the body and in the notes of this thesis, we have shown that Harkavy's text is much more correct. For that reason we suspect it immediately and regard it as a consciously corrected and

modernized version of the older texts.

But A. Cahana and the others are not necessarily right. Indeed, we shall try to show that they are wrong and that the Answer of Joseph was not spurious but that it was the communication of that monarch, in response to the letter which he had received from Chasdai. Let us, for a moment, summarize the contents. The letter professes to be an answer to Chasdai, from a King Joseph; this king had heard of Chasdai's country through an exchange of letters; the king traces his lineage from Togarmah the grandson of Japheth; his ancestors came into the country and drove the natives to the distant Don; the cause of the conversion was the repeated dream of Bulan; the שׁוּבָה לַיהוָה participated in the conversion; the disputation was held under Bulan; the disputation was theological in character; the result of the disputation was the circumcision of Bulan and his servants (but Harkavy makes it include all the people); Obadiah is the grandson of Bulan; Obadiah strengthened the religion; the list of kings from Obadiah to Joseph is given; the wars of the Khazars with other people are treated in a very general way--only the results are mentioned, viz., that there are many tributary nations; the king protects the country from the invasions of the Russians; there are three royal cities; the "end of the wonders" is not known; the academies in Jerusalem and Babylon are mentioned; and the letter is ended with the greeting בְּרַחֲמֵי שְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי.

In discussing Chasdai's letter, we have pointed out that the answer of Joseph must be dated around 960, because no mention is made of the capture of Sarkel by the Rus-

sians--which took place in 965. This fact alone does not establish the authenticity of Joseph's answer but there are many other bits of internal evidence which substantiate this fact and thus prove the genuine character of the letter. The letter is addressed to Chasdai b. Isaac b. Ezra, but Chasdai's lineage is not carried back any farther. Were this letter the product of a Spanish writer, in all likelihood Chasdai would have also been addressed as ibn Shapr¹⁷⁸. As we have already stated, Joseph's Answer treats the subjugation of the East by Abd-er-Rahman as already accomplished. In Harkavy's version, the truth of the matter was restored by changing ער כבישתו מדינת חזקה to ער כבישת חזקה and by

ואלהים ישיב אליו מלכות אבותיו בארץ חזקה. The writer of Joseph's answer meant that Abd-er-Rahman had achieved the overthrow of the lands of the East and now ruled over Sinear. Obviously, he seems to have understood Chasdai's notice about the relation of Abd-er-Rahman to the Abassids in Sinear as though he had overthrown these again; this misunderstanding makes Joseph's answer more authentic and true.¹⁷⁹ Another proof of the reliability of Joseph's answer is contained in the words of the king (Bulan) to the angel to reveal himself to פלגיש. Cassel tells us that ibn Fozzlan writes that the King of the Khazars is called the gross-Chan; his viceroy is called the Chakan bhou.¹⁸⁰ Cassel asserts that the reading פלגיש is wrong and comes from a misunderstanding of what the writer wrote. He says that among the Bulgarians, the second prince is called bulias or bolias, which is equiv-

מפני
אולי
הוא

alent to the Slavic boljarin, bojarin, or Bojar. Evidently, Cassel argues, the original of Joseph's Answer had י'ספ or י'סב, for the name Bulan proves this, but the copyist read the word as י'סב and erroneously changed the text. Cassel confirms his point from Georgian history, by the incident of a Khazar king who wanted to marry a Georgian princess and was refused. In his indignation, he sent an army against them under his general, Blutchan or Buld-chan, who was really only a Bulan.¹⁸¹ The word י'סב testifies to the age and genuine quality of the Answer. Cassel tells us that the authenticity of the Answer of Joseph has been doubted because Bulan has no Hebrew name. Cassel answers that since he was the first to embrace Judaism, he therefore had no Jewish name; moreover, Bulan is a title, not a name. It is often argued that the disputation reported in the answer brands that answer as false because, in the first place, the character of the disputation is extremely theological, and, in the second place, it would have been impossible to have reported the exact speeches as they were made 200 years earlier. One cannot ignore the cogency of these arguments and yet it would have been very easy for Joseph to have reported that the disputation took place just in the form that we have it. Perhaps he was wrong; perhaps the speeches of the representatives of the three faiths were different--this is not the point at present--and we cannot object to the authenticity of the letter on this ground. The letter came from Joseph; the contents of the letter might have been slightly exaggerated or embellished. But we do have proof in "an Arabic account, contemporary with this narrative, which is

given in a French translation^b by Philoxene Luzzatto, in his Notice sur Abou Jousouf Hasdai ibn Schaprouit (Paris 1852), which confirms the fact that the conversion of the King of the Cusars came about in the manner related in the text." ¹⁸²

The Answer of Joseph has also been regarded as unauthentic by Kunik. Kunik cites Cyril who mentioned the embassy of Zacharias (the Fürst-Gagan) to Michael (the Zar), asking for a man to convert the Khazars to Christianity. Constantin converted them successfully. Kunik set the date of this event in 851, and says that if the Khazar letter is genuine, a king by the name of Zacharias should have been included in the list of Khazar kings. Cassel points out that this need not be so. The Knes-chagan (i.e. Fürst-Gagan) was not the high king, and therefore there was no need to mention him. Moreover, it is possible that the Jewish King omitted ¹⁸³ such a name.

Other grounds for doubting the document have been the language and certain expressions which show Spanish influence. With regard to both, we may say that the Khazars had learned the language of the Jews in Spain through the exchange of letters which Joseph mentioned. Thus the concluding greeting, בן ישראל, which many scholars have considered to be a clue indicating forgery, may have been borrowed from Chasdai's letter, or else was an imitation of the בן ישראל which the Arabs put at the end of their letters. *General in Jew. letter of the time*

Our document is further upheld by the use of the name גרמניה for the country, from which the messenger had come to Joseph. "This term refers solely to Germany, which is called Namsia among the Arabs, Namtchin (D'Olisson p.222) and is even now called Niemez in the Slavonian lan-

guages; but this appellation could scarcely have been known to the Spaniards among whom Germany went by the name of

אשכנז, under which name it also appears in Chasdai's letter.¹⁸⁴"

In addition to the internal evidence, which we have mentioned, there is also Ibn Daud's testimony to the existence of this letter and Judah Ha-Levi's Cuzari. There can be no doubt that Ha-Levi knew the letters, for he utilized the cave mentioned in Chasdai's letter and the dream, disputation, and the אשכנז (akin to השני הגויס) of Joseph's Answer. That Ha-Levi makes the angel say:

כונתך כצויה אצל הבורא אבל מעשיך אינם כצויהם

while in Joseph's Answer he says: כצויה את דכך וצויה את מעשיך, need cause us no grave worry. Ha-Levi might have been writing from memory and therefore misquoted. Besides these two witnesses, there is also the testimony of another witness, Judah ben Barzillai (Al-Bargeloni) which we shall discuss later. It might be said that the contents of Joseph's answer have been found to be in perfect harmony with the accounts of Greek and Arabic writers and so, "it is impossible to accuse the late printer, Isaac Akrish, of any fabrication of the essence of what is contained in the letters of Chasdai and Joseph. But if there is any point where we might suspect the copies of the letter in print, then that suspicion must fall only upon the truth of the sections in fine writing, viz., the salutations and conclusions of both letters. Knowing the special yearnings and longings of the generation of Akrish, we may look upon the words in the beginning of Joseph's letter, "Because the nations say unto them that

Israel has neither dominion nor kingdom....and it would be for them for an uplifting of heart and an opportunity of answering those who say to them that Israel has no remnant as a sort of explanation of the letters, added by Akrish, to prove to the nations of the world, that even after the destruction of the Temple, Israel had in many places its own rulers and kings (as for example, the kings of the tribes beyond Sambatyon, the Hemjaretim in Arabia and the Khazars) and serving as a tonic to the Spanish exiles in Turkey.

"The scholars have also doubted Joseph's words in the conclusion of his letter: "And as for us, our eyes are to the Lord our God, and to the sages of Israel, to the Yeshiva in Jerusalem and to the Yeshiva in Babylon"-- for they did not know what has since been revealed to us by the discoveries of the Genizah, that actually Palestine was stirred to new life in the tenth century and from the days of b. Meir, there were Gaonim and leaders there, with the title גאון , who contended with the Gaonim of Babylon for influence outside the country.

"It is also possible to find reason to doubt the heading and conclusion of Chasdai's letter because it contains longings for redemption and for the messianic days, in a measure the like of which is found paralleled only after the persecutions of the Middle Ages, among the exiles of Spain and Germany. Chasdai's question regarding 'the end of the wonders' and the distress expressed in the words, 'and we have nothing to reply when they say to us all the day long: Every people has its kingdom but you have no memorial on earth'

also awaken suspicion because the words of King Joseph fit them. But even here we should be cautious not to suspect too much. It is well known to us, that in the age close to the time of Chasdai, in the generation of Samuel Hanaggid and Solomon ibn Gabirol, the longing for redemption already held sway in a large measure in Hebrew poetry. The echo is heard in the poetry of Samuel Hanaggid; and in the songs of Gabirol, especially the 'Songs of Redemption', the yearnings for 'the end of the wonders' was expressed in excellent¹⁸⁵ poetry. And so, even if we admit that Akrish added a few remarks in decorating the letters, in their headings and conclusions, the matter does not affect the practical contents of the two letters which were published in his periodical

תשובה לר"י¹⁸⁶

We thus see that even on these points where the letters are most open to suspicion, we have reason to proceed with caution and to regard them as genuine.

The internal evidence and the testimony of the Jewish writers, ibn Daud and Ha-Levi, would be sufficient to establish clearly the authenticity of these letters of Chasdai and Joseph, but the data are also confirmed by the general history and by another Hebrew document and by the testimony of Judah Al-Bargeloni. It is with a consideration of the general history, (the Arab writers in particular), of the Hebrew document discovered by Schechter, and of the testimony of Judah Al-Bargeloni that we shall now concern ourselves.

Chapter Four

The Khazars

The Khazars or Chazars were a nation of Finnish origin, related to the Bulgars, Avars, Ugurs or Hungarians. 187
 "M. St. Martin suspects them to be the same with the Hunnish nation of the Acatires or Agazzires. They are called by the Greek historians Eastern Turks; like the Madjars and other Hunnish or Finnish tribes, they had probably received some admixture from the genuine Turkish races. Ibn Haukal (Oriental Geography) says that their language was like the Bulgarian, and considers them a people of Finnish or Hunnish race." 188
 Other scholars, however, regard the Khazars as of Turkish or Mongolian origin. 189

They were known to the Greeks by the name $\chi\alpha\zeta\alpha\rho\alpha\iota$; 190
 to the Arabs by the name of אלכזר ; 191 to the Armenians as ק'ז'ר ; 192 to the Chinese under the name Kosa; 193
 and to the Hebrews by different forms of the name Khazar-- viz., כזר , אלכזר , כזר , כזר , כזר , כזר , כזר , כזר . 194
 Rabinowitzyz says that the Arab writers called them חזר , and Nestor (Russian) called them כזר , but the Hebrew writers in order not to call any Israelite by a reviled name (i.e. חזר) wrote כזר or כזר . 195
 Har-kavy rightly points out that Rabinowitz is wrong, when he says that the Jewish scribes wrote כזר intentionally instead of חזר in order not to utter the reviled thing, for כזר is correct, grammatically and morphologically. It is pronounced like the Russian χ . Many times, in Arabic, the ج is used for the Hebrew ח , e.g., חזר is

equivalent to the Arabic **15X** . Moreover, **240** is
found in the Bible (Neh.10:21) as a proper name.
196

The Khazars appeared in the Caucasus in the first and second centuries. Moses of Chorene mentions an invasion of Armenia by the Khaziers in the second century.¹⁹⁷ They settled in Armenia where they became very powerful. They were a strong war-like people and made themselves feared and respected in the ancient world. They united with the Emperor Julian in his wars (363 c.e.) against Persia. It was because of fear of an invasion by them that the Persian King, Kobad (488-531) built a line of forts against them; the same fear prompted his son, Chosroes (531-579), to build the wall of Derbent. In the sixth century, they migrated westward and settled in the territory bounded by the Sea of Azov, the Don, the lower Volga, the Caspian, and the northern Caucasus. They founded a kingdom on the Volga (which they called the Itil or Atel) at the place near which it empties into the Caspian. They subjugated the Caucasian Goths in the seventh century. In 626-627, they rendered valuable assistance to Heraclius in his campaign against the Persians; as a result of which Heraclius invited them to move from the plains of the Volga to the mountains of Georgia. Many of them under Jebu Chaghan (the Ziebel Chaghan of the Greek writers) moved. In 669, the Ugrians came under their rule. In 679, they subjugated the Bulgarians. They also engaged in fierce and stubborn fights with the Arabs. In 651, Selman, the general of Caliph Osman, fell in battle with the Khazars at the river Balandjar. In the time of the Caliph Yezid (722), they engaged in violent battles with the Moham-

medans. In 730, the toops of Hisham suffered a decisive defeat at their hands, as a result of which Ardebil was plundered in 731, Aderbaidjan was laid waste and the country up to Mosul was sacked. The Khazars also made the Russian Slaves tributary to them. Thus, in the second half of the ninth century, their boundaries extended from the Jaik to the Dnieper, from the Caspian Sea, from the southern tip of the Caucasus about Derbend up to the middle of the Volga to the source of Donetz, and over Kiev to Oka.¹⁹⁸

The power of the Khazars is indicated by the marital alliances sought with them by famous princes. Justinian II married Theodora, a sister of the Khazar King. Leo the Isaurian had his son Constantin married to Irene, the daughter of the Khazar King, and Irene's son became Leo IV (775-780). Their power lasted until the middle of the tenth century when the Slavonian tribes won their independence from them. Then the Slavonian tribes ~~invaded~~ invaded and destroyed their center at the mouth of the Volga. Sarkel was captured in 965, and in 969 the Russians under Prince Svyatoslav of Kiev seized Itil and Semender and drove the Khazars from the Caspian shores. The Khazars maintained their independence in the Crimea until 1016, when Mstislav I, allied with Byzantines, blotted them out. Some of the Khazars fled to Spain,¹⁹⁹ and the nation disappeared from the scene of history.

The Jews made their appearance in this kingdom of the Khazars at a very early date. Greek inscriptions from the year 80-81 "testify to the existence of a well organized Jewish community, with a house of prayer in Tauris, on the northern shores of the Black Sea."²⁰⁰ In the fifth and sixth

centuries, the persecutions of the Jews by the Byzantine Church forced the Jews to migrate to the Taurian colonies. In the year 723, Leo the Isaurian, Emperor of Byzantium, issued his cruel decree against the Jews, demanding their acceptance of Christianity. Some Jews chose baptism reluctantly. Many Jews left their homes in Asia Minor and moved to the Crimean peninsula "where the uncivilized inhabitants of Scythian, Finnish, and Slavonian origin practised idolatry. These Alani, Bulgarians, and Chazars, were, however, not jealous of men of other race and different belief. The Jews spread towards the Caucasus and into the countries of the Khazars on the west coast of the Caspian Sea and at the mouth of the Volga." ^{"201} In the cities of Berdaa, Semender, and Balanyiar the Jews established communities and were tolerated by the natives.

Fadhlan

The Arab writes (ibn Fozzlan, ibn Dastah, Abu Istakhri, Masudi, and Albakri) ²⁰² report that the country of the Khazars was a large prairie state without cities, industry, or culture. All the houses in the capital city (Itil) were wooden or made of grass. Only the king's house was made of stone. The main nourishment of the people was fish and rice. They imported honey, wax, and skins from Kiev and exported sturgeon-bladder.

The kingdom was ruled by an unapproachable king (khagan) who was regarded as almost a divine being. He was seldom seen and took no part in governmental and military affairs. Whenever he rode out, accompanied by his guard, the guard stood at a distance and any people who met the procession prostrated themselves to the ground until he was out

of sight. The executive power was in the hands of another prince. He represented the king, commanded the army, administered the state, imposed taxes and was the virtual king. His title varies with the writers. P. Cassel says "he is called apparently, Khacan bulan, i.e. bolias, as with the ²⁰³ Bulgarians." We shall consider these two offices at greater length in the next chapter. Under the king, there was a group of seven judges, (two for Mohammedans, two for Jews, two for Christians, and one for the Russians, Slavs, ²⁰⁴ etc.) who helped him dispose of legal questions.

The Arab writers tell us that the capital city of the Khazars is divided into ~~two~~ sections, **אכרעס** and **חבולא**. The custom of the people is to reside within the city throughout the winter months. With the coming of spring the people leave the city and make their homes in the fields and in the country, not returning to the city until the winter time. ²⁰⁵

From this brief presentation of the history of the Khazars, the organization of their state, and their manners it will be seen that the contents of the Letter of Chasdai and the Answer of Chasdai are genuine and ~~true~~. Further evidence to the authenticity of the letters and to the conversion of the Khazars is adduced by the Arab writers. They all testify that the Khazars embraced Judaism, but they are not ^a uniform opinion regarding the extent ~~of~~ that conversion. Ibn Foszlan writes that the king and all the Khazars are Jews, but that the Jews compose only a small minority of the population. ²⁰⁶ Likewise the Arab writer, Schemsed-din Dimischki, writes that the Khazars are made up of two

ad-Sun Dimischki

classes: the warriors who are Mohammedans and the citizens
 who are Jews. ²⁰⁷ Ibn Dastah, however, maintains that only
 the king, the $X\psi X$ and the officials are Jews and that
 all other inhabitants have different religions. ²⁰⁸ Abu Ista-
 khri is of the same opinion and writes: אין המלך והמלוכה ²⁰⁹

ד'ג'ג' . We thus see that the contents of the letters of
 Chasdai and Joseph are proved true by the general history.
 Thus, on the grounds of internal evidence, corroborative
 evidence, and the testimony of Ha-Levi and of ibn Daud, we
 conclude that the letters except for some slight embellished
 additions by Adrish are genuine and the report of the con-
 version of the Khazars to Judaism is true. These conclusions
 will be further confirmed when we consider the genizah frag-
 ment and the testimony of Al-bargeloni. For the moment,
 however, we may discuss two problems. When did the conversion
 take place, and why?

The fact that we regard the disputation in Joseph's
 Answer as having been written by the Khazar King goes not
 necessarily imply that the conversion took place in just that
 way. All that we have established is that Joseph wrote that
 it took place in that way. Indeed, a different story is told
 by the Arab Abu Albakra. He writes as follows: "The King
 was an idolater. He became a Christian and saw the defects
 of that religion. He consulted one of his officials who
 advised him thus: 'O, my lord, there are three religious
 groups. Send for them, examine their contents and choose
 the correct one!' He sent for a priest, and there was also
 present a Jew well versed in disputation. The Jew said (to
 the priest): 'What is your opinion of Moses and his Torah?'

The priest answered, 'Moses is a prophet and the Torah is true.' The Jew then said to the king: 'Behold, the truth of that which I hold is confirmed.' Then the king asked the priest in what he believed. The priest answered: 'I say that the Messiah, Jesus b. Miriam is the word, and he revealed the mysteries.' The Jew said to the king: 'He says things which I cannot understand, but he verifies my belief.' The priest was confounded. The king then sent for a Moslem, and a wise Moslem was en route but the Jew dispatched a man secretly and had the Moslem poisoned. So the Jew turned the king to Judaism and he became a convert.²¹⁰ But this report of Albakri does not detract from the genuineness of Joseph's Answer. Indeed, it merely confirms the account which tells us that the conversion was preceded by a disputation. The differences in content can be explained easily as due to the prejudice of a Moslem who could not possibly imagine that his faith (if presented) would be rejected by the Khazar King.

When then did this conversion take place? We have already stated that Harkavy's version of Joseph's answer dates the conversion in 620. It is impossible for us to accept this date because the capture of Dariela ^{on} Ardebil, both of which are attributed to "Bulan", did not occur until 672 and 731 respectively. Harkavy accepts Joseph's date as 940 and argues that "from Obadiah to Joseph (940) there were twelve kings, and if we agree that every one ruled twenty-five years, then Obadiah ruled in 640 and Joseph's words, 'after these one of Bulan's descendants, Obadiah?' cannot be accepted as true."²¹¹ But Harkavy errs in attributing

twenty-five years to every king, for Chanukah who is the fourth king in the list was the brother of Obadiah, and we cannot possibly allow Harkavy's figures. Moreover, Ha-Levi testifies that the conversion took place "about 400 years ago", i.e. in 740. Furthermore, in 620, when Mohammed's teachings had hardly begun to be spread among the Arabs, it is hardly possible that a Moslem Kadi had penetrated into the distant land of the Khazars. Only several decades later²¹² was Mohammedanism spread. The date, 740, is not accepted by the Arab, Masudi. Masudi states that the king and his princes became Jews during the time of Haroun Al-Raschid²¹³ (786-809). Cassel, therefore, argues for 800 as the year for the conversion. He regards Ha-Levi's "400 years" as a round number which could have meant 350 years. Moreover, he adds, in 724, Leo the Isaunian had his son married to a Khazar princess; Cassel thinks it unbelievable that the Chronicles would have said nothing about it were she a Jewess. Cassel uses the same argument regarding the Khazar King who wanted to marry a Georgian princess, the sister of Prince Ivané.²¹⁴ But, there is no reason why Ha-Levi's figure should be accepted as a round number. Menahem Man and the **משנה** **השנים** **למלכות** **המלכים** both testify to the tradition-²¹⁵ al correctness of the date 740. In addition, the conquest of Ardebil in 731--attributed to the ruler who embraced Judaism--would argue for the year 740. Since many Jews fled into the country of the Khazars as a result of Leo's persecutions in 723, it is not only possible but altogether probable that the acceptance of Judaism by the Khazars can be dated in 740.

Our next question, is, why did the conversion take place? Why did the king and the princes of Khazaria embrace Judaism? The Khazars were a primitive people; their religion was coarse. But their country was situated between the Caliphate of Bagdad and the Byzantine Empire. The trade routes that joined these two powerful states passed through the country of the Khazars, and through the Arab and Greek merchants, the Khazars became acquainted with ~~the~~ Mohammedanism and Christianity. They also learned of Judaism through the Jewish refugees who fled from Leo's cruel measures. Coming into contact with all three faiths, why did they select Judaism?

For Cassel, the explanation is an economic one. The Khazars were situated between the two centers of culture, Byzantium and Bagdad, and were influenced by both. Consequently, the less the industry and education among the Khazars themselves the more was business and commerce monopolized by the strangers--among whom there were also Jews. In those days, Cassel points out, the strongest expression of folk life was religious and political expression yielded precedence to it. It was therefore a vital question in Khazar politics to determine the cultural force with which ~~they~~ should link themselves. The Khazars wanted to preserve themselves; should they choose Christianity or Islam? Either was possible, but there were many considerations. An alliance with the Christian Church in Byzantium would bring the state, through the stream of priests and church missionaries, into a position of dependence upon the prevailing religion, and would, at the same time, incur the ill-feeling

of the Moslem Caliphate which was undesirable at any time and particularly since there were many Mohammedans, especially the royal guard, in the state. On the other hand, the acceptance of Islam would not be politic because the state had a strong inclination towards Europe, bordering as it did upon the Byzantine Empire, and then the many Christians in the realm would have been dispossessed. The leaders of the state, therefore, thought it necessary, because of the central position of the state, and even more because of its dependence upon the cultural streams of the neighboring countries, to maintain a position of strict neutrality. At the same time, the state leaders were ashamed of the uncivilized, heathen elements in their culture and religion, lacking as they did both form and history. Heathendom could not be preserved while Christianity and Mohammedanism pressed from both sides. So, Cassel argues, Judaism provided the neutral zone, and in Joseph's Answer there is a political suggestion of this: both religions confirmed the truth of Judaism and appealed to its records for their support. Thus, the king in professing Judaism, accepted to some extent both of the other faiths. Thus he kept himself neutral and at peace with both--a masterful diplomatic stroke! Therefore, he was fair to both religions, and, therefore, the population of the country, made up of Jews, Mohammedans, Christians, and heathens, had representative judges assisting the king. Though the king and court were Jewish, there was no prejudice against any of the inhabitants; there was peace and equality for all. This is Cassel's explanation: Die Annahme des Judenthums war ein friedlicher Pakt, den er mit

den verschiedenen Confessionen schloss.

Cassel's explanation is cogent. Yet, there seems to be an additional explanation. The documents themselves and even the Arabs tell us that the conversion was the result of a disputation, in which the king recognized the superior spiritual value of Judaism and therefore accepted it. The tremendous power of the Christian Church and its consistent program of proselytism would not have permitted it to countenance such capitulation to Judaism on the part of the Khazar court. This objection cannot be met with an economic explanation. There can be ~~but~~ one explanation for it, an explanation that baffles even economic laws--viz., the spiritual reason. The members of the Khazar~~g~~ court were impressed with the greater spiritual content of Judaism and therefore accepted it as their religion. When we learn, ~~further~~, (as we shall when we examine the Genizah fragment) that the conversion was precipitated by a Jewish general who was the vice-king, then we have an explanation that is logical and one at which Cassel could not have guessed since he had no inkling of the Genizah.

Chapter Five

The Genizah Fragment

Additional information which supports the claim of Chasdai's Letter and Joseph's Answer to truth and which also sheds a great deal of light upon the account of the conversion of the Khazars is contained in a fragmentary letter discovered by Solomon Schechter in the Genizah. This letter was printed with a translation and with notes by Schechter in the Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series, vol.III, October, 1912, no.2. "e shall attempt to establish that this letter was written by a Jewish Khazar, who was close to the affairs of the palace, and that it was sent to Chasdai. A copy of the letter was published by David Cahana in השלח (Hashiloach), 1913, vol.28, pg.523-529 in an article called מקור חדש לגורא הכוזבים. D. Cahana follows Schechter's restoration of the manuscript in the main, but occasionally departs to follow his own reasoning. Consequently, he prefers different readings at times. A. Cahana has also included the letter in his ספר המעשר והתרומה vol. 1, pg.45-48.

The Genizah fragment discovered by Schechter reveals from its contents that it, too, was part of a correspondence. In this case, however, the writer is not King Joseph but obviously a person of lesser station. He speaks of Joseph the king as "my lord" ²¹⁷ and the person to whom the letter is addressed is also called "my lord" ²¹⁸. Moreover, he speaks of the messengers of the person with whom he is communicating, ²¹⁹ which further points to a correspondence. Since the letter is fragmentary we do not know who wrote it, nor

to whom it was sent. From the manner of referring to Joseph, we can say that the writer was undoubtedly a subject of the Khazar monarch, perhaps even a secretary, but he is anonymous. With respect to the person to whom the letter is addressed, we do not know to whom it was sent, nor to which country, whether to Spain, Italy, Egypt, or elsewhere. All indications, however, point to Chasdai whose ~~own~~ evidence shows that he was interested in the Khazars and sent a communication there. As Schechter says, "the possibility of another Jewish grandee, likewise a contemporary of King Joseph, betraying the same curiosity as the vizier of the Caliph of Cordova, and possessed of the means enabling him to fit out expeditions, which expedition also makes its way first to Constantinople--such a possibility--is so remote that it cannot be taken seriously into consideration." ²²⁰

A few words should be said regarding the physical and literary qualities of the fragment. It is made up of ninety-two lines, many of which are obscured and incomplete. The name of the people and of the country is spelled here

קזי and קזיא, with a ק instead of a כ. The country is called אינן קזיא (L.7), the princes are שרי קזיא (L.18), and the capital city is קזי (L.85). But it seems that קזי and קזיא are used interchangeably. ²²¹ Another characteristic is the combination of א and ל into ל, in the words ישראל (L.18,22,25,36,71,etc.), אלהים (L.75), ²²² אלפים (L.89), אלבואב (L.92), and so forth.

Another combination which points to an early date is the word שלקזיא (L.41), where the particle של is joined to the following word. In addition, מקבין (L.16)

original but a copy made in Egypt (the
where the letters of Chasdai were obtained

and ׀ (L.37) are used interchangeably, and Turkey is both
אֶרֶץ טורק'א (L.57) and טורק'א (L.92). The language of the
manuscript is in the main clear Biblical Hebrew, with a few
rabbinic touches.

The fragment begins abruptly with the ^{word} Armenia and
tells that the writer's ancestors fled to Khazaria because
they could not bear the yoke of idolaters. ²²³ Schechter says
that there is here an implication of "a partial or preliminary
conversion on the part of the Khazars, preceding the one des-
cribed in the sequel and corresponding more or less with that
of Bulan." ²²⁴ Schechter further points out that the expres-
sions לשוב (L.19) and וישבו בתשובה (L.35-36) suggest--
rather a renewal of the religion than an initial conversion.
He therefore concludes that the missing pages of the fragment
referred to some sort of a conversion. Despite the fact
that Schechter is speculating and that the implication could
be only that the Khazars were tolerant, it seems that his
conclusion is correct.

The letter continues to say that the people of
Khazaria were without Torah, ²²⁵ and the Jews who came there
also remained "without Torah and Scripture." They inter-
married with ^{the} natives, learned their ways, fought with them
and were fused with them to become one people. They did,
however, practise circumcision and observe the Sabbath.

According to the letter, there was no king in
Khazaria, but the general who was victorious in war was
made the commander-in-chief. ²²⁶ On one occasion, the Jews
(׀'ר'ר') went out to war with them and on that day a cer-
tain Jew was triumphant and repelled the foe. The people of

Khazaria thereupon made him their commander-in-chief. This state of affairs lasted for a long time.²²⁷ Then God became gracious and stirred the heart of the Jewish general so that he repented, for his wife Serah turned his heart (and he consented for he was circumcised); and she and her pious father taught him "the way of life." Schechter points out that this was not a conversion. The general was a Jew and "what Serah and her father had to overcome was not the prejudices of a Gentile, but the indifference of an indolent, easy-going Jew. The general's renewed zeal for the creed of his ancestors²²⁸ apparently not only affected his Jewish brethren, but also gave fresh religious impetus to the native population."

Evidently, proselytizing among the people began, for, so the fragment continues, when the Christian and Moham-²²⁹ medan rulers heard about this matter, they sent ambassadors to the princes of Khazaria, which ambassadors blasphemed Israel and said, "Why do you return to the faith of the Jews who are enslaved by every nation?" These slanders turned the hearts^{*} of the princes of Khazaria to evil. Then the Jewish general (ר' יהודה הכהן) said: "Why should we waste words²³⁰ Let the wise men of Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism come and speak for their respective religions." This was done and the disputation was held. The Christians spoke first, but they were contradicted by the Jews and Mohammedans. Then the Mohammedans spoke and they were contradicted by the Jews and Christians. Then the Jews spoke. They recited the history from the six days of Creation to the Exodus from Egypt until they came to an habitable land.

The Christians and Mohammedans bore evidence to, and confirmed, what they said. But there was also some dissension, so the princes of Khazaria said, "There is a cave in the valley of Tizul.²³¹ Bring out the books which are there and expound them for us. They did so and found the books of Moses' Torah there, which the Jewish scholars explained. Then the Jews and the people of Khazaria returned in complete repentance. Then Jews from Bagdad, Khorassan, and Byzantium came there and they supported the natives and strengthened themselves in their Judaism.²³²

It is clear that the writer of this letter does not attribute the conversion of the Khazars and the Judaization of Khazaria to a supernatural agency or to a miraculous revelation. Jews had been there (L.9) and the Jewish scholars conducted proselytizing work (LL.34-35). Moreover, it was the zeal of a devout Jew and the opportune victory of a Jewish general, which gave him complete authority to achieve his wife's purpose, that elevated Judaism to its position of dignity as the court religion and made it the faith of the mass of the population of Khazaria. The report of the disputation in this letter is much shorter and quite different in character from that in Joseph's Answer. This writer tells the story simply and straightforwardly. His spokesman makes no long speeches and indulge in no theological arguments. Its natural quality bespeaks its historical value. As to the statement about the Jewish immigrants, Joseph's Answer²³³ makes no reference.

After Judaism had been set up as the religion of the land, the fragment continues to tell us that the people

of the country made one of the scholars the judge and called him, in the language of Khazaria, the Chagan (כג). Therefore, the judges who arose after him were called by the name Chagan until this day. As for the great prince (i.e. the Jewish general), they changed his name to Sabriel²³⁴ and made him king.

In this connection, we should recall that Khazaria was, according to historians, governed by two rulers: the grand Chagan, who was regarded as a sort of divinity by the people and who led a secluded life, and the ~~Pegor~~ Peh, who was the vice-king but virtually possessed complete authority because he was the actual governor. It is interesting to note what others have said of these rulers. Sluki said:

"The rulers are called by the name קאן or קאן , which is related perhaps to the name of a sage. That the Hakan should not be taken up with worldly affairs, he had a vice-ruler who was called נפ or נפ , who actually ruled."²³⁵ Jost wrote: "The power of the Chakan was supreme. If he said to an official, "Go, die!", the latter went home²³⁶ and took his own life." Kutschera has somewhat different names for these monarchs; he writes, "As Constantin Porphyrogenitos and Ibn Foszlan agree, the names of the highest Chazar princes are Il~~x~~ and Bak. Il~~x~~ means "the first" in Turkish, and in the word Bak (which Constantin writes Pehh)²³⁷ it is easy to discern the Turkish Beg." Another name for the vice-king who is the virtual ruler is נפ .²³⁸

All the writers testify to the manner of living of these monarchs. Masudi writes, "The קאן is always in his home. He does not know how to ride a horse and never appears, neither to the princes nor the people. He does not

leave his house nor mingle in administrative affairs. If a famine or plague or war or any misfortune come to the kingdom, the princes come to the king and say, 'The rule of this chakan brings nothing but calamity. Either kill him or let us kill him.' Which he does--but if has mercy upon him, he answers that he is not fit to be killed." ²³⁹ The power of the king was very great. On one occasion (in 922) he heard that the Mohammedans had destroyed a synagogue somewhere in the land of Babunj. He thereupon gave orders to destroy the minaret of a certain mosque and to kill the muezzins, and he said, 'I should have destroyed the mosque itself, had I not feared that not a single synagogue would be left standing in the hands of the Mohammedans.' ²⁴⁰

With the Chagan being remote from the people, it is quite probable that the **כאן** mentioned in our fragment was really the vice-king. With Schechter, we would therefore interpret the **כאן** of LL.7 and 42 as meaning the vice-chagan or Peg. It is clear that it was the Jewish general mentioned in LL.11,12, and 21, who became the Sabriel of L.42. There is some hint to this in Joseph's Answer, where Bulan asked the angel to appear **אל פלון השם הגדול**. Schechter says, "If we could assume Sabriel to be Obadiah, then we might recognize in the genizah fragment the supplement to the story of Obadiah, who is regarded by Joseph's Answer as the real founder of Judaism in Khazaria but on whose political activity he dwells no further." It will be remembered, however, that Joseph's Answer tells us what Obadiah did but does not tell us why he did it. Another reason for not looking upon the fragment as a supplement to the older

letter is that, in the fragment, the disputation took place under Obadiah who must have been the descendant of a Jewish immigrant, while in Joseph's Answer the disputation took place in Bulan's reign and Obadiah was Bulan's grandson.²⁴² After the statement that Sabriel was made king, the fragment continues to say that the Khazars are descended from Simeon but that they cannot probe the truth of the matter.²⁴³ The Answer of Joseph which traces his ancestry back to Togarmah is clearly at variance. It seems that the writer of Joseph's Answer realized that he was tracing ~~tracing~~ Joseph's ancestry so he went back to Togarmah. The writer of this fragmentary letter, however, is writing from the Jewish point of view. His interest lies in the nucleus of the old Jewish population, and they (for him) were descended from Simeon.

The letter then continues to tell of the subsequent political complications. The writer deals at length with the relations of the Khazars with the Alani. He says: The King (Sabriel) made peace with our neighbor, the King of

Is, because the kingdom of Alani is the strongest of all the nations that surround us, for the wise men said, 'lest the nations wage war against us and he (the Alani) will join them.' The peace was concluded to help one another in distress, and the terror of God fell upon the surrounding nations so that they did not march against Khazaria. But in the time of King Benjamin,²⁴⁴ all the nations arose against Khazaria and pressed them sorely, according to the counsel of the Byzantine emperor. The King of Asia²⁴⁵ and Turkey and

and Byzantium went to battle, and only the King of ~~the Alani~~ supported Khazaria. For some of them observed the Torah of the Jews. These kings fought against Khazaria

and the King of the Alani invaded their land and smote them beyond recovery. The Lord also smote them before King Benjamin. But in the time of King Aaron, the King of the Alani fought against Khazaria for the Byzantine Emperer had incited him. Then King Aaron hired the King of Turkey to fight against him, and the King of the Alani fell before Aaron who caught him alive. Aaron honored the King of the Alani very much and took the latter's daughter as wife for his son Joseph. Then the King of the Alani swore unto Aaron in truth, and Aaron sent him home and from that time, the fear of Khazaria fell upon the surrounding nations.

It is interesting to note that this writer has dealt at ~~some~~ length with the campaigns concerning the Alani. Joseph's Answer, which is most general in its treatment of the Khazar wars, simply mentions Q'JSX SX in the list of the fifteen nations in the South who are tributary to King Joseph. The Alani were the inhabitants of Alania, so Benjamin of Tudela ²⁴⁶ and Constantinus Porphyrogenitos testify. Whereas our fragment always refers to both people and country as JSX , Benjamin of Tudela speaks of the people as JSX and the country as Q'JSX . Harkavy, on the strength of Jerahme'el's Chronicle (where we find the name JSX), has suggested that the third son of Togarmah ²⁴⁷ Q'JSX be changed to Q'JSX . Khazaria and Alania were adjoining, and evidence to their wars is found in Porphyrogenitos's work. ²⁴⁸ Sahechter thinks that the fear which the Khazars entertained of a concerted attack by the surrounding nations, and which led to a treaty with the Alani, was due to the fact that "the conversion (perhaps even more than the election of a new 'king') was not taken in a meek

spirit by the defeated parties." The peace treaty was concluded with the King of the Alani because he himself had Jewish subjects (L.53). It is obvious that the Aaron mentioned here is Aaron II, ²⁵⁰ the son of Benjamin and the father of Joseph.

After the wars with the Alani, the letter continues: And in the time of my Lord, King Joseph, when there was the persecution in the days of the wicked Romanus, ²⁵¹ and when Joseph learned of it, he flouted at many of the uncircumcised. ²⁵² But Romanus sent gifts to Helgu the King of Russia, and enticed him for his own evil, and Helgu attacked the province ~~for~~ of the Smerians ("סמיר") ²⁵³ at night and captured it by stealth. For the commander, the head of the princes, ("השליח") ²⁵⁴ was not there. But when Bushazi or Pesah the Revereer heard of it, he was infuriated and marched against the cities of Romanus and smote the inhabitants, and he captured three cities and many hamlets, and then marched to Shorshu and fought against it. At this point an edge of the manuscript has decayed and the sentences are fragmentary, ^{but} the sense is clear. Pesah was triumphant in his march; then he turned against Helgu and defeated him and recovered all the spoils which Helgu had taken from the Smerians. Helgu sought clemency by claiming that Romanus had led him on. But Pesah said to him: 'If this is so, attack Romanus even as you have attacked me; then I shall leave you, else I shall take my vengeance here.' Helgu unwillingly marched against Constantinople and attacked it from the sea for four months. His men fell before the fire of the Byzantines, and Helgu was too ashamed to return to his own country. He fled by sea to Persia and perished

there. And the Russians became the subjects of the Khazars.

This detailed account of the war with the Russians is missing in Joseph's Answer. There we have but a brief statement that the Khazars guard the mouth of the river against the invasions of the Russians. In this present account, ~~there~~ are several matters to consider. In the first place, there is the persecution of Romanus. He reigned from 919-945. The persecution is not mentioned elsewhere, ²⁵⁵ and Graetz thinks that Romanus is being confused with Lee. Moreover, the account that follows (of Helgu's participation in the war) is not known in Hebrew records, and the non-Jewish sources differ so widely from our text that the two accounts cannot be harmonized and should be left, as Schechter says, to the students of Russian history. According to the ²⁵⁶ Russian sources, the capture of the ~~Sclavians~~ took place in 884 and it was Oleg who bore the victory over the Khazars; moreover, ~~for~~ ^{then}, Oleg's expedition against Byzantium was in 907 (long before Romanus ascended the throne) and it was the Russians who defeated the Greeks. On the ~~the~~ other hand, ²⁵⁷ the Byzantine sources record nothing of Oleg's expedition and say that it was Igor, the successor of Oleg, who led the Russians' expedition against Constantinople and suffered defeat at the hands of Romanus sometime in 941. It is apparent that the writer of our letter was confused for he placed all these events in the time of Joseph, about the middle of the tenth century, whereas Oleg died in 912. Moreover, our writer gives us a clue to the time when he wrote the letter. He says that "Russians were subdued ~~under~~ the hands of the Khazars," which shows that he knew nothing of

mentioned
by Masada
error
will
established

the defeat of the Khazars by Svyatoslav of Kiev, in 966. Another indication of the early date of the letter is the form of Oleg's name **הלג**. It resembles closely the Scandinavian Helgi and its use points to an early source when the Russian heroes were still called by their Scandinavian names.

After the account of the battles with the Russians, the writer continues: The name of our contry as we have found in books is **ארקנוס** (Arkanos) and the name of the captial city is **קתר**. The river that runs through the city is **אטל** (Atel or Volga), which is to the south (**ימי**) of the sea through which your messengers came to Constantinople. And I believe that it starts from the Great Sea.

Some of these points need clarification. The name **ארקנוס** is not found in the other sources, but it is not too different from **אל קנוס** (the third son of Togarmah in Josippon's list, for which Jerahme'el has **אל**). In both we may detect the old name for the Caspian Sea which was called Mare Hyrcanum and later the Khazar Sea. Joseph's answer also states that the river runs through the city. But the statement that the river "is south of the sea through which your messengers came" is perplexing, for the Volga is to the north of any sea through which messengers might come to Constantinople. Nor is any light shed upon the problem by the statement that "I believe that it starts from the Great Sea." By the Great Sea, Chasdai meant the Atlantic Ocean; it usually means the Mediterranean. The Volga empties into the Caspian Sea. Our conclusion can be only that the writer knew nothing of geography or else he is talking of

places which we cannot identify.

The writer then continues to say that "our country is 2160 ris from that sea. The distance between our country and Constantinople is nine days by sea and twenty-eight days by land, and the extent of my lord's dominion is fifty days, and those ^{who} fight us are Asia, Bab al Abuah, Zibus, Turkey, and Luznu." And here the manuscript ends abruptly.

The writer's statistics are not clear. We know that one ris is two-fifteenths of a mile, ²⁶⁰ so that 2160 ris would be 288 miles. The distance from Sarkel (on the northeastern tip of the Sea of Azov) or from the nearest point on the Black Sea to the mouth of the Volga is at least 400 miles. Moreover, Chasdai's letter states that the distance from Constantinople is fifteen (not nine) days by sea, and does not mention the distance by land except to say that there are many nations between them. ~~But~~ The figure of fifty days for the extent of the kingdom hardly agrees, on the one hand, with Joseph's statement that nations to the North for a distance of a four months' journey are tributary to him, or on the other, with Joseph's dimensions of his country: 20 parasangs to the East, 30 to the South, 40 to the West, and 30 to the North. This figure is also at variance with Chasdai's statement that the length of the country is 266 miles.

It becomes increasingly clear as we read and study this genizah fragment that it differs radically from Joseph's Answer. The writer of this letter is a subject, not the king; this letter is different from Joseph's Answer in style and spelling; the cause for the conversion is the

zeal of a Jewess, not the appearance of an angel in a dream; the disputation is brief and of a narrative character, not long and of a theological nature; the disputation was held under Obadiah ~~who was the descendant~~ of a Jewish immigrant, not under Bulan whose grandson (so Joseph says) Obadiah was; the cave of Tizul is ~~mentioned~~ here, and not in Joseph's Answer; descent is traced from Simeon, not from Togarmah; the interest of the writer is in the Jews; the wars with the Alani and Russians are discussed in detail, not passed over in a general way; the distance of Khazaria from Constantinople is nine days by sea, not fifteen days (as Chasdai's Letter has it), and the figure for the extent of the country is different from that in Joseph's Answer.

We can therefore see that this letter was not another version of Joseph's Answer. In the first place, it is factually out of accord with that Answer and, in the second place, it is not likely that the King dictated one letter in the first person and caused a secretary to write another in the third person. Schechter ~~felt~~ that either the genizah fragment of Joseph's Answer was authentic, "for it is not likely that somebody would have had the courage to write a different letter after the King had sent the one written or dictated by him." ²⁶¹ Naturally it is difficult to speculate with a document that is of a fragmentary nature and which might have contained a great deal more of historical material, but recently new information has been discovered which shows that Schechter's feeling was faulty, and that both the Answer of Joseph and the Genizah fragment are both old and authentic. Before proceeding with an examination of the new evidence,

we can list certain conclusions. Joseph's Answer came from the monarch; the genizah fragment did not. Both have been proved authentic: Joseph's Answer by its internal evidence, corroborative evidence from general history, and by the testimony of Ha-Levi and Ibn Daud; the genizah fragment has been proved authentic by its internal evidence and by its natural tone which bespeaks historicity. Yet there are discrepancies between the two. As we shall show, both must be retained. How, then, are we to regard them? They must be regarded as two different accounts, springing from different sources, but relating the same incident. The first, though written by the king, is not quite so reliable as the second because it explains in a legendary manner what took place simply and naturally. We must therefore prefer the report of the anonymous writer where it clashes with that of the king and, furthermore, we must regard the story of Bulan's dream in Joseph's Answer as Joseph's explanation of what took place, but not as historical data.

Piecing the sources together, we can say with all certainty that in the year 740, in the time of Obadiah, and as the result of a religious disputation, Judaism became the court religion of the Khazars. In that conversion, a cave, in which Jews had kept their faith and had stored their sacred writings, played a part.

Chapter Six
The Last Word

The conclusion which we have just reached regarding the authenticity of both letters and the truth of their contents is further substantiated by the testimony of a trustworthy witness who lived in a generation close to those events. The witness is Judah ben Barzillai, a contemporary of Ha-Levi. He was found by R. Simcha Asaph, the Jerusalem scholar. We shall let Dubnow give us the account.

"Among the fragments of the ספר הנתיב of R. Judah Albarzaloni (אלברצלוני) which were not included in the portion of the book printed as מקצ' נדרמים (Berlin, תכס"א), but which remained in manuscript form in the British Museum, Rabbi Asaph found a fragment which was short but of great value and which touches on the question of the Khazars. He printed it in the 'שורן' (1925, vol.5, חשין, תשי"ב, Berlin, 1924--Hebrew 113-117).

"The great rabbi Judah Albarzaloni lived about one generation before the witnesses (Ha-Levi and ibn Daud) mentioned. His book was written between 1090-1105, and about 140 years separated him from the period of the letters. In the above mentioned fragment, he deals with the legal aspects of the question mentioned in Zebahim 116B, 'it is forbidden to assist Gentiles or to act as their agents in offering sacrifices in this time,' and on the point Albarzaloni speaks of the Khazars who became Jews and who (by virtue of a suggestion in Joseph's Answer) sacrificed, i.e., the King Bulan built אהל ואנן ומטה ומזבח. וכל הקדש. And the Rabbi

continues with~~a~~ clarification of his doubts. He says, 'And I have seen in ~~parts~~ of ~~the~~ texts the copy of a letter that Joseph, the King ben Aaron the Khazar priest, sent to Chasdai, and I do not know whether that letter was authentic or not. If you should say that it is a fact that the Khazars who were the sons of Togarmah became Jews, then it is not clear whether all that is written in that document is real and true or not, or ~~whether~~ false things have been written therein, or added thereto, or were scribal errors. And this which we have been forced to write about it was due to the fact that I have found a copy of a different letter which a Jew in Constantinople wrote in Hebrew and he mentioned the wars which took place between the kings of Constantinople and Aaron the King and so too the wars between those heathen kings and Joseph the son of Aaron, ²⁶² and also this matter-- that the Khazars became Jews and they had kings who were non-Jews (~~D'7A~~), all of which, I have heard, is written in the books of the Arabs who lived at that time.'" And from then on the writer copies part of Joseph's letter to Chasdai which deals with the genealogy of the king's family, the dream of Bulan and his conversion (with the omission of the section of the disputation between the representatives of the three faiths), and the order of the kings who ruled after him (omitting the second king, Obadiah, who according to the accepted version, brought to his land many Jewish scholars who interpreted the Bible and Talmud for him.

We continue with Dubnow's conclusion: "The work of Albargaloni teaches us: ~~12~~ (1) In the eleventh century there were circulated among the Jews in Spain copies of

the letters of Chasdai and King Joseph and also of the letter of the Khazar in Constantinople; and (2) the letter of King Joseph stirred up many doubts in Rabbi Albargaloni's mind, not on historical grounds but because he had to utilize the information in interpreting an important religious law and therefore had to be precise about the particulars of the event. Nevertheless, he was inclined to believe the truth of the matter because he had heard 'that all this is written in the books of the Arabs' (i.e., the Arabs of the tenth century). Regarding the section of the account that tells of the angel who came to Bulan in the dream of the night, he wrote: 'I have found it necessary to write things which seem like exaggerations'; but this reference applies only to the legendary narrative and not to the kernel of the story. Obviously, the root of the trouble was, as stated--did all the Khazars become Jews or only a part of them? For this would be the deciding point in the religious question already mentioned. In his day, many already knew the truth, that only the kings and princes embraced the Jewish religion (according to the testimony of the Arab writers of that time). Ibn Daud with his own eyes saw descendants of the Khazars. He must have known many details about them which he did not include in his book because they were unessential to his purpose.

"The conclusion is this. At a time close to the time when the Khazar kingdom endured, there were circulated in Spain, and perhaps in other countries, different letters in the names of King Joseph and the Khazar from Constantinople and Chasdai and it was also known to many people what the

Arab writers of that generation said of the Khazars. At that time, it was impossible to deny the actual events, but there were some who at the time were undecided about the details, as for example, Rabbi Albargaloni.²⁶³"

This evidence clinches our thesis. The internal evidence of the letters themselves, confirmation from general history, and the Arab writers in particular,, the testimony of Ha-Levi and ibn Daud, and now the evidence of Albargaloni-- they make a formidable and indisputable array of arguments-- and estalish indisputably these fac^{ts}: (1) The letters were written by the person to whom they are attributed, and (2) the acceptance of Judaism by the Khazar court took place in 740 c.e.

Finis

Notes

1. Dozy: Moslems in Spain, pg.446
2. Graetz: History of the Jews, vol.3, pg.214
3. Jost: Geschichte des Judenthums, pg. 394
4. Ibid. pg.394
5. Al-Charizi: **Tachkemoni**. Stern ed., 18th macama; pg.30B. Vienna, 1854
6. Luzzatto, Samuel D.: **בית האוצר** pg.22B,36B. Lemberg,1847
7. Ibid. 31A
8. Casse~~l~~, David: Chisdai, the Son of Isaac. Miscellany of Hebrew Literature, pg.77
9. Luzzatto: **בית האוצר** pg.26B,27A. The Hebrew is:
גש בקרב אירחים כאשר בתוך חוחים מכל צדדים כלי טחורים משלם בלי הפסיון
10. Chasdai's Letter to Joseph. Cuzari, Wilna ed.,pg.2Aa
11. Ibid. pg.3Aa
12. Graetz: History of the Jews, vol.3, pg.216
13. Chasdai's Letter to Joseph. Cuzari, Wilna. ed. pg.2Ba,b. Dozy: Moslems in Spain, pg.437, calls Chasdai "The Inspector-General of the Customs."
14. Chasdai's Letter to Joseph. op.cit., pg.2Bb. Chasdai mentions the embassies of **מלך אשכנזי** (undoubtedly that of Otto I, 956-59), **מלך גבלי**, and **מלך קיסטניא**.
ועל ידי תבאנה מונחם ועל ידי תבאנה גבולותם
15. Graetz: op.cit. vol.3,pg.218. The article on Chasdai in Jewish Encyclopedia has the Emperor Constantine VII; D. Cassel, "Chisdai, the Son of Isaac" (op.cit.,pg.77) has Romanus II (who was co-regent with his father from 945); Zedner's note on Chasdai's letter, in Miscellany of H.L. pg.96 says: "Ebn-Djoldjol (Abdallatif, p.496) also mentions an embassy from Romanus II."
16. Graetz: op.cit., pg.218 (vol.3)
17. Ibid. vol.3, pg.218.
18. Cassel, D.: op.cit., pg.77
19. Jewish Encyclopedia: Article, Chasdai
20. Luzzatto, S.D.: **בית האוצר** pg.22B
21. Dozy: Moslems in Spain, pg.437-438
22. Ibid. pg.442,3. The poet to whom Dozy refers is Dunash ibn

Labrat and the poem in question is to be found in the ספר תשובות לרשב"א, Filipowski ed. pg. 1.

The Hebrew reads:

אשכנזי לידים כבש עשרה מבצרים
והיבה הזמר בשית ושמי' והוביל בן כורמיר ושירים וכמיר
גבר גבור מלך הביאו כהלך ומחזיק בפסך לעס הם לו צרים
ומשך השוטה יקנתו טוטה אשר היתה עוטה מלוכה בגברים
ומריב חכמותיו ומעוז ערומותיו ירב תחבולותיו בחלק מאמנים

23. Dozy: Moslems in Spain; note, pg.442, "Judeum quendam, cui nomen Hasdeu, quo neminem umquam prudentiorem se vidisse aut audisse nostri testati sunt." Vita Johannis Abbatis Gorziensis, in Pertz, Mon. Germ. Hist. tome IV, p.371.
24. Graetz: History of the Jews, vol.3, pg.219.
Jewish Encyclopedia: article, Chasdai ibn Shaprut
Cassel, D.: Chisdai, the Son of Isaac. pp. cit. pg.81
Jost: Geschichte des Judenthums. pg.395
25. Graetz dates Chasdai's death in 970, but Jacob Mann dates it in 990. If Moses ben Chanoch did not come to Cordova until 970, and we know that Chasdai survived him, then Chasdai could not have died as early as 970.
26. Luzzatto, S.D.: בית האוצר pg.23B. The poem of Menachem...
ובלכתו בשנידים והיו כעבדים קנוים ויכורים
וגם היה היה כסלג בציה
27. Graetz: History of the Jews, vol.3, pg.217
28. Luzzatto, S.D.: op.cit. pg.23A, and תשובות לרשב"א
Filipowski ed. pg. 1 where Chasdai is addressed as
להשי כגש כלה
29. Graetz: op.cit. pg.217. In תשובות לרשב"א pg.2
we read of Chasdai, והונו אל סורה ישולג בספרים
30. Graetz: op.cit. pg.211,218.
31. Ibid. pg.211,218. Also Jewish Encyclopedia: article, Chasdai ibn Shaprut.
32. The date of this incident is not certain. While cruising about in Mediterranean waters, the Caliph's admiral, ibn-Ruhamis, took as captives, four Jewish scholars. According to the ספר יוחסין, this took place in 943. According to Graetz, they came from Sura about 942. According to Jacob Mann, these four scholars were, in all probability, sent out from Pumbedita-Bagdad, about 970, to collect funds from Jewish communities in the countries around the Mediterranean to relieve the impoverished condition of their school. One of these scholars was Rabbi Moses ben Chanoch who was ransomed by the Jews of Cordova.

beginning
in the
middle
of the
sentence
Mann
943

33. Zacuti, A.:
ed. pg.209-210

ספר יוחסין השלם

Filipowski

34. Graetz: op.cit. pg.209,210,228. Also D.Cassel: Chisdai, the Son of Isaac, op.cit. pg.85

35. Graetz: op.cit. pg.230

36. Zacuti, A.: ספר יוחסין השלם pg.209-210
ed. Venice, 1545, pg.20A. The account is taken in toto from
Ibn David: ספר הקבלה, ed. Venice, 1545, pg.29A.

37. In Joseph's Answer to Chisdai, Wilna ed. pg.3B, Chasdai is addressed as נאש אולה and in ספר יוחסין pg.209, he is called הנשיא.

38. Graetz: שני ימי יצחק, vol.3, pg.350
Luzzatto: op.cit. pg.31B. Menachem in his letter to Chasdai wrote, "Remember that you brought me from a distant land, from a blissful home. You drew me away from a green pasture. I hastened and rushed to you--neither scorching suns nor terrible winds halted me. I did not come because of fear of your Highness, nor was I attracted by the hope of getting rich presents--I came only because of brotherly love and glorious friendship."

39. Menachem served as Chasdai's secretary and the letter which Chasdai wrote to Joseph, King of the Chazars, has at its beginning an acrostic which spells out the name: Menachem ben Saruk. This acrostic is ample proof that Menachem wrote the famous letter. (See pg. 24-25).

40. ספר תשובות דונש בן לברט

41. Poem of Dunash, Filipowski ed. pg.2. Dunash referred to Menachem as follows: השיבות ספר על פותי ספר לנל אמי
שני במלכ נחביר

42. These calumnies reached Chasdai on the Sabbath, for Chasdai was at home, free from the service of the Caliph. Luzzatto, op.cit. 25B,29B

43. Ibid. pg.28B

44. Ibid. pg.26A. Both the Parma and Padua versions of the letter read, "From Menachem, in prison," but Luzzatto points out that nowhere in the letter is there any reflection of actual imprisonment.

45. Ibid. pg.26B

46. Ibid. pg.27B

47.

47. Ibid. pg.28B, 29A,B

48. Ibid. pg. 31A

49. Ibid. 32A
50. Ibid. 32A
51. Ibid. 32A
52. Ibid. 22A. See note 41
53. Ibid. 29A
54. Ibid. 25B, 26A
55. Ibid. 29A
56. Ibid. 29A
57. Ibid. 34B
58. Ibid. 21B. In the Machbereth, under אֵל.
59. Ibid. 29A
60. Ibid. 34B
61. Chasdai's Letter to Joseph. Cuzari, Wilna ed. pg.2B
62. Ibid. 3B
63. Ibid. 2A. These books are called סְפָרֵי חֲכָמִים. We do not know which books are meant. Saadya knew of the Chazars and mentioned them in his writings. Perhaps Chasdai has reference to contemporaneous Arabic sources.
64. Ibid. 2A,B
65. Ibid. 2B
66. Ibid. 2B
67. Ibid. 2B
68. The old editions of Chasdai's letter (Akrish, Buxtorf, and Wilna) have here Berada, but both Harkavy and Cahana change correctly to Berdaa. The English translation of Zedner's German version of the letter (op.cit. p.98) has the following note: "Berdaa was the principal town of Arran in western Armenia on the road to Bab el Abbab, from which the way over Semender led to the capital of the kingdom of the Cuzars on the Itil."
69. A. Cahana, on the authority of Ibn Hamkal, says that the מַסְגֵּדָא was מַסְגֵּדָא. Zedner, on the authority of Masudi, calls the same place מַסְגֵּדָא.
70. The Wilna edition of the Chasdai's Letter has here מַסְגֵּדָא. Akrish, Buxtorf, Harkavy, and Cahana have מַסְגֵּדָא. The

for show

question is whether or not there were Jews in Hungary at that time. A.I.K.D. in a note to Zedner's translation (op.cit. p.99) says: "Löwe in Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, 1839 (p.629) has an essay where we read that Hungarian legislation first mentions the Jews under the reign of Ladislaus the Holy, 1077-1095, but in a way which implies their earlier presence and diffusion in the kingdom."

71. Buxtorf has here רומניה, which might be explained as Roumania. However, it is probably a misprint for רומניא.
72. Buxtorf has רמאניא, and the Wilna ed. רמאניא. But we must regard these as incorrect spelling for רמאניא, (which Cahana has) or רמאניא (which Harkavy has).
73. Joseph's Answer to Chasdai. Cuzari, Wilna. ed. p.3B. Akrish, Buxtorf, and Cahana also have Jacob ben Eliezer, but Harkavy has Isaac ben Eliezer. P. Cassel in Der Chazarische Königsbrief, p.69, says that the name Isaac which Harkavy has could have come only from Chasdai's Letter, where Mar Isaac ben Nathan is mentioned as the first messenger, whose mission was unsuccessful. The רומניא mentioned is Germany, for Germany was called רומניא by the Arabs, Greeks, and Slavs. Cf. A. Cahana, ההיסטוריה של ישראל vol.1, pg.41, note A, and Zifrinowitsch, Cuzari, p.34, note.2

Chapter II

74. Hirschfeld, in Kitab Al Khazari, p.297, note 10, says, "Isaac b. Cardinal, however, retained the original name רומניא. The pronunciations Cosri and Kuzri are incorrect.."
75. Ibid. p.35. Wilna, Buxtorf, and Zifrinowitsch ed. of Cuzari, 1st. Maamar, section 1.
76. Ibid. p.39. Maamar 1, section 2.
77. Ibid. pp.40-44. Maamar 1, sections 4-10. For Christianity, Wilna edition has רומניא; Buxtorf and Zifrinowitsch have רומניא.
78. Ibid. pp.82-83. In editions of Cuzari, Ma'amar 2, section 1. Wilna edition has רומניא; Zifrinowitsch has רומניא.
79. Ibid. p.197. Cuzari, Ma'amar 3, section 74.
80. Ibid. p.293-295. Ma'amar 5, sections 22-28.
81. Abraham ibn Daud, ספר הקבלה in סדר עולם רבא, Venice 1545. p.32B, col.1-2.
82. P. Cassel: Der Chazarische Königsbrief, p.63.

~~Chapter III~~

83. These words are those of Harkavy's edition. In the Akriah, Buxtorf, and Wilna editions, the last words of the acrostic are **אֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּחוֹת**. These words are meaningless. In Harkavy's text, **אֵלֶּה** is inserted before **אֵלֶּה**; **אֵלֶּה** is changed to **אֵלֶּה**; **אֵלֶּה** to **אֵלֶּה**; and **אֵלֶּה** to **אֵלֶּה**. Thus, we have a meaningful name, Menachem ben Saruk.

84. Line 1: **הַמִּשְׁפָּחוֹת הַנִּפְלְאוֹת**

85. Line 13: **חֵילֵינוּ כְּבִינָקִים יְכוּזִין שְׁנֵים לְרִבְבָּהּ וְאַחַר לְמֵאָה**

86. Line 34: **סִכַּת רוּר קִינִית מֵאֵךְ יָב תְּקִיג אֲמִיגָה כְּאִשִּׁי קִיגָה**

87. Harkavy's version of the Letter. Guzari, Zifrinowitsch ed., Warsaw 1911, pg.27, note 5. One such resemblance in style is: letter: **וְהָיָה יְכוּזִין שְׁנֵים לְרִבְבָּהּ וְאַחַר לְמֵאָה**

Machbeth: **תָּהִי בְּלִבִּי כִּפִּי מֵאֲדָמָה הַשְּׁמֵת שְׁנֵים לְרִבְבָּהּ**
pg.1. **לְשׁוֹן יְהוּדִית**

88. Chasdai's Letter, Wilna ed. p.2Aa; other editions have same reading.

89. Ibid. p.2Aa

90. Ibid. p.2Aa

91. Ibid. p.2Ab

92. Ibid. p.2Ab

93. Ibid. p.2Ba

94. Ibid. p.2Bb

95. Ibid. p.3Aa

96. Ibid. p.3Aa

97. Ibid. p.3Ab

98. Ibid. p.2Ab **וְהָיָה מִשְׁחָצַל לִים הַמִּהְלֵךְ אֵל אֲנֹכְכֶם הַיּוֹצֵא מִן הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל וְסוֹבֵב כָּל הָאֲרָץ**

It is obvious that the **אֲנֹכְכֶם** is the Mediterranean, and the **הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל** is the Atlantic Ocean, for a little further on, Chasdai speaks of the **יָם הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר אֵין אַחֲרָיו יְשׁוּבָה**. And Chasdai goes on to say that it is a distance of 3000 miles from this **יָם הַגָּדוֹל** to Constantinople. (Actually the distance is about 2500 miles.)

99. Harkavy's version of the letter reads 60 astronomical

degrees or 266 miles. There is an obvious discrepancy here. Since one degree is equal to 66 and 2/3 miles, 60 degrees would be 4000 miles, an impossible figure! Harkavy's manuscript also speaks of 600,000 miles in 9 degrees when it should be 600; evidently the $\eta\delta\lambda$ is an insertion.

100. The name of the second man $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ has been taken as a proper name, on the basis of the following words:
 $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ $\eta\lambda\alpha$ $\delta\eta\lambda$. It may, however, be possible that $\delta\eta\lambda$ is a variant form of $\eta\lambda\alpha$ and that it means simply "the learned man."
101. It is true that Muhammed did not rule, but his death was not a natural one. He was assassinated by his brother ~~Mu~~tarrif at the instigation of his father, Abdallah. Dozy, op.cit. p.382.
102. Akriash: $\eta\lambda\alpha$ $\eta\lambda\alpha$, p.10B.
 Buxtorf: Preface, p.b3.
103. Zifrinowitsch, op.cit. p.28 and Cahana, op.cit. p.37.
 Cf. Dozy.
104. The older documents--Akriash, Buxtorf, and Wilna--retain an error, obviously due to a misprint, and speak of the Abassids as $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ $\eta\lambda\alpha$. Harkavy and Cahana are right; by changing the δ to a η , we have the correct form, $\eta\lambda\alpha$ $\eta\lambda\alpha$, meaning the descendants of Abu l'Abbas.
105. Dozy: op.cit. p.161-164.
106. Prince of the Believers.
107. We have already discussed the other embassies. Paul Cassel: Der Chazarische Königsbrief, p.83, says, "Abd-er-Rahman also received an embassy of the Hungarians about which Chasdai is silent. Chasdai mentions one of the kings of the Gebalim; i.e., Chrobaten whom Chasdai, correctly enough, distinguished from the Hungarians, and which was that of Krjesimir the Great (958--)."
108. A. Cahana $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ $\eta\lambda\alpha$, vol.1, p.39, note.
109. A.I.K.D. translation of Zedner's version of letter, op. cit. p.100.
110. Zifrinowitsch ed. of Guzari p.31, note 5. Can the $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ have been the Tetraxites (Caucasian Goths)?
111. The various versions have Chorassan spelled differently. Akriash and Buxtorf have $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ which is evidently a misprint for the $\eta\lambda\alpha$ of Cahana. Wilna ed. has $\delta\eta\lambda\alpha$ which Harkavy has more correctly as $\eta\lambda\alpha$.

112. Wilna ed. has **וְלֹא אֶלְדָּד וְדָנִי**, so too Buxtorf. Cahana and Harkavy have the more correct **וְלֹא אֶלְדָּד וְדָנִי**, which is Derbeed.
113. This is a possible reference to Eldad ha-Dani.
114. A. Harkavy: **כִּי סִפְרָה גָּאון עַל רֵבִי הַכּוֹהֵנִים** in Semitic Studies in Memory of Alexander Kohut. Harkavy transliterates and translates the Arabic into Hebrew. p.244-245.

115. Ibid. p.246

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Chapter III

116. Paul Cassel: Der Chazarische Königsbrief, p.69.

117. See note 73.

118. P. Cassel, op.cit. p.70, note e.

119. Akkrish, Buxtorf, Wilna, and Cahana have **יְשִׁיָּא**; but Harkavy has **יְשִׁיָּא**.

120. Older versions **יְכִיָּא**; Harkavy has **יְכִיָּא**.

121. Older versions have **אֲגִיָּא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל**; Harkavy has **אֲגִיָּא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל**.

122. P. Cassel, op.cit. p.71, note h.

123. The exact words vary in the documents. Akkrish and Buxtorf have **וְנִחַדְשָׁה מִיָּה שְׁנֵי קָדְשֵׁי**; Wilna has **וְנִחַדְשָׁה מִיָּה שְׁנֵי קָדְשֵׁי**; Harkavy has **וְנִחַדְשָׁה מִיָּה שְׁנֵי קָדְשֵׁי**; Cahana has **וְנִחַדְשָׁה מִיָּה שְׁנֵי קָדְשֵׁי**; and P. Cassel, op.cit. p.71, note i, suggests **וְנִחַדְשָׁה מִיָּה שְׁנֵי קָדְשֵׁי** instead of **וְנִחַדְשָׁה מִיָּה שְׁנֵי קָדְשֵׁי**. It is possible that Joseph refers to the renewal of a covenant, but it is more likely that he is proposing to inform Chasdai of what has taken place.

124. Joseph's Answer, Wilna ed. p.3Bb. (Also Akkrish, Buxtorf, and Cahana.)

125. The names as I have given them are those of the Wilna ed. p.3Bb. Akkrish and Buxtorf give the same list with one exception; the ninth name is not **בְּלִיָּא** but **בְּלִיָּא**. Harkavy and Cahana have lists which are, apparently, modernized and corrected. It is interesting to note how their lists compare with the lists of Togarmah's sons found in the Josippon (Günzburg ed.) p.3 and in the Chronicle of Jerahme'el (Gaster ed.), p.67, where **בְּלִיָּא** is regarded as the first born son. We give the comparative list:

Wilna	Gahana	Harkavy	Jossipon	Jerahme'el
אגיון	אגיא	איון	כוזר	כוזר
תירוש	תירוש	תוריס	פצין	פצין
אור	אור	אור	אליקנוס	אלן
אוגין	אוגין	אוגין	בולגר	בולגר
ביא	ביא	ביא	דנבין	דנבין
תרנא	תרנא	תרנא	טורקי	טורקי
כזר	כזר	כזר	בז	בז
אנור	אנור	אנור	אביר	אביר
בלנוד	בלנוד	בלנוד	אונגרי	אונגרי
סאוויר	סאוויר	סאוויר	טיטמין	טיטמין

For the main purpose of this thesis, viz., the conversion of the Chazars, a detailed examination of these names is not necessary and it would lead us far afield. It is, however, interesting to note that both Josippon and Jerahme'el, after their lists, say: "All these dwell in the North, and the names of their lands are taken from their own names, and they live by the river Hetel (**התל**); but Ugar, Bulgar, and Pasinaq live by the great river called Danube (**דנאבי**); i.e., the Dunai (**דנאי**). It can be seen that, in the lists, some of the names are almost identical and others are very similar; they thus suggest a common and older source. Just as **וְתִירְשָׁא** is evidently a play on **וְתִירְשָׁא** of Gen.10:2, so too the others could be traced back.

126. Akrish, Buxtorf, and Wilna have here **כתוב אצלי**, referring obviously, to Chazar. Harkavy has more correctly **כתוב אצלי**, referring to Joseph. The words **כתוב אצלי** hint at a third person's writing.
127. Cuzari, Zifrinowitsch ed. pg.35.
128. Ibid. p.35, note 11. Wenenter is the name for the Bulgarians in Armenian.
129. H. Kutschera: Die Chasaren, p.51.
130. P. Cassel, pp. cit. pg.72, note m.
131. Jewish Encyclopedia, article Chazars.
132. The older versions have **קודמ'ם**; Harkavy has **קודמ'ם**.
133. Whereas Harkavy omits "in a dream," he has the word **א** before Bulan and also the words **א' ב' ג'**. Zifrinowitsch (Cuzari, p.35, note 13) explains this as the vocative, showing Arabic influence.

hence for "read this!"

134. The Harkavy version omits **והפניתיך תפלתך**, inserts **והפניתיך**, changes **ואק"ו** to **ואק"ו**, and instead of reading that the angel commanded Bulan to pray, states that he did get up in the morning and thanked God. These changes are insignificant and do not affect the story.
135. The Harkavy version is again slightly different: The **בני** is inserted, "with all your heart" is changed to "with all your soul and with all your might"; **ואני** is omitted, and the reward is changed. Here we read: "And I desire to give you statute and judgment, if you will keep My commandments and My judgments."
136. Harkavy's differences are: the usual **'א** is inserted; **ואני** for **עם**; **על** for **על**; and other slight word changes. In this case the substitution of **על** for **על** might reflect the duties of the the king.
137. Instead of **לשני ההוא**, Harkavy has **אל האיש ההוא**.
138. Harkavy has **א' בני**; the heavens and earth; and instead of **ואתה בונה**, it has the more correct imperative form **בנה**.
139. Harkavy has **'א** and "You know, O Lord, that I have neither silver nor gold; how then shall I build it?"
140. **Ardebil** was captured in 731. D. Cahana, **מקור חרש** (השנה vol.28, p.525) attributes its capture to Bulan.
141. **Akrish** and **Buxtorf** have **אלך ושמעאלים** and **אלך ושמעאלים**; **Wilna** has **אלך ושמעאלים** and **אלך ושמעאלים**; **Cahana** has **אלך ושמעאלים** and **אלך ושמעאלים**; and Harkavy has **אלך ושמעאלים** and **אלך ושמעאלים**. It is clear, as P. Cassel (op.cit. p.95) points out, that the second sovereign refers to the Mohammedan ruler. Cassel further maintains that Edom means Christian Rome. A. Cahana in his note, p.42, note 27, says that Edom means to be **י**. It is clear that Christian and Mohammedan ambassadors were sent.
142. It seems that in this respect, all the other versions differ from the Wilna. The others read that the king called a **מלך מלך**. It would seem that they are right, for if the representatives of the other two religions were already there, it would be pointless to say that the king summoned them. It is to the point to say that he called an Israelite.
143. **Wilna** has **אל חכם של מלך ארז**; **Akrish**, **Buxtorf**, and **Cahana** have **אל חכם של מלך ארז**; Harkavy's version, realizing that all were dismissed, reads simply **למי למה**. With regard to the word **כומר**, P. Cassel (op.cit. p.99) says that by this word the Jews of the Middle Ages meant a monk.

144. The versions are consistent. Wilna has **החכם הפרסי** and **סלך ארז**; All others have **סלך פרי** and **כיומי**.
145. The Harkavy version is slightly different from this Wilna edition, but in addition to a praise of Judaism, it contains the following denunciation of Mohammedanism: "How can you compare Mohammedanism with Judaism? It has neither Sabbath nor festival, neither commandments nor statutes. They eat every unclean thing, the meat of camels, horses, dogs, and every detestable creeping thing. Mohammedanism is no religion; it is only like the religion of the pagans." This attack upon Islam cannot be, as P. Cassel shows (op.cit. p.75), original. The Christian could not have said all this about Islam, for just as the Mohammedan keeps Sabbath on Friday, the Christian does so on Sunday. Moreover, the Christian has no dietary laws.
146. Akrish and Buxtorf have **אל קאני**; Cahana has **אל קאצ**; Wilna and Harkavy have **אל קארי**. P. Cassel (op.cit. pp.75,99) contends that **אל קאני** is correct, for **קאני** means a Catholic priest. It may be that the others had "ghazi" (a Mohammedan warrior) in mind.
147. Akrish, Buxtorf, and A. Cahana have **רין ישיא** and **רין ארז**; Wilna has **רין ישיא** and **רין ארז**; Harkavy has **רין ישיא** and **רין ארז**.
148. Akrish, Buxtorf, and Harkavy here insert a denunciation of Christianity. The words surrounded by parentheses are in the Harkavy version only. "Christianity is not religion; they eat (pig and) every unclean thing, and they worship the work of their hands (and there is no hope for them)." P. Cassel (op.cit. p.76, note 7) claims that this is a later addition, for it is hardly fitting for a Mohammedan to say this. It is hard for us to agree with him because the old versions support Harkavy.
149. Harkavy's version is slightly different. It is on the the third day (not on another day) and not in the presence of princes, servants, and people.
150. Harkavy has a slightly different reading: he has "my God in Whom I put my trust and in the shadow of Whose wings I sought refuge."
151. Harkavy has more correctly "and Jewish scholars came." The one Jewish scholar referred to in the answer is supposed to have been Isaac Sangari. P. Cassel (op.cit. p.99) says that this name was first used by Ramban in 1263 and that it might have been **תגרי**. The name **תגרי** is suspicious; it is too close to **סנגר**, which means "attorney" in general and here "defender." D. Cahana in **מקור הדש למהלך הכהנים** (השנה, vol. 28, p.325, note 2) also claims that the name is spurious. Hirschfeld, op.cit. p.297 note 12 says that "the name of Isaac Sangari (Sinjari) attributed to the Rabbi is not either in the Mss or in the earliest editions."
152. All the texts have **יכל תקין תפילת חתנים**.

but Harkavy has **ומהגורו של חז"ל**.

153. The older versions have **חנניה**; Harkavy has **חנניה**.
M. Man in **ש"ס**, p.13A has **חנניה**.
154. The older versions have **מנשה**; Harkavy has **מנשה**.
155. Dubnow: History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, vol. 1, p.26, inserts Aaron between Nisi and Menachem. Likewise, Harkavy in Graetz: **ישיב** vol.3, p.345, note 99.
156. Harkavy adds "the son inherits the throne from his father. This is our custom and the custom of our fathers from earliest times."
157. Harkavy has here **אתל**, i.e., Atel, another name for the Volga.
158. The older versions have **הסמוך לים הגאן**; Harkavy has **נהר גיאן**. It is obvious that the Caspian is meant.
159. Harkavy lists these nations but gives only eight:
בורטה, בילגר, סואר, אריס, צנחית, ננתית, סור, and צילין.
Dubnow, op.cit. p.26, says that they are a group of Slav nations. **בילגר** might possibly refer to the more distant Bulgarians. **ננתית** might be a corrupt form of Wenenter (see notes 128,129).
160. Harkavy has "on the way to **בוארזם** up to Georgia." Dubnow, op.cit. p.26 says that this Buarezsm (Buarasm) was probably Khwarism.
161. Bab al Abgab is Derbent.
162. Wilna has **גאסנה**; Akrish and Buxtorf have **גאס**; Cahana has **גאס**; Harkavy has **גאס**.
163. Wilna, Akrish, and Buxtorf have **תגת**; Cahana has **תגת**; Harkavy has **תגת**.
164. Sea of Constantinople is the Black Sea.
165. Harkavy's version is much fuller. It includes Semender (which Dubnow, op.cit. p.26, regards as Tarku, near Temiskanshura) and Bak Tatlud (perhaps Baku) in the South. It also mentions the nations by name:
אזר, גק, בגר, סכיר, כיתון, ארכו, שאינה, סגכט, אלבסאר, איכוסר, צינגלך, גינך, אלנ"ם, כאשא, כיאל תכת.
P. Cassel (op.cit. note 2) says that the names which Harkavy supplies were certainly not in the original, but have been borrowed from Arabic, Georgian, and Armenian writers. That modern names like Azer in this

list, and Hertsch and Mangup in the next are given as old names, is another evidence of interpolation.

166. Harkavy here inserts a group of Crimean cities: **שניכול, ממכניץ, ככץ, סוגדא, אלום, למבט, ברתנית, אלוברכא, כות, מאנכיס, בעק, אלמא, גרוזין.**
167. The older versions have **גלזר**; Harkavy has **גלזר** and **גלזר** (Vaghez).
168. Wilna has **ד'גלזר**; all the others have **ד'גלזר** (Jugurii). Man, op.cit. p.13A, has a wild statement here. He has **א'נדיא** (India) which is preposterous.
169. The expression **לא אענין** is an Arabic Idiom which A. Cahana (op.cit. p.44, note 31) renders as equivalent to **לא אנין**.
170. All the other versions but Wilna have fifty square parasangs.
171. All the versions have **זיפרינוויטש**. Zifrinowitsch, Cuzari, p. 40, note 1, says that the Arabic name for this river is **קובאן**.
172. Harkavy's text has here: "In the month of Kislev, in the days of Chanukah, we return to the capital city." P. Cassel, op.cit. p.80, note hh, remarks, "In a letter which contains no dates, which does not say that they go out after Pesach or Shabuoth, Harkavy's addition is easily recognized as a later interpolation." Cassel thinks that Chanukah crept in only because King Chanukah is mentioned.
173. Harkavy adds "up to the river **קובאן**; i.e. **קובאן**."
174. All the versions agree except Harkavy's which has "thirty parasangs to Buzan."
175. Harkavy has here: "forty parasangs to Buzan."
176. The words **זיפרינוויטש** are another proof that this letter purports to be an answer to Chasdai.
177. A. Cahana, op.cit. pg.33-34.
178. P. Cassel: op.cit. p.83
179. Ibid. pg.85
180. Ibid. pg.95
181. Ibid. pg.66
182. A.I.K.D.: Joseph's Answer in op.cit. p.109

183. P. Cassel: op.cit. p.66
184. A.I.M.D.: translation of Zedner's note to Dhasdai's letter; op.cit. p.99
185. I. Zangwill: trans. of Gavirol's Poems, p.20.
The despoiled and despised Thou shalt gather to Zion;
My impudent foe seeks my life-faith to sever,
To my face he inquires how long yet wilt thou wait,
But I am afflicted, not cast off forever.
186. S. Dubnow; Poznanski Memorial Volumes: חסדאי הכוזב
p.3-4

Chapter Four

187. Graetz, Hist. of the Jews, vol.3, p.138
188. Gibbons, Fall of the Roman Empire; Milman ed., vol.3, p.477, note.
189. Jewish Encyclopedia. Article, Chasdai.
190. A. Cahana, op.cit. p.30
191. Ibid, p.30. Ibid. p.48. Ibn Dastah calls them כוזבים.
Ibid. p.49, ibn Fozzlan says: "כוזב is the name of the
אגל'ם." Ibid. p.54, Abu Istakhri says: "אלכזר
is the name of the אגל'ם."
192. Ibid. p.30
193. Gibbons, op.cit. p.477, note 98. (De Guignes, Hist. des Huns, tom. 2, part 2, p.507-509)
194. A. Cahana, op.cit. p.30. Also see the different letters.
195. Graetz, חסדאי הכוזב. Rabinowitz ed. vol.3, p.199 note 1.
196. Ibid. p.199. Harkavy's note to the editor.
197. Gibbons, op.cit. vol.3, p.477, note*
198. For the historical information about the Khazars, I have utilized: P. Cassel, op.cit. p.46-51; Gibbons, op.cit. p.477; Jew. Ency., art. Chazars; Graetz, Hist. of the Jews, vol.3, p.123-139; Dubnow, Hist. of the Jews in Russia and Poland, vol.1, p.15-28.
199. Acc. to ibn Daud.
200. Dubnow, Hist. of the Jews in Rus. and Pol. vol.1, p.15
201. Graetz, Hist. of the Jews, vol.3, p.123

202. See A. Cahana, ספרות ההסטוריא השנאלית, vol.1, p.48-56, for a translation of their Arabic writings. P. Cassel, op.cit. p.52ff utilizes the same sources.
203. P. Cassel, op.cit. p.52
204. Mamudé and Albakrî (op.cit. p.53) say there were 7 judges. Jost (Ges. der Isr., p.115) writes that there were 9 judges. Evidently Jost bases himself on ibn Foszan (op.cit. p.50) who also claims that there were 9 judges.
205. Ibn Dastah, op.cit. p.49. Abu Istakhri, op.cit. p.54
206. Ibn Foszan, op.cit. p.50, ומלכם הוא יהודי and יהחלק היותר קטן כגון הם היהודים. פ. p.52, והכללים ומלכם כלם יהודים.
207. H.Kutschera, op.cit. p.135
208. Ibn Dastah, op.cit. p.49
209. Abu Istakhri, op.cit. p.54
210. Abu Albakrî, op.cit. p.52-53
211. Graetz, רבני ימי ישראל, vol.3, p.345. Har-kavy's note 99.
212. H. Kutschera, op.cit. p.152
213. Masudi, שדות זהב, op.cit. p.53
214. P. Cassel, op.cit. p.59-60
215. Menahem Man, op.cit. ch.9, p.11A
Zacuti, ספר יוחסין השלם p.205
216. P. Cassel, op.cit. p.57. I have given Cassel's argument complete, p.55-57

~~217.~~

Chapter Five

217. S. Schechter, Unknown Khazar Document, B.61-62. נימי יוסף
המלך ארז
Also L.91, וארזן מששלת ארזן.
218. Ibid. LL.83-84: הננ קודיע לארזן.
219. Ibid. LL.86-87 אשר עברו בו שלוהיק.
220. S. Schechter, op.cit. J.A.R.; N.S., vol.3, no.2, p.185.
221. Ibid. L.11 speaks of the enemies קזי, and L.54 of the Kings who fought קניא.
222. Schechter, op.cit. p.184. Note 3 says that this combination occurs in a genizah Ms. written in Jerusalem and dated 1036.

223. D. Cahana **השולח-מקור חדש לתולדות הכוזרים** v.28, p.525 maintains that this refers to the persecutions of Leo in 723. He decreed that all Jews accept Christianity or be punished. Many Jews professed Christianity outwardly, but practiced Judaism secretly. They hid in caves and kept their religion. Many other Jews fled to Khazaria.
224. Schechter, op.cit. p.186
225. The fragment **L.3 בלא תורה** which Schechter says, "means in this case without any religion, though they did not entirely return to their ancient paganism. This fact of their having left paganism was enough to induce a number of Jews living before in heathen countries to immigrate to Khazaria. The material condition of these new immigrants was apparently a satisfactory one, but spiritual decay set in, and in course of time they became neglectful in their religious duties." Schechter, op.cit. p.187
226. **לערצבא** (LL.8-9)
227. LL.12 **ימים רבים**, which Schechter says means a long time.
228. S. Schechter, op.cit. p.188
229. **מלכי ערב** and **מלכי מקרון**.
230. In this case, **ין** is used or **מקרון**. Obviously Byzantium is meant.
231. **ת'חא** L.32. The cave is not mentioned in Joseph's Answer. There is a suggestion of it in Chasdai's letter and in the Guzari, II,1.
232. L.38 **ויתחזקו נבדית אב המון**. An allusion to Gen.17:4
233. S. Schechter, op.cit. p.188, note 11. "The best parallel is Masudi (translation, Sprenger) I, p.404, where he speaks of the Jews from all the Muslim districts and from the Byzantine Empire who came to Khazaria. According to the fragment, this immigration under Sabriel, the first real Jewish King of Khazaria took place long (perhaps centuries) before the persecution of the Jews by Romanus).
234. D. Cahana, op.cit. p.524 says that "the writer of the letter did not leave us the name of the victorious general, but in my opinion Joseph in his letter to Chasdai did. He called him Bulan." It is hardly possible that Cahana is right. Bulan might not be a name at all. Furthermore, LL.41-42 of our text call this general Sabriel and Sabriel might have been Obadiah (see note 241).
235. Slucki: Guzari, p.47-49.
236. Jost, Gesch. der Isr. vol.6, p.115

237. Kutschera: Die Chasaren, p.114. A. Cahana, op.cit. p.49, 51, gives a Hebrew translation of part of ibn Fozzlan's **ספר אסיפת הארצות**, in which the king is called **יִלְךְ** or **מֶלֶךְ** and the higher king **כַּאֲקֵא**.
238. A. Cahana, op.cit. p.48. Hebrew trans. of ibn Dastah's **ספר סמולות יקרים**.
- 239 Ibid. p.54, Hebrew trans. of Masudi's **שרות זהב**.
240. Ibid. p.52, Hebrew trans. of ibn Fozzlan's **op. cit.**
- Dubnow: Hist. of the Jews in Rus. and Pol. vol.1, p.22
Graetz, **רבי ישיע** vol.3, p.344
241. S. Schechter, op.cit. p.189. He also says, p.190, note 14, **סברא** might be a corruption of **עבדא** (Jer.36:26) in which we might recognize **עובדיה**.
242. Our texts read **אחר מבני בני**; Schechter (op.cit. p.190) says that Obadiah was Bulan's great grandson and refers to L. 106 of Harkavy's text.
243. D. Cahana, op.cit. p.523, says, "by means of line 42, where descent is traced from Simeon, the words of Eldad Ha-Dani (A. Epstein **אלרד הדני** p.60) are proved true-- 'and the tribes of Simeon and Manasseh are in the country of Khazaria, six months from Jerusalem.'"
244. The name Benjamin is Schechter's restoration, op.cit. p.208, L.49, note 23. It is suggested by line 55.
245. Ibid. p. 193, note 19. **אס'א** refers to certain Caucasian tribes. **ס"נ** cannot be identified.
246. A. Asher, The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela, vol.1, p.62.
אין אלניה היא הארץ המוקפת הרים ואין להם יציאה אלא שער ברוזל שעשה אלכסנדרוס ושם האומה הנקראת אלאן.
247. Schechter, op.cit. p.192, note 18. (See note 125 under Joseph's Answer.
248. Schechter, op.cit. p.192. Note 18, quotes Constantinus Porphyrogenetus' De Administrando Imperio, ch.10 and 11. "Since the chief of Alania is not at peace with the Khazars, but regards the friendship of the Roman Empire as preferable, if the Khazars are not willing to maintain peace and friendship toward the Emperor, he (the Alani chief) can injure them greatly by lying in wait on the roads and attacking them unexpectedly when they proceed against Sarkel and the frontier provinces and Cherson."
249. Schechter, ibid. p.193

250. See note 155. Harkavy inserts Aaron I in the list of Khazar kings between Nisi and Menachem.
251. ~~Romanus~~ was Emperor, 919-945.
252. Helgu is another form of Oleg. Schechter, op.cit. p.196. He is "the famous chieftain with whom the Russian nation makes almost its first appearance on the stage of history."
253. Schechter, op.cit. p.196. The "סמבר" were the Seviri of the Sewerians, "of whom we know that they were vassals of the Khazars and were subsequently attacked by Oleg who forbade them to pay tribute to the Khazars." Joseph's Answer has סאניר as the tenth son of Togarmah. Harkavy's version. includes the סמר in the list of 8 nations along the river, tributary to Joseph.
- ~~254.~~
254. Bulshzai's Hebrew name is פסה הייקר. In D. Cahana's version of the Letter, op.cit. p.528, he has פסה השומר.
255. Schechter, op.cit. p.195, note 22
256. Ibid. p.196-197. Russian historians use the dubious Chronicle of Nestor.
257. Ibid. p.196-197
258. Ibid. p.197
259. Man, op.cit. ch.9, p.11A says that Cuzr built a city on the river אל סמר and called its name אל סמר. Undoubtedly אל סמר is a misprint for Volga (וולגא).
260. Baba Metzia 33A שיערו חכמים אחר משבע ומהנה במיל וזה הוא כי. Also Baba Kama, 79B, Rashi.
261. Schechter, op.cit. p.201,202.

Chapter Six

262. S. Dubnow מסקנות אחרונות בשאלת הכוזרי'ם in Livre d'Hommage a la Memoire du Dr. Samuel Poznanski, p.3, note. Dubnow says, "All these signs testify that the letter of the Jewish Khazar, found in the Genizah, is meant. And I am amazed that Asaph remarks, in this connection: 'This letter has been lost and has not been transmitted to us, which is grievous.' Schechter found the letter; our only regret ~~is~~ is that it is not complete."
263. Ibid. p.2-3

Finis