Medieval Jewish Cultural Creativity in Response to Persecution

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I. Introduction

Ask most educated Jews, and many Christians as well, about their associations with "Jewish life in medieval Christian Europe," the first reaction is likely to be words like "intolerance," "discrimination," "expulsion," "oppression." If pressed to provide examples, they would probably refer to the massacres of Jews in the Rhineland communities of Germany at the beginning of the First Crusade; or the "ritual murder" accusation in which Jews were accused of murdering Christian children for various alleged purposes including the use of Christian blood; or that they poisoned the wells in the time of the Black Death plague which devastated all of Europe in 1348; or that—idespite their contribution to the economy and the culture of the lands in which they lived—ithey were expelled en masse from England, then from France, then from Spain, so that by the year 1500, all of Western Europe was devoid of a single Jewish community.

These events unquestionably resulted in considerable suffering for Jewish communities that were directly affected. But, on the whole, Jews did not simply accept such acts of oppression with resignation. They were of course usually not in a position to resist physically or militarily to the forces that oppressed them. But in many cases, these oppressions led to a creative cultural response, inspiring written texts that became an integral part of Jewish literature.

In my presentation today, I will focus on two genres of such literary works: the *chronicle* recording experiences of persecution, and the text of *ethical admonition and rebuke*, expressing an internal critique of Jewish society in the wake of persecution. I shall concentrate on four critical episodes of oppression to which Jewish writers responded:

- the violence and massacres in the Rhineland communities of Germany during the spring and summer of 1096 at the start of the first Crusade,
- the anti-Jewish riots that spread through the Iberian peninsula beginning in the spring of 1391,
- the Expulsion from Spain in 1492, and
- the attacks upon the Jewish communities in eastern Poland associated with the Ukrainian Cossack leader Bogdan Chmielnitsky in 1648.

II. Chronicles

Despite the powerful biblical injunction to "Remember", and despite the abundant models of historical literature in the Hebrew Scriptures, the writing of history was not especially valued by Jews living in exile under Christian or Muslim rule.[1] Long periods elapse without significant historical texts having been produced. Medieval Jewish intellectual activity and cultural creativity was channeled into various genres:

- commentaries on the Pentateuch and other books of the Hebrew Scriptures,
- analyses of the difficult and challenging passages of the Babylonian Talmud,
- investigations of philosophical and theological problems,
- liturgical and secular poetry,
- prose fictional narratives.

There were very few biographies of great Jewish leaders or holy men, analogous to the medieval Christian biographies of kings and lives of the saints. There was certainly little interest in writing about ordinary people during ordinary times. It was the timeless truths of the classical Jewish texts—Bible, Talmud, Midrash—that were considered to be important, not current events. It usually took special incidents of persecution and disaster to inspire Jewish writers to devote time and energy to a genre that had little prestige in traditional Jewish society. The result is that much medieval and early modern Jewish historical writing is focused on accounts of persecution in which Jews suffered unusual oppression by the majority society.

1. First Crusade in the Rhineland

Brief accounts of murderous behavior by Crusader armies appear near the beginning of several *Christian* chronicles of the First Crusade.[2] But for extensive, detailed information, we depend on three Hebrew chronicles that were written about a generation after the events, though never published until 1892.[3] The relations among the three texts have inspired a massive scholarly literature ever since the first publication of the chronicles.[4] My focus today is primarily on three characteristics of the chronicles themselves as a Jewish cultural response to disaster.

a. The first characteristic is the fiercely negative presentation of the Crusaders and the sancta of Christianity. This is not surprising, as the events being narrated are essentially the murder of Jews (or their conversion under duress) by those fighting in the sign of the Cross. Here is how one Jewish chronicler presents the origin of the First Crusade:

> Then rose up initially the arrogant, the barbaric, a fierce and impetuous people, both French and German. They put on their insignia and placed an idolatrous sign on their clothing: the cross. . . . When they traversed towns where there were Jews, they said to one another, "Behold, we journey a long way to seek the idolatrous shrine [the Church of the Holy Sepulcher] and to take vengeance upon the Muslims. But here are the Jews dwelling among us, whose ancestors killed [Jesus] and crucified him groundlessly. Let us take vengeance first upon them. Let us wipe them out as a nation; Israel's name will be mentioned no more" (Ps. 83:5). Or else let them be like us and acknowledge the illegitimate son born of a woman in a state of menstruation.[5)]

This passage is obviously filled with the most vicious rhetoric accessible in the Hebrew vocabulary, using language from the Bible for new purposes, and alluding to a popular medieval Jewish belief, based on the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, that Jesus was neither the son of God nor a great Jewish teacher, but the product of an adulterous affair.[6)] The Crusaders are accused not only of violence against Jews, but of defiling the sacred Torah scrolls.[7)] The chronicles are filled with calls for revenge: "May the Avenger avenge in our days and before our eyes the blood of his servants that has been spilled."[8)] These are certainly not very promising texts for contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue.

b. Yet not all Christians in these chronicles are portrayed in a negative light. Christian leaders such as the local bishops are presented as having made a good faith effort to protect the Jews from the Crusaders. When Bishop John of Speyer heard of the first attacks against local Jews,

> he came with a large force and helped the [Jewish] community wholeheartedly and brought them indoors and saved them from [the crusaders' and burghers'] hands. He was a pious one among the nations. He seized some of the burghers [local Christians guilty of anti-Jewish violence] and cut off their hands. Indeed God brought about well-being and salvation through him.[9)]

An account by a different chronicler of a different bishop (in Trier) presents a Christian religious leader who allowed the endangered Jews to take refuge in the bishop's palace, then went to the Church of St. Simon and spoke there on behalf of the welfare of the Jews, to the point where his own life was apparently in danger.[10)] A clear distinction seems to be made in these chronicles between the leaders of the Church (though mentioning the Pope only in the context of the initial call to the Crusade), and many of the Christians, both Crusaders and inhabitants of the cities. The political

lesson drawn was to forge alliances with those in positions of power—bishops, popes, nobles, kings, emperors—and not to rely on the neighbors living down the street.

c. A third point about the chronicles. Reading these texts today, it is clear that Jews who refused to accept baptism engaged in two kinds of martyrdom. One was the traditional form, which might be called passive martyrdom: "I refuse to do what you want me to do, I will never give up my faith for yours; do to me as you please." But alongside of this there is a different mode, an active form of martyrdom, leading many Rhineland Jews who realized that there would be no escape from this danger to take matters into their own hands. Many are reported to have decided to anticipate the Crusaders by slaughtering their children, their wives, and then themselves. To cite one example,

> Then [the Jews of Mainz] all cried out loudly, saying in unison, "Now let us delay no longer, for the enemy has already come upon us. Let us go quickly and sacrifice ourselves before the Lord. Anyone who has a knife should inspect it, that it not be defective. Then he should come and slaughter us for the sanctification of the unique God who lives forever. Subsequently he should slaughter himself by his throat or should thrust the knife into his belly.[11)]

On one level, this passage appears to be entirely artificial. No group of people ever "all cry out loudly," saying the same words spontaneously in unison. Nor is it plausible that under a terrifying life-threatening challenge, the status of the knife used for homicide and suicide would have been of paramount importance. The presentation of this internal violence as a re-enactment of the Temple sacrifices, transforming Mainz into an altar of the spiritual Temple, appears to be a later reconstruction by the chronicler of unexpected behavior under harrowing circumstances, rather than a record of words or thoughts actually expressed at the time.

Yet regarding the behavior itself—the killing of family members and suicide by pious, committed Jews—this seems much too problematic to have been invented by later chroniclers. According to classical texts of Jewish law, there is a fundamental difference between a Jew willing to die at the hands of others rather than commit an act of idolatry, and a Jew who slaughters his children, and his wife, and himself rather than commit the same act. This distinction was certainly recognized by later legal authorities, who apparently felt unable to condemn the behavior of the martyrs, but were extremely ambivalent about endorsing it as a model for emulation.[12)] It is striking to me that the chroniclers did not seem to recognize this distinction, presenting all behavior that led to death in the same category.

In a dramatic rejection of the Biblical theodicy—I will discuss this a bit later—the chroniclers assert that the ordeal was visited upon their generation *not* because of its sinfulness, but rather

because of its faithfulness and valor. Just as Abraham was tested in the Binding of Isaac because his faith was strongest, so it was precisely the unique achievements of this generation that impelled God to select it as most capable of withstanding the ultimate trial. Those who perished would merit the supreme reward in God's presence given to the greatest martyrs of the past. This is another characteristic that makes these texts such fascinating Jewish sources in response to catastrophe.

2. Iberian Pogroms of 1391

I turn now to a very different location and context for anti-Jewish violence: the pogroms that swept through the Iberian Peninsula beginning in the spring of 1391.[13] There is nothing corresponding to the detailed chronicles of Crusades. The closest text to a historical chronicle is an extremely important Letter to the Community of Avignon, written by one of the towering figures of Aragonese Jewry, Rabbi Hasdai Crescas of Saragossa, soon after the events, in order to inform the Jews in the Papal States of the disaster. The progress of the violence is duly noted: first Seville then Cordova in Andalusia, moving on to Toledo in Castile, then to Valencia, Majorca, Barcelona, Lerida, and Gerona in Aragon. Specific dates of the attacks are provided, along with numbers of Jews who were killed or who converted to Christianity to save their lives.

The most extensive description is of the events in Barcelona, where Crescas reports the death of his only son, who was newly married. According to his epistle, some Jews followed the model of Ashkenazi Jews, committing suicide by throwing themselves down from the heights of the fortress, rather than allowing themselves to fall into the power of their attackers.[14] Describing the events in Barcelona, Crescas also provides details of the broader context: the royal governor of the city did his best to protect the Jews by sheltering them; the masses and the mobs "rebelled against the city leaders," and it was decided to punish the criminals severely. But, unlike in some contemporary Spanish documents, no explanation is given for the behavior of the masses.[15] God is the one who is ultimately responsible; it was God who "drew the bows of the enemy" against His people, God whose "anger was kindled against the holy city" of Toledo, God who protected the survivors in His mercy in order to preserve a remnant. Unlike the texts I shall describe in the second part of my presentation, there is no attempt to specify exactly what was the cause of the divine anger that led to so much bloodshed.[16]

3. Expulsion of 1492

The Expulsion from Spain produced a significant number of Jewish chronicles.[17] Many themes were addressed:

- the relationship between the decision to expel the Jews and the conquest of Muslim Granada earlier in 1492,
- the relative roles of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in making the decision for Expulsion,
- the timing of the announcement of the expulsion close to the holiday of Pesach,
- the specific provisions of the Edict with regard to Jewish property,
- the efforts by leading Jewish courtiers including Don Abraham Seneor and Don Isaac Abravanel in trying to convince the monarchs to reverse the decision,
- the role of the grand Inquisitor Torquemada,
- the decision of Seneor to convert to Christianity in a major public event in order to remain on Spanish soil,
- the number of Jews who left Spain in the summer of 1492,
- their destinations and their experience upon arriving in the new environments,
- the special disaster that awaited the refugees who were granted permission for temporary passage through Portugal when—in 1497—King Manuel ordered a mass compulsory conversion of all Jews on Portuguese soil, and finally
- the reasons for the unanticipated Expulsion, which put a sudden end to more than a thousand years of Jewish presence on the Iberian peninsula.

These chronicles present detailed factual information alongside citation of selected biblical verses, suggesting that the harrowing events had been predicted in the Bible and that—by implication—as the negative verses had been fulfilled, so would the positive biblical promises of restoration and messianic redemption.[18)]

4. Cossack Massacres of 1648

As in the case of the First Crusade and the Expulsion from Spain, the massacres of 1648 produced a number of Jewish chronicles recounting the events.[19)] I will focus on one of them, *The Abyss of Despair (Yeven Metzulah)*, by Nathan Hanover, published in 1653; Hanover survived the events described, but his father was killed in 1648.

His introduction presents the work as a record of dramatic events that occurred, preserving their memory for future generations:

> I have related all of the battles and persecutions, large and small. Likewise the dates on which the major persecutions occurred have been recorded, so that everyone might be able to note the day on which his father or mother died, and to observe the memorial properly.

In addition to the events there is a broader perspective: "I have dwelt at length upon the causes which initiated this brutish design: that the Greeks [Greek Orthodox Ukrainians] revolted against the kingdom of Poland like a rebellious cow, that Greeks and Tatars joined together although they had always hated each other.[20] Considerable attention is devoted to the leader of the uprising, Bogdan Chmielnitsky, including an account of a revolutionary anti-Polish speech given to his followers, complaining (among other things) that "the most lowly of all peoples [i.e., the Jews] rule over us."

Hanover's chronicle includes detailed reports of events such as the fall of the city of Nemirov to the Cossack attackers, who carried Polish banners and pretended to be Polish army forces. His recording of acts of sadistic cruelty by the Cossacks, including widespread rape, goes beyond anything in the Crusade chronicles in its gruesome details. The Jewish martyrs

> died cruel and bitter deaths. Some were skinned alive and their flesh was thrown to the dogs, some had their hands and limbs chopped off, and their bodies thrown on the highway only to be trampled by wagons and crushed by horses; some had wounds inflicted upon them and thrown on the street to die a slow death; they writhed in their blood until they breathed their last; others were buried alive. The enemy slaughtered infants in the lap of their mothers, . . . they slashed the bellies of pregnant women, removed their infants and tossed them in their faces.[21]

But it is not merely an account of victimization. Hanover describes the complex dynamics of relationships between the Jews, their Christian neighbors, the Ukrainian rebels and the Polish army, suggesting some degree of ambivalence among the local city dwellers, with sympathy for the Cossacks, antipathy toward the Jews, and fear of Polish reprisals if they aid the rebels.

III. Literature of Admonition and Rebuke

I turn now to a different genre of texts written in response to the persecution of Jews in medieval and early modern Europe. Here the author's primary concern is not with recording the events that occurred, but rather with questions of causality: why the interruption of the normative pattern in which Jews were tolerated as neighbors, why the sudden outbursts of violence or the expulsion of an entire Jewish population?

Because of the underlying theological assumption that God is in control of such events, which must therefore be an expression of divine will, the major thrust of these writings is to analyze the faults in Jewish behavior that led to the divine punishment. These texts are therefore important for their insight into the problems of contemporary Jewish society from the perspective of at least some

of their leaders. I refer to this category of response as the literature of ethical admonition and rebuke.

1. Pogroms of 1391

My first example is a work by an early 15th-century Spanish Jew named Solomon Alami, who exposed what he considered to be the shortcomings of Jewish religious society following the catastrophic pogroms of 1391. At the beginning of his "*Iggeret Musar*" or "Epistle of Ethical Admonition," he mentions several incidents of oppression in the past, and then turns to focus on the recent events of destruction in Castile, Catalonia, and Aragon.[22] Unlike Crescas, he shows little interest in recording the specific events that had occurred, which were strongly engrained in the collective memory of the people. Alami's focus is on the cause, and here he gives a classical formulation:

> If we ask ourselves why all this happened to us, then we have to accept the truth we ourselves are at fault. God is just and righteous and it was in His power to help us. We and our own iniquities caused this evil to happen. (122)

The remainder of the text is a critical review of Spanish Jewish society from the perspective of the religious conservative. His assumption is one that we do not find in the Crusade chronicles but is rooted in Biblical theology: that the suffering of the Jews was willed by God in punishment of their failure to fulfill their obligations under the covenant. All that remains is to specify the specific sins that warranted this devastation.

Some general complaints can be found in virtually every generation from which such literature has been preserved: "Our hearts lack faith and modesty...our good deeds lack sincerity... the Sabbath is being profaned and those who try to voice admonition are quickly silenced" (123). Many were "satisfied with preserving the outer forms of religion while disregarding its inner content. On a day of penitence, they got rid of their prayers but not of their vices" (126). Behavior that we would describe as reflecting acculturation and assimilation—such as giving gifts on Christmas rather than on Purim—is strongly condemned (125).

But there are specific targets as well for the fury of the moralist, especially within the leadership class. He begins with the rabbinic scholars, ordinarily the most respected group in traditional Jewish society. According to Alami, their Talmudic scholarship was barren, devoted to "minor details, to novel explanations, to clever elucidations." Furthermore, they disagreed and argued with each other, "what one forbade, the other permitted." They studied not out of love of the traditional texts, but in

order to attain a prestigious position; their "vanity and contentiousness competing with scholarship and piety." As a result, the people felt no inclination to follow the leadership of their scholars (122, 126).

A second major category is those who were unduly influenced by Greek philosophy, and interpreted the Bible under its influence: "They believed that Plato and Aristotle had brought us more light than Moses our Master." A fierce attack on the influence of philosophical thinking ensues: "the way of reason and the way of faith are too far apart and will never meet" (122–23). Given a choice of martyrdom or conversion, Alami asserts that the philosophers chose to abandon their faith, while the unsophisticated Jews were willing to die as martyrs. And so he concludes, "May what happened to our philosophers in Catalonia not happen to us: their strength of faith was surpassed by simple people, by women and children" (126–27).

Third to be condemned are the wealthy Jewish courtiers who are "favored and trusted by the kings." Becoming wealthy, they "gave up study and industry, and cultivated idleness, vainglory, and ambition;" even worse they shifted the burden of taxation to the poorer classes of Jews, so that the wretched at the bottom of the social scale became victims of their tyranny. Eventually, they fell from favor in the court, leaving the Jews without effective representation in times of need (123).

Obviously, such a text must not be accepted simplistically as an objective description of fourteenth-century Spanish Jewish society. For a fuller understanding, we would need to look at the writings produced within each of these categories in order to judge how the objects of criticism understood and presented their own behavior and how they might have responded to Alami's critique. But the points he raises reveal considerable tension within this society, and they would have an ongoing resonance.

2. Expulsion of 1492

The Expulsion from Spain produced a number of texts in the genre of Alami's "Epistle of Ethical Admonition." I will refer to just one of them, the *Shevet Yehudah* ("Tribe or Staff of Judah") by Solomon ibn Verga. In one striking passage from this book, the admonition and rebuke of Jewish behavior is placed in the mouth of a fictional character—a Christian intellectual named Thomas, who engages in a dialogue with a king named Alfonso on the topic of anti-Jewish hatred. This literary device enables ibn Verga to express rather controversial views without fully taking credit or responsibility for them. The first point made by Thomas is that hatred of the Jews is not characteristic of intelligent, well-educated Christians like himself, but only of the masses of ignorant and uneducated Christians. Yet he immediately adds that there is "good reason" for the antagonism felt

by the masses of the Christian population.

Jews, says Thomas, are arrogant and domineering. They frequently forget their status as a people in exile, dependent on the good-will of their hosts. Rather than behave in a manner appropriate for their status as tolerated guests, they "try to present themselves as lords and nobles," thereby invoking the envy of the masses. This general pattern of behavior is clearly exemplified by the Jews of Spain. For generations they acted with appropriate humility, and there were no major eruptions of anti-Jewish sentiment. But recently the behavior of the Spanish Jews changed. They now dress themselves ostentatiously in silk and embroidered clothing that even wealthy Christian nobles would avoid. Indeed they have become wealthier than most Christians, largely because of their lending money on interest, to the point that many of the lands and estates of Spain have fallen into Jewish hands. Against this background, the resentment and hostility of the masses is understandable.[23)]

Note the difference between this explanation and that in the text by Alami following 1391. The common element is to blame the Jews for behavior that resulted in their suffering. But Alami focuses on internal Jewish failings that arouse divine anger; he maintains that God uses the Gentile persecutors as an instrument to impose appropriate punishment. Ibn Verga, perhaps for the first time, introduces a sociological dimension that explains events such as the Expulsion as a direct result of the impact of Jewish behavior upon their Christian neighbors and their Christian rulers—without the need for direct involvement of God at all.[24)]

3. Cossack Massacres of 1648

Following the Cossack massacres of 1648, in addition to the chronicles mentioned above, new works of ethical admonition were written. I refer specifically to the Polish rabbi Berekhia Berakh, who incorporated material from his weekly sermons at the synagogue in Cracow into a book called *Zera Berakh*, published at Cracow in 1646. Adding a second cycle of homilies on the weekly Torah reading, he published a combined version at Amsterdam in 1662, with a new introduction containing a fierce critique of Polish Jewish culture in the tradition of *tokheḥah*, rebuke. First comes the description of the disaster that has occurred, in writing similar to that of the chronicles:

> Blood has been spilled like water, and there is no one to bury the dead. Communities have been devastated, synagogues and schools destroyed, Torah scrolls have been torn to pieces, and some of our leading scholars have, for our sins, been sentenced to terrible, painful deaths. Tens of thousands of Jews have been killed, and we are left so few in number that it is beyond belief. The calamity has been recorded in a book of dirges, but there were too many deaths to report, beyond counting.

Like Alami, the preacher rejects the attempt to explain these events in naturalistic, sociological terms. Since God is responsible for what happens on earth, and God does not act unjustly, the suffering of the Jewish communities must be punishment for the failures of the Jews in these communities. He then proceeds to specify the failures.

Even more than in Spain, Polish Jewry took tremendous pride in the high level of Talmudic study in its academies. Like his predecessors, Berakh undermines these achievements in a caustic attack. He condemns the "empty brilliance" of intricate Talmudic dialectics—"*pilpul*"—at the expense of "the simple truth of the Torah," claiming that this fashionable study is more contemptible than the philosophy that had been banned by medieval Jewish leaders.

As for synagogue life, Berakh denounces the new style of "intellectually dishonest preachers" who claim to uncover novel meanings never intended in classical texts, and the practice of hiring cantors to lead the public prayer in the synagogues because of their beautiful voices, despite their ignorance of the liturgy. As a result "we have virtually no [proper] public worship."

He further deplores the economic activities of leading Jews, especially the institution of the *arenda*, whereby "Jews lease towns or villages from the great nobles in order to sell liquor," resulting in many violations of Jewish law, including the raising of pigs and the profiting from work done on the Sabbath. He censures the rabbis and the lay leaders for pressuring learned preachers not to address community affairs, and for not enforcing the bans issued against ostentatious clothing and for taking bribes.[25)]

Here we are on the verge of moving to the kind of sociological dimension that we have seen in ibn Verga's work. But Berakh refrains from making the direct connection between this kind of Jewish behavior—ostentatious clothing and collecting revenues from the property of Polish nobles that they have leased and taking bribes—and resentment leading to violence and cruelty on the part of the masses. For Berakh, the problem is that such behavior by Jews leads to sinful violation of divine commandments, and the massacres of the Ukrainian uprising are God's way of punishing the Jews for their religious failings. His tirade reveals tension points in Jewish society that surfaced in the wake of the catastrophe, but not explicitly the impact of Jewish behavior on Christian neighbors.

Nathan Hanover, however, reveals in his chronicle sensitivity to the economic and social causes of the uprising. Indeed, Hanover shows surprising sympathy for the plight of the Ukrainian peasants, who were "looked upon as lowly and inferior beings and became slaves and handmaids of the Polish people and of the Jews…. Their lives were made bitter by hard labor, in mortar and bricks and in all manner of services in the house and in the fields."[26)] This echoing of the language of Egyptian enslavement of the Israelite people in Exodus 1:14 is especially striking as an expression of empathy

for the people who turned out to be the enemy.

Today we tend to view this kind of response to catastrophe with suspicion, as we are taught *not* to blame the victims for the suffering that befalls them. But this kind of response produced two conclusions that were viewed as positive within the traditional society. First, it reasserts traditional attitudes toward God as being in control of the events that occurred on earth, in response to the philosophers who denied that God knew or cared about the constantly changing details of individual human lives. And secondly, it gave those who read these texts, or who listened to sermons in which similar points were made, a constructive message: keep the faith, return to the tradition, we can do better, God's anger is temporary, a movement of repentance will restore divine favor and love.

And, in addition to these positive functions for contemporaries in the literature of rebuke, these texts in response to disaster provide us today with important insights into Jewish communities of the past—insights which challenge the nostalgic fantasies of Jewish communities imbued with devotion to their traditions until the disruptions of modernity—revealing that medieval and early modern Jewish communities could be as full of conflict and as interesting as Jewish communities today.

Notes

1) The classical study of this subject is Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982); see his formulation of the apparent paradox in the Prologue, p. xiv.
2) See especially the accounts by Ekkehard of Aura and Albert of Aix in August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921), pp. 53–56; http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1096jews.asp (checked 27/8/13).
3) Adolf Neubauer and Stern Moritz Stern (eds.), *Hebraeische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1892).
4) See the brief discussion of these issues by Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 40–49; idem, *In the Year 1096: The First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 172–73; and idem, *God, Humanity and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 217–21.
5) Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, 243–44; the translation is Chazan's. For the contemptuous language referring to Jesus, cf. also 258 and 262.
6) The "facts" provided by the Gospel are: 1) Mary was betrothed to Joseph, 2) Mary became pregnant, 3) Joseph was not the father (Mt. 1:18). Since the explanation in the Gospel account—that Mary was pregnant "by the Holy Spirit"—could not be accepted by Jews, the only alternative seemed to be that the father was a man other than Joseph, which would make the child

illegitimate according to Jewish law.

7) Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, 240, 245, 260, 274, 288.
8) Ibid., 293 and elsewhere.
9) Ibid., 227.
10) Ibid., 295.
11) Ibid., 254.
12) For a review of the legal literature on this topic, see Haym Soloveitchik, "Halakhah, hermeneutics, and martyrdom in medieval Ashkenaz," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94,1 (2004), 77–108; 94, 2: 278–299.
13) See the summary in the still classic study by Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961–1965), vol. 2:95–110.
14) For the rather extreme position apparently taken by Crescas on this behavior, see Marc Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn": Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1996), 261–65.
15) The extent to which these riots were uprisings motivated primarily by broad social factors or by anti-Jewish sentiments remains an issue of debate; see Philippe Wolff, "The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or Not?" *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 4–18; Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, "Antisemitismo sevillano en la Edad Media : el pogrom de 1391 y sus consecuencias," *Sefárdica* 9 (1992), 71–90.
16) The text of the Epistle by Crescas can be found in English translation in Yom Tov Assis, *The Jews of Spain: From Settlement to Expulsion* (Jerusalem, 1988), 92–94.
17) Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 53–75. For selected passages in translation, see David Raphael, *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles: An Anthology of Medieval Chronicles Relating to the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal* (CA: North Hollywood, 1992).
18) A far more extensive historical chronicle based on this theological foundation would be written in Portuguese two generations later: see *Samuel Usque's Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, translated with an Introduction by Martin A. Cohen (Philadelphia: JPS, 1965).
19) See on these Jewish chronicles Joel Raba, *Between Remembrance and Denial* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1995), 37–70.
20) Michael A. Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 136: the alliance of the Ukrainian Cossacks with the Crimean Tatars (in the Hebrew text *Kedarim*) following century of mutual hostility was crucial to the initial success of the revolt.
21) Nathan Hanover, *The Abyss of Despair*, transl. A. J. Mesch (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1950), 43–44; cited also in Raba, *Between Remembrance and Denial*, 61–62.
22) Alami, "Why Catastrophes Come," in *Faith and Knowledge: The Jew in the Medieval World*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (Boston, Beacon Press, 1963), 121–22; subsequent citations with numbers in parentheses are from the rest of this text pp. 121–28. Glatzer notes that the full Hebrew text was printed at Constantinople in 1510 and several times afterward; a more accurate manuscript of the text was published as "Iggeret Musar" by A. M. Habermann in 1946 (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav

Kook).

23) Solomon ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, ed. Azriel Shochat (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1947), 30–31, translation in Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History*, 112–13. The same argument about the effect of Jews wearing ostentatious, costly garments is repeated by King Alfonso to three representatives of the Jews on p. 47 of the Hebrew edition. Unfortunately, no English translation of this important work is yet available.

24) For a fine example of the influence of Ibn Verga's approach, see the sermon entitled "The People's Envy" by Saul Levi Morteira of Amsterdam in 1623 in Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800* (New Haven, 1989), 270–85, esp. notes 14 and 15.

25) Berekhiah Berakh, *Zera Berakh* (Amsterdam, 1730), Author's Introduction.

26) Hanover, *Abyss of* Despair, 27–28; Raba, *Between Remembrance and Denial*, 51 and 52. For an academic study of the role of Jewish economic behavior and its impact on lower classes in Poland, see Hillel Levine, *Economic Origins of Antisemitism: Poland and Its Jews in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).