Chapter Twenty-Four

Judaism from the Arabian Conquests to the Crusades

From the Arabian conquests in the seventh century to the crusades, the circumstances of Judaeans differed greatly, depending on time and place. To summarize these circumstances crudely, we may say that Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam were much more secure than they were anywhere in Christendom. Within Christendom, the Byzantine empire and its Orthodox church were somewhat more hospitable to the Jewish minority than were western Europe and the Catholic church. In diachronic terms, for Judaeans everywhere the period before the crusades was far better than the period that followed.

By the early eighth century the worship of God was widespread. Two other religions devoted to the worship of God - Christianity and Islam - were each in its own way doing very well. The Muslims had created an empire stretching from India to Spain, and the calif was the recipient of an enormous annual tribute paid by Judaeans and Christians. Politically and militarily the Christians were not so fortunate as the Muslims, and they were divided among several communions, but they far outnumbered the other two religions: the gospel was being preached to all nations, and tens of millions of people had become Christians.

Judaeans had no empire nor, in the seventh century, even a kingdom, and they were a minority dependent upon the goodwill of the Muslims and upon the mercies of a variety of Christian rulers. Nevertheless, Judaeans in the seventh century were more certain than ever about their place in the world. Yahweh, who had begun as the god of Israel, had over the preceding twelve hundred years evolved into God. The evolution had begun in Mesopotamia in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, had gained momentum when Judaism met Greek philosophy in the Hellenistic Diaspora, and was almost completed when New Covenant Christians, between the second and the fifth century CE, drove out all the other gods and elevated the god of Abraham to the position of God. The final step was Muhammad's eradication of the pagan cults in Arabia, and the turning of the entire Arabian peninsula to God, the deity worshiped by the People of the Book.

The long tradition

Although each of the three scriptural religions had its own set of scriptures, in which God had revealed himself and his will, the Judaeans undoubtedly had the original set. Christians and Muslims had done very well in recent centuries, but the distant past belonged to the Judaeans. In the medieval period the distant past was synonymous with the stories of the Bible. Christian scholars had set up a chronology for the events described in their Old Testament, synchronizing them with Manetho's list of Egyptian kings.[1] Judaeans, Christians and Muslims all agreed that the Biblical story of Israel and Judah was the only distant past that really mattered. That had not always been the case. In 700 BC the story of Yahweh and Israel was of no interest to anyone but Israelites, just as the history of the god Haldi's relations with his Urartians or of the god Chemosh's relations with his Moabites was of only parochial interest. But as Yahweh, over the

centuries, evolved into God, so did Israel necessarily evolve into God's Chosen People.

All the great acts of God, his miracles, had been performed on behalf of Israel and Judah. From the Ten Plagues and the Exodus to the miracles attested by Daniel, the books of what Christians called "the Old Testament" clearly showed God's love for the descendants of Jacob. Although the Gentiles too had recently begun to worship Adonai, they did so only because they knew of the mighty acts that he had performed for his original favorites. Gentiles could not deny God's miraculous acts for Israel without denying God himself.

One of the most effective reminders of the unique bond between God and the Judaeans was language. In the early medieval period Judaeans in all lands, taking their cue from the rabbinic academies in Galilee and Mesopotamia, began to use Hebrew in their worship. At one and the same time Hebrew brought the Judaeans closer to God and distanced them from the Gentiles. Hebrew was obviously the language of Creation, for does not the name *Adam* mean "man" in Hebrew? Although other languages were sent down upon other people in the Confusion of Tongues, the Hebrew language was transmitted via Eber to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Arabic was used in the mosques, and Greek and Latin in the churches, but only in the synagogues was Hebrew heard. Under rabbinic guidance the Greek translations and the Aramaic targums were discarded, and readings from the Tanakh were now all in Hebrew, as were the prayers and the rest of the liturgy.

Medieval Judaeans prided themselves on the uninterrupted tradition that tied them to the great events at the beginning of the history of God and man. Genealogies played a key role here. The Table of Nations, at Genesis 10, showed where all seventy of the world's nations had come from, and the rest of Genesis showed that the only nation of concern to God was the one descended from Jacob: the twelve tribes of Israel. It was with Israel that God had made his Covenant, first with Abraham and then repeating his promise to Isaac and Jacob. Many medieval Judaeans claimed to be able to trace their own genealogy back to one of the twelve tribes, thus assuring themselves a share in the Covenant. To say that much of this was myth, including all of the Book of Genesis, would have been blasphemy for Gentiles as well as for Judaeans.

In the sixth century Christians had begun dating documents *in anno domini*. In the seventh, Muslims established their own era, beginning with Muhammad's *hijra* to Yathrib/Medina. Judaeans were at the time still using the old Seleukid era, which began in 312 BC, and they continued to do so even after, in the ninth or tenth century, Jewish scholars devised an era appropriate for Judaeans. The Jewish era that the anonymous scholars devised did not begin two or three centuries earlier, as did the Muslim era, nor eight or nine, as did the Christian era. Instead, Judaean scholars elaborated a chronology that began with the first day of the week in which God's created the world and then, on the first Saturday, established the Sabbath and took a well deserved rest from his labors. This *Aera mundi* or *in anno mundi* ("in the year of the world") chronology set the Creation in what would be, in the BC chronology, 3761 BC. As I write this, we are in Year 1470 of the Muslim era and in Year 2009 of the Christian era, but according to the Jewish era we are in Year 5769. The precise year of Creation took some working out. The Muslim scholar al-Biruni observed that in his time (ca. 1000) the Judaeans had three competing eras, none of which quite corresponded to the Jewish chronology now in use.

By the twelfth century, however, the present chronology had apparently been agreed upon. The first reference to the *in anno mundi* chronology appears in a work by Rabbi Sherira ben Hanina, head of the rabbinic academy at Pumbeditha, writing in 987.

Rabbi Sherira's Christian and Muslim contemporaries may have quibbled about the precise year of Creation, but they were as certain as were Judaeans that God had created the world and had set Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and that the history of God and man was as it was written in the Hebrew scriptures. The hieroglyphic records of ancient Egypt and the cuneiform inscriptions of Mesopotamia were unintelligible, and would remain so until the nineteenth century. With nothing to contradict it, the Bible was accepted as the story of God's dealings with all of humankind from Creation to classical times, and in that story the Judaeans shared with God the starring roles. Christians claimed that God turned away from the Judaeans when they rejected Jesus the Messiah, and that since Jesus' Resurrection it was not Israel but the Church that enjoyed God's favor and protection. Muslims claimed that God's plan culminated in his giving to the Arabians first the Quran and then dominion over the world. But while Christians and Muslims believed that in recent times they had been favored by God over the Judaeans, neither Christians nor Muslims doubted that for a very much longer time the favor of God had rested on Israel. The distant past was thus a treasure of Judaism: although everyone now claimed God, Judaeans had not only God but also an unparalleled tradition. As the tradition lengthened, the dearer it became. By the time of the crusades the central focus of Judaism was becoming Judaism itself.

The Judaeans' tradition was corporate, stretching over millennia, and so contrasted with the Christian and Muslim traditions, each of which focused on a single individual. The Christian religion centered on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, and Islam was entirely contained in the prophecies of Muhammad. Judaeans boasted of a continuum, or of a long series of episodes. Although for them Moses' transactions with God on Mt Sinai were easily the most important, the transactions were only a chapter in a much longer story. Before Moses there had been the patriarchs, each of them very close to God, and after Moses came the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua, all the miracles associated with the Judges, and then the splendor of the kings. The story included God's recurring punishment of Israel and Judah for idolatry or errors in worship, but even the punishment was a reflection of God's intense interest in Israel.

Medieval Judaeans thus had an eminently "usable past." This should not be mistaken for an interest in history. In the Middle Ages, as in Late Antiquity, a serious study of history was not yet possible. Your religion was your identity, and your interest in the past was limited to those stories that validated your religion. Further inquiry into the past would have been unprofitable and probably disconcerting. Keen as the rabbis were about the stories contained in the Tanakh, they "evinced little interest in the history of postbiblical times."[2] The exceptions were those post-Biblical events to which a religious interpretation could be attached or a religious lesson extracted. So the rabbinic imagination embroidered the destruction of the temple by Titus, the disastrous revolt of Bar Kochba, or the honors given by the Roman emperors to the patriarchs at Sepphoris and Tiberias.

Judaeans in Christendom during the early medieval period

In Christendom - both Catholic Europe and the Byzantine empire - Judaeans were a small minority. At most they accounted for three per cent of the population, and Salo Baron's estimate placed them at one per cent. Their lot in Christendom was better at the beginning of the Middle Ages than at the end: the period during and after the crusades was for Judaeans throughout Europe much more dangerous than the so-called "Dark Age" (roughly from the sixth century to the end of the eleventh). The following pages pertain to that "Dark Age" and to the imperial centuries of Byzantium, the earlier phase of the medieval period.

By the seventh century Hellenistic Judaism was gone and rabbinic Judaism was well established. The Talmuds became increasingly the object of religious study and the focus of interest, as the Tanakh took on the status of a holy and ancient but no longer very relevant text. During all of the medieval period European rabbis had little competition within Judaism, since the Karaite movement - so vigorous in the Dar al-Islam - was not so important in the Byzantine empire and scarcely intruded at all into Catholic Europe. Secular Judaeans were nowhere to be found: in this Age of Faith nobody doubted God's existence, and anyone abandoning Judaism did so only as a convert to Christianity or Islam. The local Jewish community was invariably religious, centered on a synagogue. The synagogue was usually (although not always) led by a rabbi, whose knowledge of the Torah, Hebrew and Aramaic and whose study of the Talmud set him above even the most affluent members of his congregation.

The profile of Judaeans in early medieval society was much lower than it had been in Hellenistic and Roman antiquity. With a few brief and disastrous exceptions, Judaism had been a strange but respected religion in the polytheistic cities of the Greek-speaking half of the Roman empire, and in most of these cities Judaeans had played a limited but significant role in civic life. Although they were not enrolled as citizens, because they could not participate in the city's cults, in many ways the Judaeans of Hellenistic and Roman times were not much different from the Gentiles of their city: Judaeans and Gentiles looked alike, usually had similar names, spoke the same language, plied the same trades, and watched the same games and theatrical performances. Many Judaeans in the Hellenistic Diaspora were proselytes and most were descended from proselyte forbears. In many homes the husband was a Hellene while the wife had become a Judaean. Although most cities had Judaean wards, these scarcely differed from the predominantly Hellenic wards. In short, under the Hellenistic kings and the pagan Roman emperors Judaeans in the Diaspora were to a considerable degree integrated in Gentile society.

In the European cities of the early medieval period such assimilation was not possible, nor was it desired by either the Christian majority or the Jewish minority. The cities themselves, especially in the Latin west, were in all ways far below their ancient predecessors: from the seventh through the eleventh centuries the cities were small, poor, ill-kempt, and unhealthy, with none of the amenities that could have been found in the typical city of the Roman empire. In a Christian city "the Jews" lived in their own quarter or on their own street, which - as in antiquity - may not have looked much different from the rest of the city. Such clues as we have, in fact, suggest that the small Jewish neighborhood - it was hardly a *ghetto* - was much less squalid than were the Gentile quarters.[3]

The center of the Judaeans' neighborhood was obviously the synagogue. What quarrels arose among them were normally resolved according to Talmudic law. In every synagogue a court - a *beth din* - decided cases in which both parties were Jewish (a case involving a Judaean and a Christian was decided by the temporal authority). The *beth din* was in some circumstances just the rabbi, who was supposed to be expert in Talmudic law. More often, the members of the synagogue would choose three judges - *dayyanim* - to serve as their *beth din*. This court of three might include the rabbi, but often it did not (the rabbi, however, was available to answer whatever legal questions the *dayyanim* had). Although the *beth din* was not empowered to inflict capital punishment on a guilty party, it could pronounce a sentence of excommunication (*herem*). Excommunication effectively banned the person from participating not only in religious worship but also in the daily activities of the community. Because such a sentence was normally honored by other synagogues, a Judaean upon whom it was pronounced was often forced to convert to Christianity. The Jewish minority in a medieval city of Christendom was thus in many ways a self-governing community.

In Catholic Christendom the rabbi and his community were of course subjects of a count, duke, or king. These temporal authorities were usually concerned to keep the peace and to guarantee certain political rights to their Jewish subjects. An exception was the Visigothic kingdom in Spain, where in 613 King Sisebut ordered that all Judaeans in his kingdom be forcibly baptized and that they discontinue their synagogue worship and other expressions of Judaism.[4] The Visigothic experiment continued for almost ninety years, and ended when the kingdom was overrun by the Muslim troops of Tariq and Musa. Possibly the Visigothic example was enough to persuade other Germanic kings in Europe that forcible conversion of Judaeans to Christianity was not something that God rewarded.

In the early medieval city the social isolation of Judaeans, although not so adamant as it would become after the crusades, was nevertheless much more obvious than it had been in antiquity. Most importantly, proselytizing to Judaism had virtually ceased, and in medieval Europe mixed marriages were unheard of. The lines of friendship were also clearly drawn, as hospitality was limited entirely to one's co-religionists. The external appearance of the Christian and Jewish population differed, as Jewish men in a medieval city wore full beards while Christian men either trimmed their beards or were clean-shaven. Christians and Judaeans each followed their own calendar. While the Christians were in late July, Judaeans were in early Ab. The first of the winter months was Kislev for Judaeans, December for Christians.

Personal names were distinctively either Jewish or Christian. Even names common to both religions were rendered differently: thus the Jewish *Yakov* and the Christian *James*. In the typical ancient city one intensely religious community - the Judaeans - occupied an important niche in a civic community of Gentiles, for most of whom religion was not of great concern. The typical city of medieval Europe, in contrast, housed two intensely religious communities, each of them certain in the knowledge that the other was hateful to God and therefore bound for Hell.

Talmudic concern with ritual purity

Rabbinic Judaism was well suited to the changed condition of Judaeans in the early

medieval period. Unlike its Hellenistic predecessor, rabbinic Judaism strove for a clear separation between Judaeans and Gentiles. The rabbis absolutely prohibited mixed marriages, as did the Christian clergy. If you were Judaean you would either have no dealings at all with Gentiles or, if that was impossible, you would do what you could to minimize contact with them. Over the last centuries BC and the first two centuries CE the Mishnah had evolved in a society in which Judaeans were a minority in a predominantly Gentile society that was polytheistic and image-worshiping. After Rabbi Judah wrote down the Mishnah ca. 200 CE, and as the dominant society was transformed from paganism to Christianity, the strictures aimed at pagan Gentiles were applied to Christian Gentiles. Although Christians were hardly idolaters they were uncircumcised and - by rabbinic standards - heathen.

Of utmost importance in rabbinic Judaism was holiness, or cleanness. God had given general instructions in the Tanakh (for example, at Leviticus 11) about what was clean and what was unclean, and in the oral Torah he provided the specifics. Anything that polluted or defiled was to be avoided, and contact with the unclean had to be scrubbed away through rituals of purification. Washing of hands before eating a meal or after defecating or urinating was not merely recommended for hygienic reasons but was a ritual required by God's covenant. Much more elaborate was the purifying bath called a *tevilah*. The person undergoing *tevilah* was submerged in water that flowed from a natural source. Although in New Testament times such ritual baths were taken in the Jordan river or other rivers and streams, in medieval Europe they took place in a *mikvah*, a building located close to the synagogue. More accurately, the synagogue was located close to the *mikvah*, which was necessarily sited first. After digging a deep well and reaching "pure" water, medieval Judaeans would finish construction of their *mikvah* and then build a synagogue next to it.

A Judaean undergoing *tevilah* was naked and had thoroughly washed himself or herself before entering the *mikvah*. Steps led down into the pool of water, and upon reaching the bottom of the pool the bather would crouch so that the entire body, including the hair, was briefly under the purifying water, the ritual again punctuated by prescribed prayers and blessings. Women especially made use of the *mikvah*. In addition to ritual baths before her wedding night and after every childbirth, a woman performed *tevilah* after every menstrual period, or *niddah*. Until she did so on the seventh day after her menstrual period ended, a Jewish woman was herself called a *niddah*, and God forbade her husband to embrace or even to touch her. An entire tractate of the Talmud dealt with *niddah*, and intercourse with a woman during her *niddah* was one of the most heinous sins a Jewish man could commit. The *mikvah* was obviously of central importance in every medieval Judaean community, and its use was not limited to women. A man was supposed to perform *tevilah* after a nocturnal emission, and all men underwent *tevilah* before a holy day such as Yom Kippur. In some communities, Judaeans were expected to take a ritual bath before every Sabbath.

Christians, in contrast, took no ritual baths and few baths of any sort. Christian baptism, which was a once-in-a-lifetime sacrament, came from the very same tradition as did the Jewish *tevilah* (the verb *baptizein* means "to submerge, or completely immerse"), but over the centuries had become something unrecognizably different from what it had once been. In antiquity the Christian ritual of baptism was performed in a baptistry, a building devoted entirely to the

sacrament. The central feature of a baptistry was a deep pool in which a naked adult convert could be briefly immersed. By the sixth century most Europeans had become Christians, and baptism was increasingly a sacrament performed on infants. For submersion of an infant a deep pool was unnecessary, and archaeology shows that in the early medieval period baptismal pools were constructed with shallower depths. Eventually separate baptistries were no longer deemed necessary, and baptisms - almost always of infants - were performed at a baptismal font located in the church itself. Furthermore, submersion gave way to a more symbolic cleansing, as the priest was content to pour or even to sprinkle water over the head of the rare adult who required baptism.

Avoidance of Gentiles in rabbinic Judaism

In rabbinic Judaism the incarnation of uncleanness was, alongside menstruating women, the entire Gentile population. Sexual contact with a Gentile was abhorrent, but so also was eating and drinking with a Gentile, or eating or drinking anything that had been prepared by a Gentile. Cups, plates and other dining utensils that had been bought from or touched by a Gentile had to be taken to the *mikvah* so that they could be ritually cleansed from the pollution. The Talmud listed all the food and drink, from bread and wine to Bithynian cheese, that could not be purchased from Gentiles. Judaeans were instructed not even to purchase milk from a Gentile unless they had watched as the dairyman milked the goat or cow. The rabbis further forbade their congregants to eat anything cooked by a Gentile. If you walked by a field in which were locusts that had been roasted because a Gentile had set a brush-fire to clear his field, the roasted locusts were unclean and you were to eat none of them (if the fire had been set by a Judaean, of course, you were free to eat all the locusts that you wished). Gentile involvement in the preparation of food was kept to a minimum: if a Jewish woman made a stew before going to synagogue, while she was away a Gentile could stir the stew but not taste it. And if Judaeans had placed meat on coals, they were permitted to ask a Gentile to watch the meat, and to turn it from time to time, so long as the Gentile did not touch it. A stopper popped out of a wine barrel belonging to Judaeans, and a Gentile quickly put his hand to the bung-hole to keep the wine from pouring out: the rabbinical instruction was that all of the wine above the level of the bung-hole was therefore unclean and had to be drained and thrown away.[5]

An ever-present concern was that a Judaean who ate with Gentiles or ate their food might eventually marry one of them. It was for this reason that the rabbis instructed Judaeans to eat no bread other than that made by Judaeans. The Talmud explained that Gentile bread was forbidden "as a safeguard against intermarriages," and that Rabbi Nahman b. Isaac said to the people, "Hold no converse with Aibu, because he eats the bread of Gentiles."[6] Intimate contact of any kind was forbidden. The oral Torah forbade Judaeans to have their hair cut by a Gentile barber. No Jewish woman was to act as a midwife for a pregnant Gentile, lest she deliver into the world another heathen, and no Gentile midwife was to assist a pregnant Judaean.

The most sweeping commandment seemed to prohibit a Judaean from doing any business at all with a Christian. For the pious Judaean the Mishnah of Rabbi Judah had laid down, ca. 200 CE, a rather simple commandment about commerce with Gentiles: "On the three days preceding their festivals it is forbidden to do any business transaction with them." By the time that the

Babylonian Talmud was written down, and to be absolutely certain that they would not be defiled by contact with a Gentile festival, the rabbis had expanded the Mishnah's original prohibition, so that it now included the three days following as well as the three days preceding a Gentile festival. This created few problems when most Gentiles were pagan, because pagan festivals were few and far between. The prohibition posed a huge problem, however, when Gentiles were converted from paganism to Christianity. Because for Christians every Sunday was a holy day, it appeared that on no day of the week - Sunday, the three days preceding it, and the three days following - was it permissible for a devout Judaean to do business with them. A way out of the dilemma was found by resourceful rabbis who included Sunday itself in both the "three days preceding" and "the three days following," thus allowing a Judaean to do business with Christians on Wednesdays and Thursdays.[7]

Paradoxically, every devout Jewish family depended on Christians to perform tasks which the Talmud prohibited for Judaeans. These tasks were especially numerous on the Sabbath day, and the Christian who performed them was the family's *shabbat goy* ("Sabbath Gentile"). Thus a Jewish family would depend on its Sabbath *goy* to light a cooking fire or tend an oven on the Sabbath, or to grind meal or wash a soiled cloth. A community consisting entirely of devout observers of the Talmud encountered a host of difficulties. For religious as well as economic reasons the small Jewish communities in medieval Europe were necessarily located within or alongside Christian cities.

Christian attitudes toward Judaeans in early medieval Europe

Just as rabbinic Judaeans recoiled from Christians because the latter were unclean and outside God's covenant, so did Christians revile "the Jews" because they had rejected the gospel and were therefore damned. For a long time, however, this hostility against Judaeans and Judaism was kept in check by official policies: some of these were inherited from the Roman emperors and others were reflections of early Christian doctrine. Popes, patriarchs and bishops were less hostile to Judaeans, and more inclined to protect them, than were monks and the laity. Christian theology and dogmatics had from the first century onward declared that Judaeans and Judaism had a special place in God's plan for the world. As Paul wrote in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, God allowed Judaeans to reject the gospel in order that the Gentile world might accept it. After the Gentile world was converted, so Paul wrote, God would finally bring the Judaeans to see the truth, and after the conversion of Israel would come the End of Time. Although the Visigothic kings and a few Byzantine emperors chose to hasten this process by force, Christian theologians warned that the use of force was counter to God's plan and would only delay the long-awaited Judgement Day. Pope Gregory the Great was especially insistent that although compulsion could be used against Christian heretics it was not to be used against Judaeans (Letters 1,2, 8, 9 and 13). Judaeans, he made clear, were to be allowed to worship as they wished. Later popes reiterated Gregory's pronouncements..

Over the centuries the two religious communities - one immense and the other minuscule - developed a symbiotic relationship, and until the crusades the Judaeans of Europe lived in relative safety, tolerated and largely avoided by the Christian majority. Because of its great numbers the Christian majority had nothing to fear from a small Jewish community in its midst.[8]

In the eastern Mediterranean in the late fourth and early fifth centuries Hellenistic Judaism had been a formidable rival to Christianity (Judaizing Christians were then a great worry for bishops), and Christian monks considered themselves courageous for attacking synagogues. The story was very different in Europe during the early medieval period: rabbinic Judaism - unlike its Hellenistic predecessor - was not at all a threat to Christianity, and Christians could afford to be tolerant. The Judaeans, in turn, however much they were disliked by the Christian majority, felt amply protected by its rulers and made a place for themselves adjacent to but separate from the Gentiles. For religious reasons each side despised and hated the other, but for economic reasons they needed each other.

Work and trade

The Jewish Diaspora of antiquity was never a "dispersal" of Judaeans from Jerusalem, however much it imagined itself to be just that, but it was a far-flung and loosely connected network of local congregations. Thanks to this network, which was one of the world's first truly ecumenical or international communities, it was possible for Judaeans in a given city to make contacts with co-religionists in cities hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Already in the Roman empire many Judaeans put this advantage to practical use, and in one way or another involved themselves in long-distance trade. Most of the participants were small retailers and local pedlars, offering exotic goods or artifacts for sale to the Gentile population of their city. A few, however, were prosperous merchants, who controlled the importing of costly commodities from far away. Seldom did Judaeans produce the goods that they traded. The typical pattern was to purchase a commodity in a distant land, where it was plentiful and relatively cheap, and to carry it to those places in which it was rare and would fetch a high price.

This economic niche - "international" trade - was dominated by Judaeans in medieval Europe. Judaean congregations throughout the Dar al-Islam served as way-stations for trade-routes that stretched from India to Spain. The Judaeans of Christian Europe were thus connected to the east, and they provided for the Gentiles of Europe luxury goods that would otherwise have been unavailable. Rulers and the wealthier class of Christians were especially appreciative of the exotica that a small Jewish community in their midst had to offer.

Scattered evidence shows that in Late Antiquity at least a few Judaeans owned large landed estates that were worked by pagans or Christians. Kenneth Stow noted that even in the eighth century there were still Jewish landowners near Narbonne,"but whether these Jewish landowners numbered two or two thousand cannot be determined."[9] Although Judaeans may in some places have been legally barred from owning land, such laws were apparently exceptional. Owning land and working it, however, were two different matters, and there is no evidence at all for Jewish farmers in medieval Europe. Medieval European society was thoroughly traditional, and so were the trades. A son normally carried on his father's work, whether that of a cobbler, a pedlar, or a banker. Judaeans in medieval Europe invariably lived in cities, not in villages, and they did not farm the land.

Judaeans who were not involved in trade, whether as great merchants or as local pedlars, often were found in a few highly specialized industries. Skills in these specialties were typically

passed down from one generation to the next, with some improvement along the way. Judaean craftsmen were known for their expert work in textiles, especially silk, and for the making of jewelry with precious metals and precious stones. These specialties were the result of the provenance of the materials. Silk from the Far East was carried through the Dar al-Islam (the Hadith forbade Muslim men to wear silk) to Europe. There the manufacture and dyeing of clothes made from silk became a Jewish specialty. Diamonds, likewise, could be obtained in Europe only through middlemen in the Dar al-Islam (in medieval times all diamonds came from India). As a result, Judaeans gained a reputation as jewelers: specialists in assessing and cutting diamonds, and fixing them in gold and silver settings.

The most profitable business for a Judaean dealing with Gentiles was moneylending. Christians believed it a sin to engage in moneylending, or more precisely to charge interest on money loaned. The condemnation of "usury" was strong enough that Christians convicted of it were excommunicated. Like prostitution, however, "usury" was a social necessity. In every sizeable city Christians depended on Jewish usurers from whom money could be obtained, often at an exorbitant price. In Judaism too usury was condemned, but only for loans made to other Judaeans: according to the Torah, God forbade Israelites to charge interest on a loan to another Israelite, but God expressly permitted them to charge interest on a loan to a Gentile, with no limit on the rate of interest.[10] The result was that the primitive banking system of medieval Europe, as of the Dar al-Islam, was essentially a Judaean undertaking. Not surprisingly, a small Jewish community played a very important role in the economy of an early medieval town.

A charter issued shortly before the First Crusade shows how at that time a Christian bishop could take pride in having a Jewish settlement attached to his city. Bishop Rudiger of Speyer, a German city on the upper Rhine, wrote as follows ca. 1084:

> In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, I, Rudiger, surnamed Huozmann, Bishop of Speyer, when I made the villa of Speyer into a town, thought I would increase the honor I was bestowing on the place if I brought in the Jews. Therefore I placed them outside the town and some way off from the houses of the rest of the citizens, and, lest they should be too easily disturbed by the insolence of the citizens, I surrounded them with a wall. Now the place of their habitation which I acquired justly (for in the first place I obtained the hill partly with money and partly by exchange, while I received the valley by way of gift from some heirs) that place, I say, I transferred to them on condition that they pay annually three and a half pounds of the money of Speyer for the use of the brethren. I have granted also to them within the district where they dwell, and from that district outside the town as far as the harbor, and within the harbor itself, full power to change gold and silver, and to buy and sell what they please. And I have also given them license to do this throughout the state. Besides this I have given them land of the church for a cemetery with rights of inheritance. This also I have added that if any Jew should at any time stay with them he shall pay no thelony. Then also just as the judge of the city hears cases between citizens, so the chief rabbi shall hear cases which arise between the Jews or against them. But if by chance he is unable to decide any of them they shall go to the bishop or his chamberlain. They shall maintain watches, guards, and fortifications about their district, the guards in common with our vassals. They may lawfully employ

> nurses and servants from among our people. Slaughtered meat which they may not eat according to their law they may lawfully sell to Christians, and Christians may lawfully buy it. Finally, to round out these concessions, I have granted that they may enjoy the same privileges as the Jews in any other city of Germany. Lest any of my successors diminish this gift and concession, or constrain them to pay greater taxes, alleging that they have usurped these privileges, and have no episcopal warrant for them, I have left this charter as a suitable testimony of the said grant. And that this may never be forgotten, I have signed it, and confirmed it with my seal as may be seen below. Given on September 15th, 1084.[11]

The Judaean community at Speyer prospered and soon built a synagogue, the remains of which, along with those of the structure housing the *mikvah*, are still to be seen. But the community came to a tragic end in 1096, when the People's Crusade marched upon Speyer.

While Judaeans were flourishing at Speyer on the Rhine, others were doing equally well in the city of Troyes on the upper Seine. The Judaeans of Troyes were led by Rabbi Solomon bar Isaac (1045-1105), better known by the acronym, "Rashi." Rashi was the most eminent Talmudic scholar in medieval Judaism: his Hebrew commentaries on the Tanakh and the Babylonian Talmud were admired in his own day and by the fourteenth century had become classics. Rashi established a yeshiva at Troyes and devoted his life to religion, to writing, and to hearing cases brought before him by litigating Judaeans (many of his decisions - what in Latin were called *responsa* - are extant). He was also, however, a practical man and seems to have achieved some wealth by making and selling wine. Most of Rashi's life was untroubled, but he lived to see the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence at the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century. At that time many of his congregation either were forced to accept Christian baptism or were killed.

Through the early medieval period the small Jewish minority in Catholic Europe was socially disadvantaged, but in other ways the Judaeans fared well enough. Their material circumstances were often better, and sometimes much better, than those of the Christian majority. With a few exceptions, they were free to practice their religion and were not pressured to convert to Christianity. Most importantly, Judaeans for the most part did not have to fear physical violence. From a Jewish perspective the period before the First Crusade was far happier than what was to follow.

Literacy and schools

Almost all Jewish men were able to read.[12] Most importantly, they were required to read Hebrew in order to participate in synagogue worship. A rabbi was also able to write in Hebrew, but few men in his congregation would have been able to do that. Typically, a synagogue provided a school in which young boys could learn the Hebrew alphabet and then learn to read Hebrew texts. A boy began his study of Hebrew at age six or seven, and the normal course of instruction lasted four years.[13] During that time the boy memorized long stretches of the Tanakh, first the Pentateuch and then the Prophets, repeatedly reading the same passage along with his teacher and trying to commit the passage to memory. Whether he understood the meaning of the

passage - Hebrew was essentially a foreign language - was evidently not of great importance.

Learning to read Latin and to write in the Roman alphabet was not a high priority for most Judaeans, although many merchants, moneylenders and scholars evidently acquired at least a rudimentary command of the language and the script. By the seventh century Latin was mostly the province of the Christian clergy and of the scribes and secretaries of the king and the nobility. Latin was not widely understood by the Christian laity, which was in large part illiterate (nobody had yet begun to write in the vernaculars of western Christendom). Judaeans in the Byzantine empire had some incentive to learn to read and write in Greek as well as in Hebrew. In the cities of the empire a fair number of Christians were literate in Greek, and for Judaeans who did business with them a limited facility in Greek was often useful.

The evolution of Ladino and Yiddish: Sephardic and Ashkenazic Judaism

In the Hellenistic Diaspora of antiquity Judaeans spoke and wrote the same koine Greek that the Gentiles used. This was not the case in the Middle Ages. Eventually the languages spoken and written by Judaeans became quite distinct from the local vernaculars of medieval Christendom. In their worship the Christians heard and recited Latin or Greek while Jewish worship was in Hebrew and Aramaic. All of these were ancient liturgical languages, no longer spoken in daily life. For an example of the spoken vernaculars we may look to the Christian lands of northwestern Spain. There stood the city of León, the city which in antiquity was called - in the locative case - *Legióne* (after the Romans' Seventh Legion, whose camp formed the basis of the city). In the early medieval period the Latin spoken in and around León began to evolve into a dialect that linguists not surprisingly call Leonese, an early and local form of Spanish. The Latin spoken in the small Jewish settlement adjacent to the city evolved in a similar but different direction. This language, originating as Latin but much influenced by Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, eventually became noticeably different from Christian Leonese and is called "Judaeo-Spanish" or, more often, "Ladino."

The separate linguistic evolution was in part the result of the adoption of Hebrew as the liturgical language of the synagogues, an adoption that in most parts of the Roman empire seems to have begun late in the fourth century and that by the sixth century was almost universal. The Aramaic of the Talmuds, in which the rabbis were necessarily competent, was also a contributor to Ladino. Yet another factor was sociological rather than purely linguistic: the medieval Jewish settlement was in most of its affairs separate from the Christian city, but was necessarily in close and regular contact with other Judaeans elsewhere in Spain and beyond. For religious, social and economic reasons (long-distance trade was essential to their communities) Judaeans necessarily had "international" connections while most Christians lived at the local level. Also important was the high degree of literacy among Judaeans. The language of literate communication among Judaeans was their Ladino dialect. The dialect was occasionally written with the Roman alphabet but was normally written with Hebrew characters.

By the end of the medieval period Ladino was the lingua franca of Judaism in all of Spain and Portugal and into southern France. Medieval Judaeans referred to Spain as *Sepharad*, and to the inhabitants of Spain as *Sephardim*.[14] The Ladino community therefore came to be known as

"Sephardic" Judaeans. In southern and central Spain, which from the eighth century until the 1230s was under Muslim control, Judaeans generally spoke Arabic in daily life. Even in Muslim Spain, however, many Judaeans were also able to speak, read and write Ladino, because they maintained a close connection with Jewish communities in Christian Spain. An arranged marriage often brought a bride from a Jewish community in Christian Spain to the Dar al-Islam, or vice versa, and movement of individuals and families from one community to another was frequent.

In central Europe a similar linguistic evolution occurred. The Yiddish language, which before World War II and the Holocaust was spoken by several million Ashkenazic Jewish inhabitants of eastern Europe, was originally a dialect of Middle High German, distinguished from other Middle High German dialects by its inclusion of many loan-words from Hebrew and Aramaic. The oldest known Yiddish text is a single sentence in an otherwise Hebrew prayer-book written at the Rhineland city of Worms in 1272-3. The sentence, a couplet written in red ink with Hebrew letters (and, like Hebrew, written from right to left), blesses the person who carries the prayer-book into a synagogue:[15]

gut tag im betage se vaer dis *makhzor* in *beit hakneseth* trage
(May a good day come for him who carries this prayer-book into the assembly house)

The language of the blessing - other than the medieval Hebrew words for "prayer-book" and for "assembly house" (synagogue) - is quite clearly a dialect of Middle High German. A revisionist view is that Yiddish began a thousand years ago among the Khazars as a Slavic dialect, and that over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was "relexified" to German (that is, German words were substituted for Slavic words, while the structure and grammar of Yiddish still mirrored its Slavic origin).[16] This thesis has not yet persuaded most specialists in Yiddish or Slavic linguistics.

Judaean men in Christendom were generally bilingual: without some understanding of the local vernacular no merchant, moneylender or craftsman could speak with Christians from the larger community. Among themselves, however, the Judaeans of Christendom spoke a language that the Christian majority either could barely understand or found completely unintelligible. This contrasted with the linguistic situation in the Dar al-Islam: there most Judaeans spoke among themselves a dialect of Arabic not very different from the Arabic spoken by the Muslim majority alongside whom they lived.

At the end of the medieval period the language of Judaeans in Spain, Portugal and southern France was Ladino, and in most of the rest of Christendom it was Yiddish. These two language communities formed the great divide in Judaism: the Sephardim were those who spoke Ladino, and Judaeans who spoke Yiddish were the Ashkenazim. Today both Ladino and Yiddish are dying languages, but a division between the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic traditions of Judaism still persists.

Judaism under the Byzantine emperors

In the Byzantine empire Judaean minorities were small but ubiquitous.[17] In the typical city of the empire, as of the western kingdoms, Judaeans rarely exceeded a few hundred in a population of many thousands. At twelfth-century Constantinople, which by that time had a population nearing half a million, lived some two thousand Rabbanites and five hundred Karaites. Not permitted to live within the city's walls, the Judaeans of both traditions were restricted to "the narrows" (the *stenon*) of Galata, across the Golden Horn inlet from Constantinople. The nadir of Judaism in the Byzantine empire was probably plumbed under Justinian and Heraclius, who in the sixth and early seventh centuries had resorted to force in their attempts to bring Judaeans over to Orthodox Christianity.

The spectacular Arabian conquests in the middle decades of the seventh century improved the lot of Judaeans in the Byzantine empire, as elsewhere. The Levant - in which Judaeans were numerous - was lost to the Byzantine empire when Umar's generals conquered it in the 630s. As Dhimmis, the Judaeans were protected in the Dar al-Islam, and seemed to enjoy greater favor from the califs than did the Christians. After the death of Heraclius in 641, and the continued growth of the Arabian empire, the typical Byzantine emperor not only tolerated Judaism but tried to provide his Jewish subjects with enough security that they would not be tempted to remove themselves to the Dar al-Islam. Most emperors, that is, not only treated Judaism as a legitimate religion, but punished Christians who attacked the persons or property of Judaeans. Certain restrictions were nevertheless enforced. Judaeans were not permitted to carry weapons, to own Christian slaves, to hold a post in the government, or to attempt to proselytize Christians. A Jewish tax had been put in place by Justinian, and for the next nine hundred years this tax evidently remained on the books, although its collection was sporadic. In practicing their own religion, the Jewish minorities were generally left alone by the Byzantine emperors.

It is often supposed that the emperor Leo III (718-41) tried to suppress Judaism, but the evidence is ambiguous. Christian chronicles state that in the year of the world 6214 (721-722 CE) Emperor Leo ordered that all Judaeans and Montanists be baptized. Jewish sources say nothing about such an edict, and Andrew Sharf has made a good argument that Leo's edict applied only to the followers of a Messianic figure named Severus. In the year before the edict Severus had created a stir in Syria, where he "claimed to be a re-incarnation of Moses, who would lead the Jews back to the promised land."[18] Because Leo's family had come from Syria, Leo was as fluent in Arabic as he was in Greek and he was especially alert to troubles and disaffection in the southeastern stretches of Anatolia. In any event, the supposed "suppression" of Judaism by Leo was of little or no consequence for Byzantine Judaism as a whole.

More serious trouble for the Judaeans of the empire occurred during the Macedonian dynasty, which began with Basil I (867-86). As we have seen, Basil was faced with aggression by the Paulicians, and his Judaean policy may have been influenced by the Paulician threat. However that may be, Basil first tried to win Judaeans over to the Orthodox church by offering incentives, including a remission of taxes or outright gifts, to those who agreed to be baptized. When this failed to bring in many converts, Basil seems to have resorted to threats and coercion, although no formal decree was issued. Judaism was never outlawed, and under Constantine VII (914-59) the "persecution" was stopped.[19]

Greek was the language of the empire, and in the empire's Jewish communities a Judaeo-Greek dialect evolved in much the same way that Yiddish and Ladino evolved in Catholic Christendom. This Judaeo-Greek is often called "Yevanic" or "Romaniote." After the spread of rabbinic Judaism, Judaeans in the empire began to write their Greek dialect with Hebrew characters rather than with Greek characters. Almost nothing of the Yevanic dialect survives. In Anatolia it was gradually abandoned after the Seljuk conquest. In Greece it survived until the sixteenth century, when it began to be submerged by Ladino, the language brought to the Ottoman empire by Sephardic immigrants from Spain. In Bulgaria the Yevanic (or Romaniote) dialect eventually gave way either to Ladino or - in the northwest - to Yiddish.

When a Judaean scholar, rabbi, or poet in the empire wrote for publication he wrote in the Hebrew language. If a writer wished to include an occasional sentence of Greek in his text, he did so by transliterating the Greek into Hebrew script. Although not so notable as their counterparts in the Dar al-Islam or even in Catholic Europe, several Jewish writers in the empire achieved fame outside its borders. These writers were initially Karaite: the spread of Karaism to the Byzantine empire in the eleventh century provided an intellectual stimulus for all of Byzantine Judaism.[20] The first of the Byzantine Karaite writers was Tobiah ben Moses, who ca. 1050 wrote religious poetry and translated various Karaite works from Arabic into Hebrew. In the middle of twelfth century Judah Hadassi, a Karaite Judaean at Constantinople, wrote (in Hebrew) several texts that for centuries were highly regarded in Karaite Judaism. The most important of these was his treatise on the Ten Commandments. The Karaite example served also to inspire rabbinic scholarship. Tobiah ben Eliezer, probably born in Kastoria in northwestern Greece, was a respected Talmudist in the eleventh century. Some of his writings attacked Karaism, but his most important work was his *Lekah Tov* ("Good Doctrine"), a commentary on the non-prophetic books of the Tanakh. Apart from an acquaintance with Greek medical writers, the Judaeans of Byzantium seem to have had little or no interest in anything that Greek authors - whether classical or Christian - had written.

As summarized by Scharf, the Judaeans of Byzantium were "better off than in the West, worse off than under Islām, usually secure, occasionally threatened, potentially receptive to the culture around them but a very long way from assimilation, enjoying a legal but explicitly inferior status."[21] The characterization applies especially to the period from Justinian through the twelfth century. After the Fourth Crusade, which devastated the city of Constantinople and left much of the imperial machinery in shambles, the situation of Judaeans in the empire changed for the worse.

The Judaean Khazars

Judaeans throughout Christian Europe and the Dar al-Islam were politically subject to Gentiles, and today it is often supposed that after the death of Herodes Agrippa nowhere did Judaeans live under Judaean rulers. That is not quite correct. In antiquity Judaism had been the rulers' religion in a very few states other than Judaea itself. These states - for example, Ituraea and Chalcis in Syria, or Adiabene in northeastern Mesopotamia - were small or obscure. One by one, they were converted - usually by force - to Christianity. The last of these was the kingdom of Yemen, which was conquered by the Christian king of Ethiopia in the early sixth century (the

Christian rulers shortly gave way to Sassanids and then to Muslims).

Far more important for the history of Judaism has been Ukraine and adjacent lands, and here Judaism was the established religion for a long time. From the eighth century to the tenth, that is, Judaism was the religion of the khanate or khaganate of the Khazars. Unfortunately, we have only a bit of information about this Jewish kingdom.[22] The Khazars were a coalition of Turkish-speaking mounted warriors, who show up in Byzantine records early in the seventh century. At that time they were located just north of the Caucasus. The steppe country above the Black Sea and the Caucasus range was inhabited by Slavic speakers living in small agricultural settlements scattered along the river valleys. The "Sclaveni" had no state, were illiterate, and worshiped a variety of nature gods. The Sclaveni had for a long time been dominated by coalitions of mounted archers: Sarmatians, Goths, Huns, and Avars. The last of these coalitions had collapsed, and the Khazars had come in to take their place as lords of the steppe and of its Slavic-speaking settlements. The Khazars were ruled by a khan or khagan and were so militarily successful that by the middle of the eighth century they were able to hold their own against the last of the Umayyad and the early Abbasid califs. By the reign of Harun al-Rashid, ca. 800, the Khazars controlled most of the steppe country north of the Black Sea and the Caspian, from at least the Dnieper to the Ural river. "Khazaria" would have corresponded to what is today Ukraine, southern Belarus, and parts of southern Russia. The khaganate came to an end in the late 960s, when its capital was razed. This was the city of Atil on the lower Volga, just above the river's delta into the Caspian sea. The enemy who ended the Khazar khaganate was Sviatoslav I, the ruler of Kievan Rus'.

Although in central Asia the Khazars had worshiped nature gods, at some time after they moved near the civilized world they put the gods aside, turned to God, and converted to Judaism. Long before the arrival of the Khazars several of the Greek cities along the northern shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov had included small Jewish communities. We have seen that already in the first century a Judaean synagogue was of some significance at Pantikapaion, on the Crimean peninsula,[23] and Judaeans are also attested at Gorgippia and Phanagoria, on the eastern bank of the Kerch Strait. Presumably the synagogues were started when Judaean merchants came north to engage in the voluminous trade that flowed between the steppe and the Mediterranean world.

How the conversion of the Khazars came about was the subject of a story told by the Khazars themselves and also by the *Kitab al-Khazari*, a fanciful twelfth-century composition by Judah ha-Levi of Toledo.[24] According to the story, after the king of the Khazars sees the error of idolatry he studies the scriptural religions and stages a contest among Christian, Muslim and Judaean spokesmen. The Judaean rabbi easily wins the contest, the king changes his name to Sabriel, and he and his nation become Judaeans.

However it happened, the Khazars' conversion was not superficial. Although they did not give up their identity as Khazars, they evidently took their new religion as seriously as did everyone else at the time. The Khazars continued to use their Turkish language in everyday life, but they learned enough Hebrew to use it as the liturgical language with which to worship God.[25] Their rabbis were evidently fluent speakers, readers and writers of Hebrew. Archaeological

evidence from burials suggests that during the ninth century the Khazars abandoned their traditional beliefs about the underworld. It may be that Judaism among the Khazars had begun in the seventh or eighth century, and that a general conversion took place early in the ninth. By 837 or 838 the khagans were minting coins that - in clear defiance of the Muslim califs to the south - bore the legend, "Moses is the messenger of God."[26]

Except for the coins the archaeological evidence is mute, and the best sources on the Khazars are a handful of Hebrew texts from the medieval period. One of these is an autograph: a tenth-century letter of commendation, written in fine medieval Hebrew by "the community of Kiev." Another, the so-called "Schechter letter," is an eleventh-century copy of a letter received more than a hundred years earlier by Hasdai ibn Shaprut, a rabbi and the chief advisor to Abd el-Rahman, the calif of the Umayyad califate at Cordoba.[27] Most informative is a copy of a letter that King Joseph, khagan of the Khazars, sent to this same Hasdai. Both the Schechter letter and King Joseph's letter include an account of the Khazars' conversion to Judaism. Joseph's immediate predecessors as ruler of the Khazars were named Benjamin and Aaron.

The debate about the Khazars and the origins of Ashkenazic Judaism

Publication of the Schechter letter in the 1912 *Jewish Quarterly Review* sparked a debate about the origins of "Ashkenazic" Judaism. In the Middle Ages the name *ashkenazim*, "people of Ashkenaz," was given to Judaeans of eastern Europe by Judaeans of western Europe, who identified themselves as Sephardic, or Spanish. It is not clear where or what the Judaeans of Spain supposed Ashkenaz to be. Some medieval writers identified Ashkenaz with Germany, perhaps because the preferred language of the Ashkenazim was Yiddish, a dialect of German. But others equated Ashkenaz with the shores of the Black Sea. In the Hebrew Bible the only three references to *ashkenaz* point to the lands near the Black Sea and the Caucasus.[28] The Schechter letter, with its account of the Khazars' conversion to Judaism, seemed to explain how and why the adjective "Ashkenazic" came to be attached to Judaeans of eastern Europe. Between the two World Wars Jewish historians in Poland argued that Judaism in Poland began as early as the tenth century, and that it was brought to Poland by Judaeans who fled the steppes after the destruction of the Khazarian khaganate by the Kievan Rus'.[29]

The suggestion that Ashkenazic Judaism came in large part from the realm of the Khazars met with an array of objections from defenders of the Jewish ideology of nationhood. As the defenders saw it, "the Jews" are descended from the twelve tribes of Israel, and no mass conversion of Gentiles to Judaism has ever occurred. Some defenders of this tradition argued that both the Schechter letter and the Khazar correspondence between Hasdai and King Joseph were fictions, and that the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars was a medieval Jewish fantasy. Others argued that the conversion of the Khazars was limited to the royal family and the court, and did not extend to all their followers. Some evidence does indeed show that the khagan ruled over Christians, Muslims and pagans, and appointed judges appropriate for each religion, but Judaism was certainly the established religion. Yet another solution was to concede that all or most of the Khazars were indeed Jewish, but to argue that the Khazars were descended from the biblical Israelites.[30] This argument focused on two lines in the Schechter letter: "Now they say in our land that our fathers were of the tribe of Simeon, but we cannot insist on the truth of this

matter."[31] Critical historians have all along recognized the claim of descent from Simeon as an aetiology typical of the medieval Diaspora, all of which necessarily explained itself as somehow or other descended from biblical Israel.[32] Simon Dubnow, writing his classic *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland* soon after the Khazar correspondence had been published, recognized that the Khazarian Judaeans were converts: although some of the Khazars converted to Christianity or Islam, "the lion's share fell to Judaism."[33]

The *Kitab al-Khazari* account of the conversion is mythical, but it shows that Judah ha-Levi supposed that all of the Khazars - "hundreds of thousands," so it was said - converted to Judaism. In ha-Levi's story, after the rabbi persuades the king that Judaism is indeed the true religion the king and his vizier travel to a cave frequented by a few Judaeans:

> They disclosed their identity to them, embraced their religion, were circumcised in the cave, and then 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 Tōrāh. Their chronicles also tell 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 honoured and cherished those born Israelites who lived among them.[34]

The Judaism of the Khazars was brought to the attention of the reading public by Arthur Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and its Heritage*, a work of non-fiction published in 1976. The argument made by Koestler, a well known and controversial writer who identified himself as an Ashkenazic Jew, was that a large part of the early twentieth-century Jewish population in eastern Europe and Russia was descended from the Khazars. As Koestler saw it, such a descent was in no way a stigma and should be cheerfully accepted by Jewish scholars, and even by Zionists. Koestler's book was nevertheless roundly criticized, and various DNA tests have been undertaken to prove or disprove the contention that much of the Ashkenazic Jewish population has genetic roots in central Asia.[35]

The scholarly argument about the authenticity of the Hebrew documents on the Khazars was essentially settled in 1982, with the publication of the Kievan letter by Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak.[36] This autograph letter, written in the tenth century, was no fiction or forgery. The "we" who sent the letter are identified in line 8 as "the community of Kiev," which city the Khazars seem to have founded in the eighth century. Of the names in the text, most of them belonging to the signatories at the bottom of the letter, fourteen are Hebrew and six are Turkic. The personal Hebrew names are mostly those of biblical personalities, but men named "Sinai" and "Hanukkah" also appear.[37] Several of the men with Hebrew names are identified as the sons of men with Turkic names.

We may conclude that in the tenth century the steppe country of Ukraine and southern

Russia was home to a large number of Judaeans. Many of these would have been of Khazarian descent. Others would have been Jewish immigrants, who had left cities subject to Christian or Muslim rulers in order to live in a land ruled by a Jewish khagan.[38] Still other Judaeans in Ukraine would have been Slavic natives who converted to the religion of their Khazarian overlords. From the seventeenth century until the Holocaust, as we shall see, Ukraine was one of the most important centers of Judaism, and it was here that - in the eighteenth century - Hasidic Judaism began. Why Ukraine was to play so important a role in the history of Judaism is explained at least in part by the khaganate of the Khazars.

Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam

Altogether, Judaeans fared much better in the Dar al-Islam than under Christian rulers.[39] Their numbers were also much greater there than in Christendom. During the Umayyad and early Abbasid califate Judaeans were grateful for the protection that the califs gave them against the Christian majority, and were therefore reliable supporters of Arabic rule. This was especially the case in the Levant, where Heraclius had tried forcibly to convert all Judaeans to Christianity. In Spain too, where the Visigothic kings had repressed Judaism, most Judaeans regarded the Arabic conquerors as liberators. The same may also have been true in North Africa, where Judaeans had heard from their elders what had happened during Justinian's persecution.

During the early Abbasid period cities in Iraq and the Levant seem to have housed Muslims, Christians and Judaeans in roughly equal numbers, the Christian population dwindling, the Muslim increasing, and the Judaean holding its own. In Egypt the Christians continued to be the majority until the eleventh century. In their religious expression Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam were evidently placed under the same restrictions that the "Pact of Umar" stipulated for Christians, although the "pact" itself is explicit only about Christians. In any case, even against the Christians most of these restrictions were not imposed until late in the Abbasid period.[40] Synagogues in lands ruled by Muslims were more visible and impressive than those in Christian lands. The principal synagogue in Baghdad featured a courtyard and a fine colonnaded interior. Violence against either synagogues or churches was not tolerated by the Umayyad and early Abbasid califs, but in some cities Judaeans were able to appropriate churches and convert them into synagogues.

The chronicler al-Tabari reported that in the year 235 A.H. (850 CE) the calif al-Mutawakkil ordered that everyone in the *ahl al-dhimma* wear at least one piece of yellow clothing and a distinctive cap. The calif also ordered that synagogues, churches, and Zoroastrian places of worship that had been built after the Muslim conquests were to be destroyed or converted into mosques. As we have seen in Chapter 22, al-Mutawakkil faced a revolt by his Turkish *mamluk* troops, and for support turned to the Muslim populace. This required him to turn away not only from Mutazilite Islam, favored by educated Muslims, but also from the tolerance and small degree of secularism that had characterized the regimes of his predecessors. Perhaps it was at this time that some of the restrictions in the Pact of Umar were first mandated. Certainly at some point Muslim rulers forbade the building of new synagogues and churches. The Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo was built on land purchased by Abraham ibn Ezra in 882. A court document from the same city shows how matters stood in the early eleventh century. A

Muslim plaintiff named al-Burhani Ibrahim claimed that a synagogue was recently built and therefore should be torn down. The leader of the synagogue, Abu Imran Moses, produced for the *qadi* (the judge) several respected witnesses who "testified that the just Elder Abu Imran Moses, mentioned above, has been in control of said synagogue for a period of more than forty years to the present date, and that the synagogue's status as a pious foundation was ancient, going back more than two generations." The *qadi* was persuaded and ordered that the synagogue be retained by the Rabbanite Judaean defendants.[41] It thus appears that by the eleventh century Judaeans in Cairo were no longer permitted to build new synagogues, but that the prohibition was fairly recent. In the twelfth century, after the First Crusade, Muslim majorities vandalized both churches and synagogues, but the synagogues suffered less than did the churches.

In Christendom during and after the crusades, as we shall see, it was not uncommon for a king to expel all Judaeans from his realm, either for a specified period or *ad infinitum*. No such expulsions are known from the Dar al-Islam, where the *ahl al-dhimmah* were acknowledged as the original occupants of the lands in which they lived. Although the Dar al-Islam also witnessed far fewer physical attacks on Judaeans than did Christendom, from time to time persecution and even pogroms did occur.[42] In Egypt the notorious Fatimid calif al-Hakim (996-1021) ordered every Dhimmi, whether Jewish or Christian, to wear humiliating clothing and he also destroyed many churches and synagogues. Such persecution was atypical, and it is relevant that even his Muslim subjects regarded al-Hakim as a madman (he also ordered that all dogs be put to death).

Perhaps the worst pogrom in Muslim lands during our period took place in 1066, in the city of Granada: the Muslim majority rioted against Joseph ibn Nagrela, Granada's Judaean vizier, and the rioters went on to kill almost all the Judaeans of the city (one source puts the number of dead at four thousand).[43] A still bloodier massacre occurred in Morocco in the later medieval period: in 1465 a party of zealous Muslims in Fez assassinated the king and his Jewish vizier, and then went on a rampage against the Judaeans of Fez and the rest of Morocco. That atrocity marked the end of a long "Golden Age" for Judaeans in North Africa.

The Cairo Genizah

Much of what is known about Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam comes from the attic of a synagogue in Cairo. The Ben Ezra synagogue, as indicated above, was built in the ninth century, at what was then Fustat and is now Cairo. The windowless attic of the synagogue served as a *genizah*: a "store-room" or "archive." Because it was sacrilege to burn or otherwise destroy any text in which was written the name of Adonai, Judaeans consigned old scrolls and codices of the Tanakh to a respectful retirement in a Genizah. At the Ben Ezra synagogue Judaeans put away into the Genizah not only texts of the Tanakh and Talmud, but books, papers and documents of a secular and often private character. Thanks to the dry climate of Egypt, these documents - written on papyri, paper, parchment, and still other materials - survived fairly well. During the course of a thousand years the Cairo Genizah accumulated more than 200,000 discarded texts, most of them in the form of a single leaf.

In the nineteenth century synagogue officials from time to time balanced their books by selling items from the Genizah to travelers from Europe and Britain. In this way the Genizah and

its contents came to the attention of Solomon Schechter, who taught rabbinic and Talmudic studies at the University of Cambridge. Schechter and the university negotiated with the synagogue and with the Egyptian government, which at the time was nominally invested in Abbas II, the Khedive (viceroy) of Egypt, but was effectively under the control of Britain and France. In 1897 Schechter succeeded in bringing some 140,000 of the Genizah texts to Cambridge, where they still remain. Many of these are trivial, a few are priceless, and for historians all of them are informative.[44]

Social and economic life of Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam

It is quite certain that Jewish men were not permitted to marry Muslim women, while everywhere in the Dar al-Islam Muslim men were free to marry Judaean women. Likewise, no Judaean was permitted to own a Muslim slave, but Muslims often owned Jewish and Christian slaves. In the califate of al-Mutawakkil (847-861) Judaeans, like Christians and Mutazilite Muslims, lost their governmental positions to Sunni Muslims, as the calif tried to bring his upper-class subjects over to the version of Islam preferred by the Muslim populace. The repression begun by al-Mutawakkil did not last long: he was followed by a series of short-lived califs, all of them beholden to the Turkish troops (many of them *mamluks*) on which the security of the califate now depended.

In their work and trade Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam were able to do mostly as they wished. Some rose to considerable eminence in the service of the amirs and califs, and Jewish physicians and merchants were highly respected in Muslim society. In contrast to Christendom, where they were restricted to a very few trades, in the Dar al-Islam Judaeans were engaged in many trades. As summarized by Mark Cohen, documents from the Cairo Genizah show that in Egypt Judaeans were

> involved in dyeing, metalworking, weaving, bread-baking, wine-making, manufacture of glass vessels, tailoring, tanning, production of cheese, sugar manufacture, and silkwork. Where financially possible, Jews owned agricultural land, and many raised crops in the arable Egyptian countryside. Jews owned and worked orchards and date groves. Some assigned gentile sharecroppers to work their fields, vineyards, and orchards. In short, far from occupying predominantly one economic niche, Jews in the Islamic world during our period were broadly distributed throughout the various sectors of the economy.[45]

Moneylending in the Dar al-Islam was usually, although not always, in Judaean hands. Muslim moneylenders are occasionally attested in the sources. The Quran forbade usury, however, and this often meant that Muslims who wished to borrow money had to seek it from a Judaean moneylender. Medicine was also a field in which Judaeans were prominent. In the thirteenth century Jewish physicians became visible in Christendom, but long before that a number of Judaeans had become eminent physicians in the Dar al-Islam. In antiquity Jewish medicine was almost a contradiction in terms, but by the ninth and tenth centuries Judaeans had learned the art of medicine from Arabic translations of the works of Galen and other ancient Greek medical writers.

There were several reasons why Judaeans were much more comfortable in the Dar al-Islam than they were in Christendom. Perhaps the most important was Christian hostility to Judaeans because of their perceived role in the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ. Also important, however, was the differing attitude toward wealth and trade in Christianity and in Islam. Among Christians, especially where the monastic example was strong, poverty was a virtue, and long-distance trade and the pursuit of wealth were suspect. The Quran, in contrast, does not disparage the rich man. Muhammad himself had become wealthy from his marriage to Khadija, whose caravans traveled to Yemen and to Syria. The trader or the merchant was therefore esteemed by Muslims, while Christians generally regarded him as an alien, who violated the medieval Christian ethic. On many occasions a Muslim and a Judaean were business partners. In such cases the Muslim was the senior partner, so that no infringement on Islamic law would take place. When Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam had a legal dispute among themselves they normally took their case to a Muslim court, confident that the case would be fairly adjudicated by the *qadi*. In Christendom, intra-Judaean cases were normally tried by the synagogue's *beth din* and rabbi.

Separation of Judaeans from Muslims in the Dar al-Islam

The physical separation of Judaeans from Gentiles was less pronounced in the Dar al-Islam than it was in Christendom. In the typical city ruled by the Muslim califs Judaeans did tend to congregate in certain areas, close to their synagogues. The calif's Christian subjects did the same, choosing to live near a church. Until well after the crusades, however, a single section of the city would often be home to Muslims, Judaeans and Christians.[46]

Although Judaeans had considerably more freedom and security in the Dar al-Islam than in Christendom, we must not imagine that they were assimilated to Muslim society. The kind of assimilation familiar in modern, secular civilization was virtually unknown in the medieval period. Everyone believed in God and the only question was, Who is right about what God wants? A person's identity was based on his or her religion, and the community to which a person belonged was in the first instance a religious community. Judaeans had no doubt at all that their religion was the correct one: they regarded themselves as descended from Jacob, the only descendant of Abraham not eliminated from the Covenant, and they had the very book of instructions - in Hebrew - that God had revealed to Moses. Muslims were no less confident about God's revelation to Muhammad, having only to look around and see who were the rulers and who were the subjects.

Muslim rulers imposed certain restrictions on Judaeans, as on all other Dhimmis. Judaeans, like Christians, were not allowed to have weapons or horses. All Dhimmis were protected, but were lower in status than the Muslims. In recognition of this, a *dhimmi* was obliged in a wide variety of circumstances to show respect to a Muslim. In the religious sphere, as described above, the construction of new synagogues was eventually prohibited, and Muslims were not allowed to proselytize to Judaism (by Abbasid times nothing prevented Judaeans from converting to Islam).

As a visible expression of their identity, Judaeans wore distinctive clothing, headgear and footwear.[47] The distinctions were originally voluntary and natural, but eventually were made

mandatory by Muslim authorities. Muslim men wore a *qalansuwa* and a turban on their heads, while Judaean males wore either a *kippah* (yarmulke) or a brimmed hat culminating in a conspicuous steeple. For both Judaeans and Muslims the covering of the head was regarded as a mark of piety (only Christians went bareheaded). The Sunnah forbade Muslims to wear the color yellow, and in parts of the Dar al-Islam the wearing of yellow became a requirement for Judaeans. Although a calif or an amir was free to stipulate various kinds of distinctive clothing for his Dhimmis, in most cases the Dhimmis themselves chose to dress in their traditional ways. They did so in order to declare themselves as either Christian or Jewish.

For most Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam their subordinate social status was not a cause for complaint. Judaeans had a very long history of political subjection, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Captivity. Rabbinic Judaism and New Covenant Christianity had both evolved as the religions of subcultures, but since the conversion of Constantine the catholic Church had in many ways become dependent upon catholic Christian rulers. In contrast, rabbinic Judaism was able to function perfectly well under the Muslim califs. Confident that in the eyes of God they were far superior to Muslims, as to all Gentiles, the Judaeans could put up with the minor indignities that Islam imposed on them in the present life.

Language, literacy and elementary education of Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam

When Umar's armies conquered the Fertile Crescent, the many Judaeans who lived there spoke Aramaic, whether the eastern dialect of Iraq or the western dialect of the Levant. Until the eighth century Aramaic continued to be the vernacular, but by that time many Judaeans had also learned to speak some Arabic. By the ninth century Arabic was increasingly the first language of Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam. It was not the Classical Arabic of the Quran, but was very close to the spoken Arabic dialects of the ninth century. "Judaeo-Arabic" differed from the Arabic vernaculars because of its inclusion of a considerable Hebrew and Aramaic vocabulary (especially religious and cultural terms). Thus did the Judaeans of the Dar al-Islam come to speak their own dialect of Arabic. Benjamin Hary, who has made a detailed study of Judaeo-Arabic, has described it as "the meeting point of Classical Arabic, Arabic dialects, Hebrew and Aramaic."[48] Alongside their spoken Judaeo-Arabic, rabbis necessarily kept their ability to speak and read Hebrew and Aramaic. Religious scholars occasionally translated one or more tractates of the Talmud into their dialect of Arabic, but for the most part the Talmud could be read only in Aramaic and Hebrew. As mentioned in Chapter 22, an Arabic (Judaeo-Arabic) translation of the Tanakh was finally made by Saadia ben Joseph in the tenth century.

The script used by Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam was usually not the Arabic alphabet. Instead, they regularly wrote Arabic with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a habit that seems to have originated among the Judaeans of Arabia in pre-Islamic times. Many Judaeans knew the Arabic alphabet, and if need be were able to employ it, but they much preferred the familiar Hebrew characters. In addition, if a Judaean wrote a religious text not only in the Arabic language but also in Arabic script, he might have been suspected of attracting proselytes, while a text written in Hebrew script was obviously meant only for Jewish consumption. In any case, rabbinic Judaeans in the Dar al-Islam normally wrote in Hebrew script, whether the language they were writing was Hebrew, Aramaic, or Arabic. Most of the documents found in the Cairo

Genizah are in the Judaeo-Arabic language, and the great majority are written with Hebrew characters.

As we have seen, literacy among medieval Judaeans was relatively high. Although women, regardless of their religion, were less likely than men to be literate, Jewish girls were often schooled at home and many reached an elementary level of literacy. First-hand information about the teaching of Jewish boys comes from exercise books found in the Cairo Genizah.[49] These are especially informative for the period from the late ninth through the eleventh centuries. At the synagogue school a boy of six or seven first learned to read and write the Hebrew alphabet, a project that was ideally completed in three months. With the alphabet mastered, the boys read and memorized (but hardly understood) passages from the Tanakh, and especially from the Pentateuch. A father who was ambitious for his son also saw to it that the boy learned to write in Arabic script. Teaching pupils how to read and write in Arabic, however, was done elsewhere.[50] Arabic calligraphy was highly esteemed by Muslims, and a talented Jewish student learned to write beautifully in either Hebrew or Arabic script. In the school attached to the Ben Ezra synagogue, however, writing in any script was not emphasized: the boys spent almost all of their time and effort in learning Hebrew well enough to read it in worship. Instruction was carried out in the local Judaeo-Arabic vernacular (Hebrew was in effect a foreign language for the boys), but the goal of instruction was the ability to read Hebrew.[51]

The rabbinic academies in Iraq, the *geonim*, and the exilarchs

For a long time Iraq was the heartland of Judaism. There Judaism had been more or less protected already in pre-Islamic times (the Sassanids were much more tolerant of minority religions than were the Christian emperors in Constantinople). The Muslim rulers were generally solicitous of Judaism, and until late in the Abbasid califate the Judaean minority in Iraq was large and prosperous. When the Arabians conquered Mesopotamia, at Qadisiya in 637, its Christian and Judaean populations were both sizeable. As the centuries passed, many more Christians than Judaeans converted to Islam and by the tenth century the several Christian communions in Iraq (Monophysite, Orthodox, Nestorian) were together only a fraction of the Jewish population.

The Babylonian Talmud had been completed ca. 500. After that date, new questions about the sacred law were usually addressed to the head of one of the rabbinic academies at Sura and Pumbeditha, in southern and central Iraq respectively (Pumbeditha is now the city of Fallujah). The head of an academy was known as its *gaon*, literally its “pride” or “splendor.” The Gaon not only acted as the ultimate judge in disputes on sacred law but also issued *responsa* to legal questions submitted to him by Talmudic Judaeans from far and wide. Beginning in the sixth century, therefore, the *geonim* of the academies were the final authorities on the Torah, not only in Iraq but in all of rabbinic Judaism. By the tenth century the prestige of the two academies and their *geonim* was fading, as rabbinic Judaeans increasingly consulted more local authorities, whether rabbis or *poskim* (a *posek* was a Talmudic judge) on questions or cases of Halakha. In the eleventh century the academies at Sura and Pumbeditha disbanded, after a career of eight hundred years.

A Gaon was typically descended from a family prominent in the study or administration

of Talmudic law, and it was not uncommon for a son to succeed his father as Gaon. For example, second to the last of the *geonim* was Hai Gaon, head of the Pumbeditha academy from 998 until his death in 1038. Hai Gaon not only was the son of Sherira Gaon, whom he succeeded as head of the Pumbeditha academy, but also was the son-in-law of Samuel ben Hofni, the last of the *geonim* at Sura. Occasionally a great rabbinic scholar was brought in from elsewhere to lead a school. In 928 Saadia ben Joseph came from Egypt to become the Gaon of the Sura academy, and he became one of the most influential leaders the academy ever had.

Less respected than the *geonim* was the *resh galuta*: the exilarch, or "head of the exiles in Babylonia." This was an honorific position known already in the third or second century BC. Supposedly a descendant of King David, the exilarch functioned as a figurehead through whom the various rulers - Parthian, Sassanid, and now Muslim - communicated with their Judaean subjects throughout "Babylonia." The last exilarch recognized by rabbinic Judaeans was Hezekiah, who died in 1040, but whatever importance the position may once have enjoyed had already been lost by the middle of the tenth century.

Karaite Judaism

A large religious community in the Dar al-Islam was that of the Karaites (more correctly, Qaraites). They were Judaeans who did not recognize the oral Torah, the Talmud, and rabbinic authority. Instead, they insisted on the authority of "that which is read," the *mikra*, from which they received their name. The *mikra* was the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, and the Karaites were zealous students of it. Among the Karaites were several Masoretes, scholars of Hebrew who devoted themselves to perfecting the Hebrew text of the Tanakh. In the tenth century Aaron ben Moses ben Asher was the leading Masorete, and ben Asher was evidently a Karaite. Although they did not recognize the oral Torah, the Karaites were even more meticulous than were the rabbis in observing the commandments they found in the Tanakh, all of which they took in a literal sense. In addition, Karaites fasted for long periods, drank no wine, and surpassed the rabbis in avoiding contact with Gentiles.

The origins of the Karaites are of course controversial. Today a tiny religious community of thirty or forty thousand people, the Karaites have consistently regarded themselves as the custodians of the original Judaism. Rabbinic Judaism, in their view, is a "defection" from the Mosaic tradition while the Karaites have preserved the true religion. According to this view, the Sadducees of the Second Temple period were proto-Karaites. Within rabbinic Judaism, in contrast, Karaism is seen as an eighth-century innovation. In this view, the Karaites originated in a breakaway from rabbinic and Talmudic authority. The breakaway, so the rabbis said, was the result of Anan ben David's pique and personal ambition: As the nephew of Solomon, the old and childless exilarch (ruled ca. 731-ca.760), Anan was the heir-apparent to the position of Judaean exilarch in Iraq. But when old Solomon died the Geonim recommended to the calif, al-Mansur, that he pass over Anan in favor of Anan's younger brother. After the calif made the requested appointment the insult supposedly led Anan to request of the calif that he be allowed to set up his own Judaean community, separate from that of the rabbinic establishment, and to act as its exilarch,[52]

What is not disputed is that ca. 767 al-Mansur, the Abbasid calif in Baghdad, formally recognized as a lawful religious community - under the exilarch Anan ben David - an assortment of non-Talmudic Judaeans. That ben David was responsible for turning his followers against the rabbis, however, is unlikely. In Arsacid and Sassanid Mesopotamia rabbinic and non-rabbinic Judaisms had existed side-by-side, and in the seventh and eighth centuries many Judaeans in Iraq must not yet have accepted the authority of the oral Torah. When the Abbasids came to power, and confirmed as exilarch the man selected by the *geonim* of the Sura and Pumbeditha academies, Anan ben David may have been inspired to organize the non-rabbinic Judaeans into a formal sect. Well after Anan ben David's death the community for which he gained official recognition came to be known as the *bnai mikra*, or the *karaim*. We may say, then, that although something like the religion of the Karaites may have been practiced all along, Karaism did not become an *organized* religion until the eighth century. Karaite exilarchs, who like their rabbinic counterparts were regarded as descendants of David, continued to be appointed by the califs until ca. 1100 when the last of them - Solomon II - died.

Throughout the Dar al-Islam the Karaites enjoyed the same protection given to rabbinic Judaeans, to Nestorian, Monophysite and Orthodox Christians, and to still other Dhimmis. In much of Christendom, especially in Catholic Europe, the Karaites had no meaningful protection. Regarded with suspicion by Christians and vigorously opposed by rabbinic Judaeans, Karaism rarely appeared in Latin Christendom. In the Byzantine empire Karaites were more visible, but they were far overshadowed by Rabbanites. In the Dar al-Islam the story was very different, and for almost three hundred years Karaite Judaism grew and prospered there. It also found many adherents in the Crimea and in other lands north of the Black Sea. By the early tenth century Karaism may have been almost as widespread in the Dar al-Islam as was rabbinic Judaism.

Karaite scholars wrote extensive commentaries on the Tanakh, as well as tracts promoting their own version of Judaism and attacking that of the rabbis. The Karaites normally wrote in Arabic, and - unlike rabbinical Judaeans - they wrote in the Arabic script. In the late tenth century David ben Boaz wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch. His contemporary, Yefet ben Ali (or Japheth ben Ali ha-Levi) was perhaps the most eminent of all Karaite writers. Yefet translated the entire Tanakh into Arabic. His translation was much more literal and less attractive than the one done fifty years earlier by Saadia ben Joseph. More important than Yefet's translation was his commentary (in Arabic) on all the books of the Tanakh. Even rabbis were impressed by Yefet's commentary and often made use of it.

By ca. 1100 Karaism was coming to the end of its Golden Age, but for a very long time thereafter it remained an important religion in the Dar al-Islam. In the fifteenth century Karaites were numerous enough in the Ottoman empire to deserve their own *millet*, a privilege that they maintained until the end of the empire. An important Karaite community flourished in the city of Troki (today Trakai) in Lithuania during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *Hizzuk emunah* ("strengthening of faith") was a massive and consequential argument against Christianity written by Isaac ben Abraham Troki, a Karaite Judaean. Troki had long engaged in arguments with Catholic, Protestant and Socinian clergy, and his critique of Christianity was polite and well informed. In 1681 a Latin translation of Troki's *Hizzuk emunah* was published, and during the Enlightenment was much used by freethinkers attacking Christianity.[53]

In the Golden Age of Karaism (especially the tenth and eleventh centuries), however, Karaite concern was primarily with Rabbanites rather than with Christians. The Karaites succeeded in persuading many Judaeans to turn their attention from the Talmud to the Tanakh. They built their own synagogues and had their own judges. Karaite scholars gathered students around them, to match the rabbinic academies at Sura and Pumbeditha. Although the Karaite schools were conducted in Arabic, the usual subjects of study were Hebrew grammar and the Hebrew lexicon.[54] The Karaite Hebraist assumed that his students already knew Hebrew, and so he concentrated on the fine or difficult grammatical points of the language. Famous Karaite schools for the study of Hebrew grammar were held at Jerusalem by Yusuf ibn Nuh toward the end of the tenth century and by Harun ibn Faraj in the eleventh century. Still earlier Karaite schools for Hebrew grammar were located in Iraq and in Iran.

History was less important than Hebrew for the Karaites, although here too they wrote important works. An outstanding Karaite scholar was Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī (Jacob the Circassian, Circassia lying along the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountains). In his *kitab al-anwar* ("book of lights"), written in 937, al-Qirqisani offered a history and appraisal of some twenty Judaean "sects." Although many of these are otherwise unknown, al-Qirqisani included Christianity (but not Islam) among the sects.[55] Al-Qirqisani included some criticism of his own Karaite tradition, but he emphasized when and why the rest of the sects had gone wrong. Perhaps most remarkable were al-Qirqisani's critical abilities, and his emphasis on the intellect. He differentiated between Jesus, whom he supposed to have been on the right track, and Paul, who made a god out of Jesus. More broadly, al-Qirqisani complained that too many people are happy to accept what they have been taught, instead of delving into books in order to ascertain the truth.[56]

Early Jewish writers in the Arabic language

Some of the earliest Judaeans who wrote in Arabic and published their works are very obscure. An ex-Judaean may have been Hiwi al-Balkhi, a native of the Iranian city of Balkh, who lived in the second half of the ninth century. Hiwi wrote, in Arabic, a book arguing that much of the Hebrew Bible is nonsense. Needless to say, his book has not been preserved, and the refutations of it made by later Jewish writers do not prove that Hiwi was a Judaean before he became a caustic critic of Judaism. However, his knowledge of the Tanakh suggests that he did come from a Jewish background.

As we have seen in Chapter 22, David ibn Merwan al-Mukkamas wrote his philosophical works in Arabic late in the ninth or early in the tenth century. David was born in the city of Rakka, in Iraq. He evidently intended his *Ishrun makalat* ("Twenty Chapters") for philosophers in general, regardless of their religious affiliation. At least for a while he was a practicing Karaite Judaean, but in his philosophical writings he distanced himself from all of the revealed religions. Although he can be called the first Jewish philosopher in the Middle Ages, he had no continuators within rabbinic Judaism and all that survives of his writings are quotations by later authors.[57] David knew something of Aristotle, but a more important influence upon him was Mutazilite *kalam*.

Far better known than Hiwi al-Balkhi or David al-Mukkamas is the sage, Saadia ben Joseph (882-942). As Gaon of the Sura academy, Saadia was one of the great defenders of rabbinic Judaism. In that capacity he wrote a book refuting the criticisms that al-Balkhi had leveled against the Tanakh. More importantly, Saadia was to a great extent responsible for turning back the Karaite tide that for a hundred years had been running against the rabbis. At least three of Saadia's books, or three editions of the same book, attacked the Karaites, furnishing rabbis with an arsenal of arguments to be used against their Karaite critics and detractors.

Saadia was born in the Fayyum of Egypt (whence his surname, *al-fayyumi*), and gained a reputation as a rabbi, scholar and writer. Although he was fluent in Hebrew, most of his writings were in the Judaeo-Arabic dialect of Arabic. All of his writings, whether in Hebrew or in Arabic, were done with Hebrew characters. In 928 Saadia went to Iraq to head the rabbinic academy at Sura, a position which he held until his death. In addition to his polemical works, his immense achievements included a translation into Arabic of the Tanakh and of a mystical tract (the *Sefer yetzirah*), the composition of a Hebrew dictionary and a Hebrew grammar, and a philosophical defense of Judaism.[58] He also wrote an Arabic commentary on several books of the Tanakh, as well as works on moral philosophy. Although he formally retained the traditional belief in bodily resurrection at the End of Time, Saadia borrowed from Islamic *kalam* the Neoplatonist emphasis on the soul. The immortality of the soul was to become increasingly important in Jewish philosophy, as the resurrection of the body was left more and more to Christians and Muslims. Many of the same questions that Saadia considered had been considered by Philo of Alexandria nine hundred years earlier, but by the Abbasid period Philo's writings - all in Greek - had long been forgotten in Judaism. Because al-Qirqisani certainly and al-Mukkamas probably was a Karaite, for rabbinic Judaism it was Saadia who revived philosophical writing, beginning a tradition that would continue through Maimonides and Gersonides to the fifteenth century.

Another Judaean who very early gained a reputation as a writer in the Dar al-Islam was a native of Egypt named Isaac ben Solomon, "the Israeli." Remarkably, Isaac (Yitzhaq in Hebrew and Ishaq in Arabic) wrote not on Judaism but on secular subjects. Trained as a physician, he rose to the very top of his profession. From that comfortable position he went on to write a dozen books on medical and "philosophic" topics. All of Isaac's books were in Arabic, and he evidently wrote them in the Arabic script. At his death Isaac ben Solomon was reputed to have been one hundred years old, and his death has been variously dated between 932 and 950. Isaac spent many years at Qairouan in Tunisia, where he served as physician to the Aghlabid ruler of North Africa. When the Aghlabids were defeated by the Fatimids, Isaac transferred his medical services to the Fatimid calif in Fustat (Cairo), and at the encouragement of the calif he wrote several medical books. Late in the eleventh century these were translated from Arabic into Latin, so providing a foundation for the study of medicine in Catholic Europe.

As a philosopher Isaac ben Solomon was much influenced by al-Kindi, and by Neoplatonism.[59] His "Book on Definitions," the *Kitab al-hudud*, was translated into Latin as the *Liber de definicionibus* and was also translated into Hebrew. Although the translations are extant, nothing of the Arabic original survives except a fragment recovered from the Cairo

Genizah. The fragment is written with Hebrew characters, but seems to have been transliterated from an original that was written in Arabic script. Isaac's *Kitab al-jawahir* ("Book about Substances") likewise was written in Arabic and in Arabic script, but survives only in fragments of two manuscripts transliterated into Hebrew characters. Isaac also wrote a book "on the spirit and the soul," in which he tried to differentiate the one from the other. It is here that Neoplatonist ideas found expression.

It is worth noting that prior to the intensification of religious conflict in the Middle East and in Spain, a Judaean in the Dar al-Islam occasionally wrote for a general public of both Judaeans and Gentiles. In the Dar al-Islam, as everywhere else in the Middle Ages, the intellectual life of Judaeans was concentrated on the Torah: Judaeans faithfully read and re-read the Tanakh, the Talmud, commentaries on the one or the other, or devotional literature. Regardless of where they lived, their world was Judaism. But in contrast to the later period, when religious interests crowded everything else aside, the earlier period saw at least a few Judaeans writing in Arabic, and in Arabic script, on "secular" subjects. David ibn Merwan (al-Mukkamas) in Iraq, and Isaac ben Solomon in Egypt, were two of these.

Decline of Judaism in Iraq

As we have seen, by the tenth century the Judaeans of Iraq, like the Christians, were not only speaking Arabic but were also writing in that language (although Judaeans usually did so in the Hebrew script).[60] With Baghdad the center of power and wealth, the calif's court was the epitome of splendor. Both in Baghdad and in other cities of the Abbasid caliphate Muslim mosques far surpassed the churches and synagogues in size and beauty.

The ban on building new synagogues, probably issued in the late ninth or the tenth century, and the other restrictions included in the "Pact of Umar" seem to have reflected a decline of Judaism in Iraq and certainly accelerated it. The decline was felt more by rabbinic than by Karaite Judaism, and was punctuated in the 1030s and 1040s with the end of the exilarchate and the disbanding of the academies at Sura and Pumbeditha. By this time perhaps two thirds of the population was Muslim, perhaps a fifth was Judaean, and the rest was Christian or Mazdian.

Judaeans in Umayyad Spain

Although for a long time Iraq was the heartland of Judaism, by the late ninth century Spain was becoming the part of the Dar al-Islam in which Judaeans were most conspicuous. Spain was also where important Jewish writers did their work, where "Sephardic" Judaism originated, and where mysticism – Kabbalah – was added to rabbinic Judaism. It is therefore worth our while to look more closely at Judaism in Spain in the period before the crusades.

We have seen in Chapter Twenty-One that when Tariq and his Muslim army arrived in Spain in 711, the Judaeans of Spain welcomed him as warmly as the Christians opposed him. Likewise, when Umayyad survivors came to Spain in the 750s, they received considerable Judaean help in establishing Umayyad control of *al-andalus*. Although from their palace at

Cordoba the Umayyads tried to conciliate the Christian majority, the rulers were far more comfortable with the Jewish minority. In the late eighth and the ninth centuries Umayyad policies attracted a considerable influx of Judaeans into Spain, first from Christian Europe and then from the Abbasid lands of the Middle East and Egypt. By the tenth century the Judaean element of Umayyad Spain may have been larger than the Christian, and "Sephardic" (Spanish) Judaeans may well have outnumbered the Judaeans in all of Catholic Europe.

In the tenth century the normal language of Judaeans in Umayyad Spain was Arabic, although heavily influenced by Hebrew and Aramaic and usually written in the Hebrew alphabet. Among the Judaeans in northern (and Christian) Spain, the vernacular was Ladino, a Judaized Romance language. The shift from Arabic to Ladino among the Judaeans of southern and central Spain began late in the eleventh century, and paralleled the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty and the Reconquista of Spain by the Christian kings of Castille. By the fourteenth century Ladino was the principal language of Sephardic (Spanish) Judaism.

The high point of Umayyad Spain, and a Golden Age for Judaeans in Spain, came with the rule of Abd er-Rahman III, from 912 until his death in 961. From his palace at Cordoba Abd er-Rahman initially contented himself with the title of Amir, but eventually he styled himself Calif. One of Abd er-Rahman's most trusted underlings was a Judaean, Hasdai ibn Shaprut, Already as a young man Hasdai was a respected physician and in that capacity began his service at the calif's court. By ca. 950 Hasdai was Abd er-Rahman's chief advisor on many things, including dealings with the Christian world and with the Khazars's khaganate in Ukraine. Many other Judaeans held important positions under the Umayyad califs and their regional amirs.

Whether Judaeans in Umayyad Spain were allowed to build new synagogues is a question about which we have only circumstantial evidence. David Wasserstein, the leading authority on Judaism in Umayyad Spain, suggests that the Umayyad rulers probably did at some point formally prohibit the construction of new synagogues, but that the prohibition was rarely enforced. Many synagogues stood, Wasserstein notes, in cities that were built or greatly enlarged well after the Muslim conquest.[61]

The Umayyad caliphate ended in 1031, torn apart by infighting among pretenders to the position of calif, each pretender having the support of one of the several (Berber, Arabic, Christian) mercenary troops upon which the califs depended. In the aftermath, Umayyad Spain was broken up into a cluster of Taifas. Each *taifa* was led by an amir but none of the Taifas was strong enough to deal with the Christian kings of the north. In general the security of Judaeans was not diminished in the Taifa period. A great exception occurred in the city of Granada on December 30 of 1066: a Muslim mob seized the amir's Jewish vizier, Joseph ibn Naghrela, nailed him to a cross, and then massacred thousands of the city's Judaeans. Because Joseph had antagonized many of the city's Muslims, and especially the Berber troops, the outbreak reflected personal and local rather than religious hatreds. In other Taifas Judaeans remained prominent on the political, economic and cultural scene. The relative weakness of the Taifas, when faced by the Christian armies of King Alfonso VI of León and Castile (ruled 1065-1109), made many of the amirs even more solicitous of their Jewish subjects than the Umayyad califs had been.

Solomon ibn Gabirol's infusion of Neoplatonism into Judaism

It was in Spain, although well after the Umayyad caliphate had come to an end, that Jewish mysticism – Kabbalah – began. The essential texts of Kabbalah did not appear until the twelfth and thirteenth century, and we will look at them in Chapter Twenty-Six. The Kabbalah was much indebted, however, to earlier figures in Spanish Judaism. Especially significant was Solomon ibn Gabirol, ca. 1020-1060, whose agenda reached beyond traditional Judaism. A native of Malaga, on the Mediterranean coast of southern Spain, ibn Gabirol was a devout Judaean and wrote a considerable amount of Hebrew poetry, some of it lamenting the death of Hai Gaon in Iraq. In Arabic ibn Gabirol wrote a philosophical work, of which the Arabic title may have been, *Yanbu' al-hayat* ("The Fountain of Life"). The book nowhere quoted the Tanakh, and instead was heavily indebted to the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, through which Neoplatonism had been introduced to the Dar al-Islam. Ibn Gabirol's book was translated into Hebrew as the *Meqor hayyim*. Both the Arabic original and the Hebrew translation were eventually lost, but not before helping to lay the foundation for Kabbalah, or the entire Jewish mystical tradition. It was largely through the writings of ibn Gabirol that Judaism made room for the Neoplatonist concept of "The One," so different from the Tanakh's picture of a personal and anthropopathic Adonai.[62]

In the twelfth century ibn Gabirol's *Yanbu' al-hayat* was translated into Latin as the *Fons vitae* of "Avicebron." The Latin translation, supervised by Archbishop Raymond of Toledo, enjoyed a considerable vogue among the scholastics in the late medieval period and among humanists in the Renaissance, and printed editions of the *Fons vitae* followed in the sixteenth century. Because his work contained no specifically Jewish references, "Avicebron" was thought to have been a Christian Neoplatonist until discoveries in the nineteenth century revealed otherwise. The *Fons vitae* was found to be a Latin translation of an Arabic original, and "Avicebron" was in fact Solomon ibn Gabirol, the Jewish poet from Malaga.

Alfasi and Judah ha-Levi

The last important Jewish writer before the crusades was Isaac ben Jacob al-Fasi (1013-1103). Isaac was a native of Fez, where over the course of several decades he taught many rabbis and wrote his *Sefer ha-halakhoth*, a digest of the Talmud. As an old man he was exiled from Fez and moved to the Spanish city of Lucena, south of Cordoba. Acquiring there his epithet, al-Fasi ("the man from Fez"), he established a Talmudic academy and continued to lead it for another fifteen years before his death at the age of ninety. Long after his death Alfasi became one of the greatest names in halakhic studies, especially in Italy. In 1553 Cardinal Caraffa (soon to become Pope Paul IV) ordered the seizure and burning of all copies of the Talmud in the Papal States. For the next two hundred years, while the Talmud remained on the Catholic *Index* of prohibited books and authors, Alfasi's digest became for Jewish scholars something of a substitute for the Talmud itself.

One of Alfasi's last students at Lucena became another writer of great importance for Judaism and Kabbalah. This was Judah ha-Levi (1075-1141). Although most of his writing was done after the First Crusade, he grew to adulthood in the period before the crusades. Ha-Levi,

whom we have met in connection with the Khazars, was a native of Toledo. Like so many other medieval Jewish writers, ha-Levi was a physician, but in his leisure he devoted himself to poetry and to a defense of Judaism. All of his poetry was written in Hebrew (Judaeans did not write poetry in Arabic), and many of the poems - elegies, love songs, and religious poems - are still treasured. Judah's main venture into theology was his *Kitab al-khazari*. Written in Judaeo-Arabic and running to five books, the work is a dialogue between the king of the Khazars and a Jewish rabbi. The dialogue, says ha-Levi, will explain for the reader how and why the king of the Khazars "became a convert to Judaism about four hundred years ago." Book One opens with the king knowing he must abandon his idolatrous and sacrificial religion, and begin to worship God. A philosopher gives him a few unsatisfactory abstractions, and then a Christian and a Muslim, each in five paragraphs, summarize their own religions (Bk 1, 1-9). All the rest of the *Kitab al-khazari* is the rabbi's dialogue with (or instruction of) the king. The rabbi delves deeply into philosophical topics, defining matter, spirit and soul, and differentiating Adonai from the God of Aristotle. Along the way, the rabbi makes reference not only to the Tanakh but also to the *Book of Creation* (*Sefer yetzirah*), which he supposes to have been written by Abraham.

A physical resurrection of the dead is alluded to, but is of little importance to the rabbi, who dwells upon the soul. Here the connections back to Neoplatonism and ahead to the Kabbalah are patent. By pious actions, by living a life of sanctity and purity, and by listening to the words of the prophets,

> the human soul becomes divine, detached from material senses, joining the highest world, enjoying the vision of divine light and hearing divine speech. Such a soul is safe from death, even after its physical organs have perished. If thou, then, findest a religion the knowledge and practice of which assist in the attainment of this degree, ... this is beyond doubt the religion which insures the immortality of the soul after the demise of the body.[63]

Overwhelmed by such arguments, the king of the Khazars - noting that Christians and Muslims claimed to look forward to bliss in the Afterlife but were seldom eager to die - decides that Judaism is indeed the true religion.

The precious Torah, the rabbi tells the king, was given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai, to be shared with those who spoke Hebrew. When the king asks the rabbi why God did not give his law to all people, the rabbi responds that one may as well ask why God did not make all animals as rational as mankind. The twelve sons of Jacob, the rabbi reminds the king, were "distinguished from other people by godly qualities, which made them, so to speak, an angelic caste." Conversion to Judaism, however, is possible, and "any Gentile who joins us unconditionally shares our good fortune without, however, being quite equal to us. If the Law were binding on us only because God created us, the white and the black man would be equal, for He created them all. But the Law was given to us because He led us out of Egypt, and remained attached to us, because we are the cream of mankind."[64]

A few decades after Judah ha-Levi's death his *Kitab al-khazari* was translated into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon, and was titled *Sefer ha-kuzari*. Ha-Levi's poetry was greatly

admired already in his own lifetime. The poems vary widely in content, from the deeply religious to the sensual, but all reflect the author's control of the Hebrew language. As a philosopher, Judah ha-Levi was overshadowed a century later by the most important Spanish Judaean of all: Maimonides, whose ultimate project it was to reconcile philosophy with Judaism.

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1. In his *Chronicle* Eusebius utilized Manetho's *History of Egypt*, and listed all the Egyptian kings together with the length of their reigns, distributed over 31 dynasties. At places he scaled down the very high chronology of the Egyptians (for example, the 24,900 years for the dynasty of gods and demigods) by converting the years into months. Eusebius also integrated the Egyptian king-lists with the Pentateuch, identifying Apophis as the pharaoh under whom Joseph came to Egypt, and Achencherses as the pharaoh under whom Moses led the Israelites in their Exodus out of Egypt.

2. Cohen 2008, p. 177. Cohen's entire chapter, "Persecution, Response, and Collective Memory," is pertinent.

3. The term *ghetto* does not appear until the early sixteenth century, when it was applied to the Jewish district of Venice. In the early medieval period the Jewish quarter of a European city was much less isolated and parochial than were the ghettos of the Renaissance and the early modern period.

4. Stow 1992, pp. 47 ff.

5. BT, Tractate *'Abodah Zarah*, Folios 29b (foods not to be received from a Gentile), 38a (roasted locusts), 59b (wine barrel).

6. BT, Tractate *'Abodah Zarah*, Folio 35b.

7. BT, Tractate *'Abodah Zarah*, Folios 5a and 6b. Some rabbis disagreed with this liberal interpretation.

8. On the question of Jewish passivity and non-violence in the Middle Ages see Horowitz 2006.

9. Stow 1992, p. 42 (see also his remarks at p. 213). A Hebrew account of the Jewish Diaspora in Spain, written soon after the expulsion ordered by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, estimates that before the expulsion 53,000 families in Spain were Jewish. "They had houses, fields, vineyards, and cattle, and most of them were artisans." See Marcus 1938, no. 11, p. 52. Conditions in Spain, however, were probably the result of the long period of Muslim rule.

Jewish moneylenders throughout Latin Europe could seize land that Christians had used as collateral for securing a loan. For Frederick the Belligerent's promise to defend the moneylenders' title to such land see Marcus 1938, no. 6, p. 32.

10. See especially Deuteronomy 23:19-20 (OSB): "You are not to exact interest on anything you lend to a fellow-countryman, whether money or food or anything else on which interest can be charged. You may exact interest on a loan to a foreigner but not on a loan to a fellow-countryman." See also Exodus 22:25 and Leviticus 25:35-37.

11. Bishop of Speyer: Grant of Lands and Privileges to the Jews, 1084. Taken from Internet Medieval Source Book. www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1084landjews.html Translated from Altmann and Bernheim, eds., *Ausgewahlte Urkunden zur Erlauterung der Verfassungsgeschichte Deutschlands im Mittelalter*, (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904), p. 156, reprinted in Roy C. Cave & Herbert H. Coulson, *A Source Book for Medieval Economic History*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1936; reprint ed., New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1965), pp. 101-102. Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

12. Marina Rustow addresses the topic of medieval Jewish literacy and "book culture" in an article forthcoming in 2010 in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.

13. Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, p. 55.

14. The name *sepharad* comes from Obadiah 20, and had no clear referent. During Hellenistic and early Roman times Judaean scholars decided that *sepharad* was Spain. There is no possibility that the prophet Obadiah, in the seventh or sixth century BC, had any idea where or what Spain was.

15. For the Yiddish text see Frakes 2004, pp. 3-4.

16. Advocated by Paul Wexler, a specialist in the Yiddish language at Tel Aviv University. Wexler has written ten books, mostly on Yiddish, beginning with *Explorations in Judeo-Slavic Linguistics* (Leien: Brill, 1987). He has argued that Yiddish began as a Sorbian dialect, and that it was "relexified" to High German by the twelfth century. Yiddish also, he argues, received a strong contribution from East Slavic (the Kiev-Polessian dialect of northern Ukraine and Belarus) at a later time. This East Slavic component had a Turkic substratum which, according to Wexler, was a contribution of the Khazars. On all this see Wexler 1993 and more recently his *Two-tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian Dialect* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

17. On Judaism in the Byzantine empire see Starr 1939 and Sharf 1971.

18. Sharf 1971, p. 63.

19. On the Macedonian persecution see Sharf 1971, pp. 82-105.

20. Sharf 1971, p. 121.

21. Sharf 1971, p. 198.

22. For a good survey of this much neglected topic see Kevin Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria*, 2nd edition (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

23. Attested by inscription 70 in the *CIRB* (= *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani*, ed. V. V. Struve, Moscow 1965).

24. The Hartwig Hirschfeld 1905 translation of the *Kitab al-Kharari* is posted on the internet in the Medieval Sourcebook of Paul Halsall, at Fordham Univ.
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/kuzari.html
The East Slavic speakers told a similar tale about their conversion to Orthodox Christianity in the late tenth century: Vladimir the Great, knowing that traditional Slavic paganism was wrong, sent from Kiev to investigate all the scriptural religions. The investigators were astounded by the majesty of Haghia Sophia and decided that Orthodox Christianity was the true religion.

25. Brook 2006, p. 67.

26. See Brook 2006, pp. 79-81, on the "Moses coins," and pp. 106-113 on the chronology of the conversion.

27. The "Schechter letter" is named for Solomon Schechter, who taught rabbinic studies at Cambridge University and discovered it among the thousands of documents that Cambridge had acquired from the Cairo *genizah*. Schechter published the letter in 1912.

28. At Genesis 10:2-3 (repeated at I Chronicles 1:6) the Table of Nations lists Ashkenaz as a son of Gomer and a grandson of Japheth. Gomer is the eponymous ancestor of the *Gimmirai* of Akkadian texts (the Kimmerians of Greek authors), who lived in northwestern Iran or southeastern Turkey. At Jeremiah 51:27 three northern kingdoms - Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz - are summoned to war against Babylon. Because Ararat lay in ancient Armenia and Minni (Manna) along Lake Urmia, Ashkenaz is likely to have been the Hebrew name for a land somewhere between the Black Sea and the Caspian. Possibly *Ashkenaz* is a corruption of the name *Ašhkuzāi* found in Akkadian texts, which came into Greek as *Σκύθαι* and into English as "Skythians." For references see my *Early Riders*, pp. 112-113.

29. Most important was the work of Yitzhak Schipper (1884-1943), but because Schipper wrote mostly in Polish his views were generally ignored in western Europe and America. They have been summarized by Jacob Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland - the Contribution of Yitzhak Schipper* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984).

30. Quotations from the various arguments on this side of the debate are available in Golb and Pritsak 1982.

31. Folio 1 verso, lines 19-20 (Golb's translation, in Golb and Pritsak 1982, p. 113).

32. By the tenth century the Khazars supposed that, although descended from Simeon, their ancestors had strayed from Judaism and became idolaters. The khagan Bulan's conversion to Judaism was therefore a "return" to their original religion.

33. Dubnow 1918, pp. 4-5.

34. *Kitab al-Khazari* (Hirschfeld translation) 2.1.

35. On these see Brook 2006, pp. 220-26.

36. Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). In preparing the book Golb, Professor of Jewish History at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, collaborated with Pritsak, Professor of Ukrainian History at Harvard, and also made a thorough study of the other medieval Hebrew texts relating to the Khazars. The Kievan letter, like the Schechter letter, was part of the vast collection of medieval Jewish documents that in 1897 came to Cambridge University from the *genizah* of the Ezra synagogue in Cairo.

37. Golb and Pritsak 1982, p. 21.

38. Dubnow 1918, p. 6, cites a 10th-century Arabic writer, Masudi, on the exodus of Judaeans from Christian and Muslim lands to Khazaria.

39. Shown in detail by Cohen 2008.

40. Marcus 1938, p. 13, assumes that in the Dar al-Islam the Pact of Umar applied to both Judaeans and Christians, but evidence is lacking.

41 For the court document see Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), pp. 189-191.

42. On Muslim attacks on Judaeans in the medieval period see Cohen 2008, pp. 162 ff.

43. According to Cohen 2008, p. 269, n.2, "Jews rarely held the position of chief minister" under a Muslim amir. Joseph ibn Nagrela and his father Samuel were exceptions to that rule (although a nominal Judaean, Joseph was reported to have been a scoffer at all religions).

44. On the Cairo Genizah, and especially the material brought to Cambridge, see Reif 2002.

45. Cohen 2008, p. 99.

46. The first known instance of a "more or less compulsory Jewish quarter in the Muslim world" was established at Fez, in Morocco, in 1438. See Cohen 2008, p. 268, n. 167. The first ghetto in

Christendom was mandated at Venice in 1516.

47. Cohen 2008, pp. 113 and 118.

48. Hary 1995, p. 74.

49. Olszowy-Schlanger 2003.

50. See Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, p. 51: "It seems that in most cases the teaching of Hebrew and Arabic were carried out in different schools and by different teachers. This can be gathered from a letter to the teacher where a father explains that his son is often late for his Hebrew classes, because he attends an Arabic class before. While some Arabic alphabets (e.g. TS K5, 31) and some advanced exercises in Arabic do exist (e.g. TS K5, 65), the vast majority of the children's writing exercises found in the Geniza are surprisingly monolingual and monoalphabetic - in Hebrew."

51. On the synagogue schools' "highly formal methods of teaching literacy, and their lack of interest in meaning," see Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, pp. 68-69.

[52] See Martin Cohen, "'Anan ben David and Karaite Origins," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 68 (1978), pp. 129-145 and 224-234. Cohen argues that the stringent aspects of ben David's *Sefer ha-Miṣ wōt* ("Book of Commandments") – adding fasts, prohibiting wine, restricting sex, restricting contact with Gentiles – reflected and validated practices of the lower and disadvantaged stratum of Judaeans.

53. Troki was the Polish name for the city that is now Trakai, in Lithuania. Almost a century after its composition, Johann Wagenseil translated the *Hizzuk emunah* into Latin as the *Tela ignaea Satanae* ("The fiery arrows of Satan"). Although Wagenseil intended to demonstrate how "satanic" were Jewish attacks on Christianity, his translation served more to undermine Christianity.

54. For a full account of the early Karaites' study of Hebrew see Khan 2000.

55. On Karaite historical thought see Astren 2004. For Wilfrid Lockwood's translation of al-Qirqisani's history of Jewish sects and Christianity see Chiesa and Lockwood 1984.

56. For al-Qirqisani's comments on Jesus and Christianity see 1.2.9 and all of 1.8 in the *kitab al-anwar* (pp. 102 and 135-39 in Chiesa and Lockwood 1984). For his strictures on the intellect see the introduction and the conclusion to Book 1 (pp. 93-95 and 156 in Chiesa and Lockwood 1984).

57. Forgotten for 800 years, al-Mukammas came back to light with the 1885 publication of a kabbalah commentary written by Judah ben Barzilai at the end of the eleventh century. Judah had included in his commentary a Hebrew translation of a long excerpt from al-Mukammas' *Ishrun makalat*. More light was shed on al-Mukammas in 1898, when Abraham Harkavy, curator of oriental manuscripts at the imperial library in St. Petersburg, discovered Al-Qirqisani's

Kitab al-anwar. In the first book of the *Kitab al-anwar* al-Qirqisani cites David ibn Merwan as a precursor in giving a history of Judaean sects, including Christianity, and gives a brief biography of David (see esp. Chapter 5, on pp. 137-38 in Chiesa and Lockwood 1984).

58. Fenton 1990, p. 466.

59. On Isaac ben Solomon as a philosopher see the "Isaac Israeli" entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available on the Internet).

[60] See Samir 1990, p. 446.
[61] Wasserstein, personal correspondence 11/18/2013.

62. For various perspectives on the place of Neoplatonism in Jewish thought see the articles in Goodman 1992.

63. Hartwig Hirschfeld's 1905 translation of the first book of the *Kitab al-Khazari* is included in the Medieval Sourcebook of Paul Halsall, at Fordham Univ. For the quotations see paragraphs 102-03.

64. Book 1, section 27.