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## **"Moses Almosnino, His Ethical and Other Writings": A Study of the Life and Works of a Prominent, Sixteenth Century, Salonikan Rabbi**

Charles J. Abeles

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## **"Moses Almosnino, His Ethical and Other Writings": A Study of the Life and Works of a Prominent, Sixteenth Century, Salonikan Rabbi**

### **Abstract**

The works of R. Moses Almosnino, the subject of this study, contribute to the history of the Ottoman Empire and to the history of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. As his three volumes of Responsa exist only in reference(I),this study differs from those based on Responsa literature. Almosnino's writings do not answer religious questions while indirectly illuminating some aspect of Jewish life. His writings that deal with his times are focused directly on the scene. Some of his other writings encompass philosophical, scientific end Jewish subjects of universal magnitude, that cannot be contained in the narrow confines of his times.

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"MOSES ALMOSNINO, HIS ETHICAL AND OTHER WRITINGS"

A Study of the Life and Works of a Prominent, Sixteenth  
Century, Salonikan Rabbi.

by  
Charles J. Abeles

BY  
Charles J. Abeles

candidate for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

has been read and approved by

*Abraham J. Hays*

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The Dropsie College for  
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APPROVAL

"MOSES ALMOSONINO, HIS ETHICAL AND OTHER WRITINGS"

This dissertation, entitled

"MOSES ALMOSONINO, HIS ETHICAL AND OTHER WRITINGS" 19th Century  
Balonikan Rabbi.

By

Charles J. Abeles

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Charles J. Abeles  
1956-1957

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Date:

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"MOSES ALMOSNINO, HIS ETHICAL AND OTHER WRITINGS"

A Study of the Life and Works of a Prominent, Sixteenth Century  
Salonikan Rabbi.

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## BACKGROUND

### Chapter I

The works of R. Moses Almosnino, the subject of this study, contribute to the history of the Ottoman Empire and to the history of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. As his three volumes of Responsa exist only in reference(1), this study differs from those based on Responsa literature. Almosnino's writings do not answer religious questions while indirectly illuminating some aspect of Jewish life. His writings that deal with his times are focused directly on the scene. Some of his other writings encompass philosophical, scientific and Jewish subjects of universal magnitude, that cannot be contained in the narrow confines of his times.

Almosnino was not only a viewer and recorder of the times, but also an actor on the scenes. Born in Salonika early in the sixteenth century, at a time that his native city was becoming the religious capital of European Turkey for the Jews, he rose to a position of eminence as a rabbi, preacher, author and representative of the Jewish community at the Porte. He played an important role in the communal affairs of Turkish Jewry, during its transition period from a largely immigrant community to a native one.

Almosnino's works are mainly religio-philosophical treat-

ises, that have as their object to persuade the reader that by living in accordance with the laws of the Torah, man can experience the highest felicity. While there is little in some of his rabbinical works that reveal his times, with the exceptions of how he and some of his contemporaries interpreted universal and timeless principles, one of his works describes and relates the conditions and happenings of his times(2). Brief references are made in some of his works, to the part he played in helping to bring about a greater stability from the relative disunity in the affairs of the Jewish community of Salonika. A brief background of the Ottoman Empire and a more extended one of the Jewish community of Salonika, will prove helpful to understand Almosnino's work and his works.

The Ottoman Empire seized numerous provinces from Christian Europe, extended its boundaries in the East to India, in Northern Africa along the Mediterranean Sea, and virtually grew to the height of its expansion, under the leadership of the "Lord of the Age", Sultan Suleiman(3). A military monarchy since the days of Orchan I (4), a dynasty of ten rulers had expanded its borders by conquests in four directions, so that in two hundred years the Ottoman Empire was territorially larger than the great empire of Charles V(5), Suleiman's contemporary. The march of conquests, which was almost uninterrupted in two centuries, brought the problem of ruling the conquered majority of non-Moslems. The Otto-



man sultans succeeded in integrating the many subjugated nationalities, by a generally practiced policy of tolerance, fairness and firmness(6).

The nationalities that were conquered, while they enjoyed freedom and privileges, had to pay a head tax(haraj), from which the Moslems were exempt. The Jews were exempt from the 'blood tribute' and from military service(7). It was from the 'blood tribute', or, children forcibly taken from Christian families, that the most fearsome army in Europe, the Janissaries, was comprised.

Suleiman reigned over 21 races, with a population of about 50,000,000, of which the Ottomans numbered 11,000,000. The 1 1/2 million square miles of the Ottoman Empire were divided into 21 governments and 250 sanjaks(states). The religious faiths that Suleiman's subjects professed were the Mohammedan, Greek Christian, Jewish or Roman Catholic(8).

One body of men composed the army and the government of the Ottomans, for the army and the government was one(9). The despot(Sultan, Padishah, Caliph) was the center of the government and had his seat at the Sublime Porte. Central and local government, household and court, standing, feudal and irregular armies, all depended upon the sultan(10). Suleiman ruled through the "Ruling Institution" and through the "Moslem Institution", which correspond roughly to state and church, in a country where there is a state church(11). The "Ruling Institution" was composed of

Christian born children, forcibly taken from their parents, trained in the sultan's schools and converted into Moslems. The Grand Vizir, who presided over the Divan as the sultan's representative was frequently drawn from the 'blood tribute'(12). The Reis-Effendi (secretary-general) and the mischandjis (under-secretaries) handled the firmans (decrees) and protocols of the government. The Defterdars (treasurers), under whom were the 25 kalems (bureaus), that kept account of the income and expenditures, were also members of the Divan (High Council of the Empire) (13).

The "Moslem Institution" personnel were Moslem-born. Its chief officer was the Grand Mufti, who was the head of the Ubema, which had jurisdiction over the law schools and the judges, and the religious functionaries, as the imams, muezzins and sheiks (14). Subordinate officials executed the decisions of the above mentioned; as an example, the Beys ruled the sanjaks, the Agas ruled the Janissaries, the Admiralty and the Harem. The "Ruling Institution", that controlled the Christian-born Janissaries, protected the "Moslem Institution" by the sword, while the latter kept the Moslem population obedient to the will of the sultan (15).

The seemingly well organized government left room for abuses and corruption. The Defterdars practiced tax-farming and sold the revenues from the land to magnates for a lump sum. The magnates would sell the revenues to others at a profit. The tax-farming practice raised the tax burden on the subjects to staggering proportions. Bribery too, was a common practice, and govern-

ment officials expected it(16). Though it was the policy of the sultans to heed the decree of their religion, that is, to convert the conquered, to exact tribute from the unconverted, or to destroy, the subjugated were treated fairly and with tolerance. Life under the Ottomans was relatively free, when compared with life in the countries under the Cross(17).

The Jews in the Graeco-Byzantine Empire in the 12th. century were few in numbers. Constantinople, like Thebes, had a Jewish population of about 2,000, and Salonika had about 500. The other cities and towns had 200 Jews, or less in a community. The Greeks hated and molested them at will. This condition changed when the Byzantines were conquered and replaced by the Ottomans(18). When Orchan I captured Brusa, the largest Christian city in Asia, and showed the Jews tolerance and friendship, they organized a community in 1326(19). After Mohammed II conquered Constantinople in 1453, the Jews were permitted to remain. Wherever the Ottomans conquered, the Jews were permitted to settle, and erect their own schools and synagogues.

Mohammed II appointed R. Moses Capsali as the Hakam Bashi, with the authority to preside over the Jewish community in the Empire. Capsali apportioned the taxes among the communities and individuals, so that the lump sum tax that the government imposed on the Jewish communities could be paid. Capsali supervised over the tax collections, and the delivery of the taxes from the Jewish communities to the sultan's exchequer. He had the power to

inflict punishment, and he sanctioned the appointment of rabbis for the various communities. The German Jews that fled from Germany at about this time, because of persecutions, influenced the Greek and Oriental Jews to adopt some of their rites and customs. Capsali himself manifested the strictness of the German school, by his severe attitude toward the Karaites. The Karaites, whose sect was dwindling, sought instruction from the rabbis. Capsali showed the Karaites no kindness, and ruled that they should not be permitted to study the Talmud, because they rejected its teachings. The added German-Jewish elements did not change the attitude of the government, in bestowing upon all Jews the freedom of movement throughout the Empire, and the freedom to conduct business unhindered(20).

After the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they immigrated into Turkey in great numbers. Sultan Bayazid II gave them welcome, and threatened with death anyone that would mistreat them. Capsali's task of helping the Spanish and Portuguese immigrant poor was difficult, as thousands of the immigrant Jews made Turkey into an Eastern Spain in one generation. The greater part of the 300,000 Spanish-Jewish exiles found asylum in Turkey. The sultans Bayazid, Selim I and Suleiman I gave them the liberties that were given to the Greeks, Armenians and other Christian groups. In a short while, the Jews proved themselves the most dependable minority group among all the rayas (non-Muslims), to the Ottoman government(21).

Toward the end of the 15th. century, the native Greek Jews lost their superiority in numbers. R. Elias Mizrahi, became the Hakam Bashi in 1495. An opposition grew to this office of government imposed leadership over the Jewish community, in the person of a rabbi. The opposition came from the immigrant Spanish Jews; among them were physicians and bankers, who had gained influence at the Porte. The office of Hakam Bashi also suffered loss of prestige, for there were now a number of eminent rabbis in the realm, to whom some communities turned for counsel and guidance. In consequence of the loss of influence and prestige of the Hakam Bashi, the government entrusted the supervision of tax collection to the Kahiya. The Kahiya was a Jewish officer who was made representative and advocate of the Jews, and who had access to the sultan, to present the requests of Jews, or appeal for their protection. The office of Hakam Bashi contracted to supervision over spiritual matters, and then its authority did not reach beyond the confines of the capital(22).

The rapid growth of the Jewish population of Salonika, dates to 1430, when the Turks captured the city. In Almosnino's lifetime, the Jews had a population majority(23). Jews probably settled in Salonika(Thessalonica) in the second century before Jesus(24). Until the 14th. century, the Jewish community was Greek in character. Jews expelled from Hungary in 1376, wandered into Bulgaria, then to Salonika, where they established themselves in 1387(25). Some Barcelonian and Majorcan Jews came to Salonika, after the

or Spanish Jews(30).

Prior to 1492, Salonika had the Greek congregations of the "Ez Hayyim" and "Ez ha-Daat". Its members spoke Greek and followed the Romanian rituals. Later, they intermingled with the Spanish Jews, adopted their customs and even spoke their language(31). Other elements in the city were the Ashkenazim, who had their own synagogue, the Kehillat Ashkenaz. Their customs were characterized by the strict observance of the rituals, and they were never entirely absorbed by the Sephardim. There were the members of the congregations Apulia, Calabria, Estruc, Italia and Otranto, that followed the Minhag Italiano, and the Sicilian congregation, whose customs resembled the Spanish. By 1570, the majority of Salonikan Jews, followed the Sephardic rites, and practically all spoke Castillian Spanish(32).

The first Spanish refugees founded the synagogue "Guerush Sepharad"; those that established the Majorcan congregation, undoubtedly came to Turkey at about the same time. The Castillian congregation was established soon thereafter, and within a quarter of a century, the congregations Cabalan, Aragon, Provence, Portugal, Lisbon and Evora were established. Practically all of these communities practiced their own respective customs, until the middle of the 16th. century(33).

A number of other congregations were created, some as a result of population growths, others out of controversies between and within congregations. The Catalonian congregation split into the Catalonian synagogue and Catalan Hadash, because of disagree-

of Spanish Jews(30).  
massacres of 1391 in Spain(26).The German Jews(Ashkenazim) that were driven from Bavaria,had a flourishing community in Salonika in 1470.They held fast to their religious rites and customs, especially those pertaining to marriage and diet,and the Greek Jews adopted many of the Ashkenazic customs and rituals(27). Another element in the make-up of the population of Salonika, were the Italian Jews.Since the 11th. century,merchants from Italian ports traded with Salonika and Constantinople.Some of the Italian traders settled in Salonika.By 1423,their numbers increased to the point that there was an Italian as well as a Sicilian synagogue in the city.The same fate befell the Sicilian Jews as befell the Spanish Jews,because Sicily was Spanish territory. The numbers of members of the Sicilian Congregation grew,after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.However,in the days of Almosnino,the Sicilian Jews had religiously lost their identity, having adopted the Spanish Jewish religious rites(28).

Great numbers of immigrants streamed into Salonika from Spain in 1492,from Naples in 1493,from Portugal in 1495 and from Apulia in 1502.Jews from the Provence entered Turkey in small numbers,after Charles VIII annexed the Provence in 1487.After they were expelled from the Provence in 1559,they came in larger numbers.(29) French Jews that settled in Turkey following the expulsion of 1394,or those that first settled in Spain or Germany, and came to the Ottoman Empire later with the Spanish or German exiles,lost their identity and were absorbed by the Greek,German

ments about congregational taxes. Differences concerning the status of the Marranos split the Lisbonians into the Lisbon Yashan and the Lisbon Hadash. A similar fate befell the Sicily, Calabria and other congregations, for diverse reasons, as differences on the selection of a rabbi, or, the rights of settled members as opposed to the newcomers. It is probable that because of the crossing of lines, that the Sephardic customs spread over the Salonikan community. This was the case when the Guerush Sepharad joined with the Ez Hayyim, and when the Shalom congregation joined that of the Provence(34). It is difficult to estimate how many congregations Salonika had in the middle of the 16th. century, or what percentage of the synagogues in the city were the 20 that went up in flames in the fire of 1545, which also swept away 5,000 Jewish habitations and 200 Jewish souls(35).

The educational system, of providing its youth with the knowledge of its faith and culture, was admired by the outside world, and its Central Talmud Torah was reputed to have been the best in the world(36). There were private schools that were maintained by tuition fees, and public schools subsidized by the community. The latter was for the orphaned and the poor(37). The Central Talmud Torah also had a secondary school and a Yeshiba. The Hebrat Talmud Torah, made up of a board of directors representing the entire community, supervised the Talmud Torah's affairs, examined the pupils, and judged the curriculum and the teaching methods(38). It also gathered contributions to support the school,



and endow scholars, specialists in the many fields of Jewish studies, and helping in the support of a number of the city's smaller schools(39). As a community house, the Central Talmud Torah was the seat of important citywide public meetings. It was here that Almosnino rendered his report on his activities at the Porte, in behalf of the Jewish community(40).

When the powers of the Hakam Bashi were curtailed, the kahals took the place of a centralized, unified Jewish community. A kahal governed the affairs of its own congregational community and was autonomous(41). Members of the congregation chose their own administrative officers, that decided on policy and executed it(42). It was as if the ajalmas of Spain, in the preceding century, were transplanted to Salonika as kahals(43). A number of kahals had their own schools, yeshibahs, hospitals and Hebra Kadi-shahs(44). The kahal collected taxes, provided for the instruction of the young and adults, distributed charities, provided for Pidyon Shebuim (redemption of captives), presided over the punishment of violators of communal law. Its authority was limited by the Government, to whip or imprison violators; the malsin (Jewish informer against Jews) came under the kahal's jurisdiction.

Seven members formed the Maamad ha-Kahal. They were elected during the intermediary days of the Passover, to serve for a period of one year. Between themselves, the seven selected a Parnes (president) and a Gabai (treasurer). Together with the Marbiz Torah (rabbi) the kahal administered civil matters, according to decisions based on the Talmud. The Marbiz Torah was the chief functionary and

guardian of the Faith. He had charge of education, religion and acted as judge. He signed marriage and divorce contracts, administered the fortunes of widows and orphans, adjudicated civil litigations growing out of disputes in business, and on matters of ritual. With the salaried dayanim, selected from the Maamad, the Marbiz Torah formed the Bet Din (court). The court resorted mostly to persuasion to effect settlements. The kahal also engaged a salaried shohet (ritual slaughterer) and a Hazan (precentor), who assisted the rabbi in the synagogue, a melamed (teacher) and a shamash (sexton) (45).

The Taxes that the Jewish community of Salonika had to pay to the government, were the haraj (head tax), which only the rayas (non-Moslems) had to pay each year (46). The haraj was collected by a committee composed of representatives of all congregations. This committee submitted books to the government of taxable members, and the government determined the levy (47). There was also the annual communal tax on each community, according to its population numbers, and its estimated worth and wealth (48). Besides these two main taxes, there was a tax on the slaughter of sheep, a certain number of sheep had to be delivered annually to the government, cloth to provide for the garments of the Janissaries (49), a tax on the condiments that brought water into the city, and took the waste water out, a tax on wines (50), the Avariz (tax on estates) and other special taxes (51). One of the purposes of the mission of Al-mosnino to the Porte, was to plead for the annulment of the annual

sheep tax.

To the Jewish community, its members paid taxes to support their charitable and educational institutions, and for the salaries of its personnel. The mas gabella (indirect taxes) on meats, wines and some food stuffs, was levied through the shop-keepers. The kahal got a lump sum in advance from the tax-farmer who acquired the franchise. A pecha (direct tax) was usually paid by the rich, and this was a subject of much haggling (52). When the circumstances required it, special levies were imposed by a committee representing all kahals, on the whole community. The musselmlik was a tax on merchandise exported from or imported into Salonika, to pay for the special privileges that Almosnino obtained at the Porte, for the Jews of the city (53).

The taxes were raised in the following manner. Each congregation submitted a list of its members to an official of the Turkish government. The official determined what the tax would be for the whole Jewish community. The kahal representatives met and chose a committee that represented all the kahals. The committee determined the assessments for each congregation. An individual had the right to complain and protest if he thought his assessment was excessive. The committee could fine the person that broke its regulations. Each member paid his tax to his own congregation, and he could not change his congregation, or the city of his residence to escape his tax. The Turkish government backed the central committee, which could confiscate a man's property, that failed to pay his taxes (54).

Exempt from taxes were those that owned less than 1,000 aspers, married women of whatever economic condition, men that lived off their wives' estates (nikse milog), and those that were not definitely established in the city. While the haraj had to be paid by all, the Jewish community exempted the aged over 60, the blind and the crippled from the communal tax (55). In some instances, the rabbis of Salonika were also exempted from taxes (56).

The rabbis had tried to bring some semblance of unity into the Jewish community, that was split into many kahals. In early attempts, they dealt with Shehita (ritual slaughtering) and Bedika (examination of internal organs to determine kashrut), for in some aspects of the law, the practices of some kahals were at variance (57). Housing demanded urgent attention, because of the many waves of immigration, fires and plagues that occurred often. The rabbis availed themselves of Talmudic precedent and law, the hazaka, which legalized the occupation of a house for a period of time (58). The principle of hazaka was amplified in the middle-ages to give added protection to tenants, against the raising of rents, unless special circumstances warranted it. It also enjoined Jews not to lease a house for a year from a non-Jew, from which another Jew had been evicted (59).

In Salonika, the first hascamot (Rabbinic group rulings) on the hazaka to protect tenants were enacted by the rabbinical tribunal of R. Don Judah Benveniste, R. Joseph Fasi and R. Samuel Franco in 1494. Succeeding tribunals gave it further amplifications (60).

After three consecutive years of occupancy of a home or a store by a Jew, other Jews could not rent the premises from a non-Jewish landlord. If the store or home had been vacant for three consecutive years, the hazaka (tenure right) was forfeit (61).

As the housing problem became more acute, the urgency for alleviation grew, for there were many that circumvented or abrogated the law. Fraudulent and fictitious purchases were made, calculated to possess or inhabit a property, which imposed great hardships on the poor (62). A hazaka could be sold and its price depended upon demand and supply, acts of God, as plagues and fires, when the price was high. Jews preferred to be tenants, because owners had to pay high taxes. Sometimes, Jews wielded the hazaka weapon against Turkish home owners. Knowing that the hazaka would protect him, a Jew would threaten a Moslem with vacating the property, thereby forcing the rental rate down. Such threats and practices were sharply condemned by the rabbis (63). Means were sought to remedy many of the abuses, by having the exact worth of the hazaka, or the transfer of the tenure-rights, announced from the pulpits of the synagogues (64), and to discourage some from resorting to non-Jewish courts, in the hopes of obtaining greater advantages in dower and in inheritance cases (65). Almosnino participated in this enactment.

The most effective way that the Bet Din could assert its authority, was by imposing the herem (ban). The ban took two forms; the milder form was the niddui, a form of social ostracism, and the

more severe form, the herem, which denied the offender all religious privileges. The duration of the ban lasted from one week to a month. In the case of a malsin (informer) it lasted longer, and was announced from the pulpit (66).

The Marranos (crypto-Jews) emigrated from wherever Spain and Portugal had their territorial possessions, or, from Italy and France, after having first fled to those lands (67). Salonika absorbed more of them, than any other city in the Turkish Empire. They developed commerce, and brought the city to the position of being the second center of commerce in the realm. By virtue of their religious status, they created difficult problems (68). What was the status of their children, since they lived as Christians? The hascama of 1493, did not regard them as Jews, and from the standpoint of Jewish law, their marriages were invalid. As an example, the widow of a Marrano was not bound by Yibom (levirate marriage law), wherein she was obliged to marry her brother-in-law, if the marriage was a childless one. In 1514, after a ruling by R. Jacob ibn Habib, Marranos were regarded as Jews, and the widow of a Marrano could not remarry, unless her brother-in-law, not wanting her, would release her through the Haliza ceremony. There was no unanimity on accepting the Marranos as Jews, and many irritating differences between the Jewish community and the civil authorities arose.

Marrano marriages, at times, involved one party that did not go to Turkey to live, and did not return to Judaism. The dower

claims, or inheritance claims encountered conflicting decisions in the civil and in the rabbinical courts. According to Jewish law, Christian children of a Marrano could not inherit if the parent died in Turkey. In general, rabbis ruled legacies in favor of those that remained true, or returned to Judaism. Some rabbis felt that Marranos should not be returned to the Jewish fold, without malkut (flagellation) being inflicted upon them. Others maintained that those that voluntarily returned to their faith, should be regarded as Jews. The Marrano problem also involved international complications, as in the case of sultan Suleiman, who interceded in behalf of his Marrano subjects, whose goods were confiscated in Ancona, and whom Pope Paul IV imprisoned (69).

A number of fires and plagues added to the troubles of the Jews in Salonika, in the first half of the 16th. century. The fire of 1545 was particularly devastating (70). A plague took its toll in the very same year, and others followed in 1550, 1552, 1554, 1556, 1561 and 1564 (71). During such epidemics, the rabbis of congregations fled to neighboring villages. In their absence, unprincipled rabbis usurped their positions. They brushed aside existing hascamot, to favor the malcontents that put them in office. The outstanding rabbis in Salonika, among them Almosnino, whose authority and stations were secure, banned the actions of the usurpers (72). This hascama was enacted in 1565.

On the more favorable side, Jews practiced in Turkey, the commercial acumen, and the industrial skills that they knew in Spain. They were leather tanners, jewelers, goldsmiths, and the textile

trade was almost entirely in their hands. They engaged in construction and mining. Because they had relatives living in European ports, in Flanders and in Italy, they were able to develop international traffic in wheat, silk, leather and cloth. They were successful, in spite of the additional duty that the government imposed upon them, above that which the Moslems had to pay.

Jewish agents from Salonika could be found in Italian and North African ports, selling Turkish raw materials and cloth. They followed the Turkish armies in their many battles, and supplied them with their needs. They farm-leased taxes and customs.

Part of the credit for the orderly development of commerce, belonged to the rabbis, because of the Minhag ha-Soherim ordinances that they enacted (73). These ordinances, based on Jewish law and prevailing business practices, where the Jewish law was not clear, or offered no precedent, were regarded by the rabbis as binding as Talmudic law (74). The growth of wealth could best be gauged by the striking fact that within a half century, the community was able to raise itself from its ashes three times, after three fires that razed homes and institutions, and reinvigorate itself after thirteen plagues. Among the impediments to a continued prosperity was political interference (75).

The political interference resulted from the envy of Moslem officials and from the hostility of Christian-Greek merchants. The Jews were fortunate to have had men of influence at the Porte. Moses Hamon was Suleiman's physician. He persuaded the sultan to



issue a firman(degree) forbidding his subjects to accuse Jews of being guilty of ritual murders,unless concrete proof could be presented(76). Don Joseph Nasi exercised great influence over Suleiman,and was even more successful with his son Selim.On the other hand,the rank and file had to wear safran-colored turbans,which made them fair game for attack and extortion by the Janissaries(77). The condition of Salonikan Jewry,in the early part of the 16th. century,was incomparably better than the insufferable conditions in Spain,far better than the lot of their co-religionists in Christian lands,but not without exasperations,humiliations and annoyances.

During Almosnino's times,there were 26 Jewish communities of 2,933 households,that represented Jews that were originally from the native Greeks,German,Spanish,Portuguese,Italian,Sicilian,Provencal,and Jews from Corfu(78). The Minhag Romania and the Minhag Italiano were virtually absorbed by the Minhag Separad.A minority subscribed to the Minhag Ashkenaz.The kahals of Salonika were independent and autonomous.Each had its salaried officials, as the rabbi, hazan,shemash,melamed and sometimes a shoet. The mohel(circumcision official) was not paid,as his function was deemed a mizvah(noble deed,honor)(79).The affairs of the congregation were managed by chosen members.The Parnassim supervised the religious,civil and economic needs.The Berurim represented the kahal before the government's officials,and supervised the assessment of taxes and collecting them(80).The synagogue was not only

Notes on BACKGROUND  
Chapter I

the house of worship and the theatre of religious functions, but also the place where policy decisions, enactments and bans, were announced, and where communal welfare was debated. Every congregation had its own court that dealt with civil cases, but not with criminal cases. For the most part, it acted as a court of arbitration. The court, with the rabbi as its presiding officer, exercised the herem as the communal weapon, to assert its authority over the individual that did not subscribe to its rulings (8). All kahals had a school to instruct its young, and some had their own yeshibahs.

Though the rivalries between the kahals undoubtedly weakened the community, Salonikan Jews united when urgent conditions necessitated concerted action. Such an emergency obtained, when Almosnino was delegated to represent the community at the Porte.

(8) Davis, p. 38 ; Greasy, pp. 179-82

(9) Lybyer, pp. 90-1

(10) Ibid, p. 181

(11) R. B. Merriman, Suleiman the Magnificent, (Cambridge, 1944, Harvard University Press), p. 148

(12) Lybyer, pp. 185-6

(13) Ibid, pp. 167-74

(14) According to references in Lybyer, pp. 206-8, the Marti's position was "ever exalted"; but on ordinary occasions he yielded to the vizir, and at other times, "he was almost equal to the Sultan himself". Quoting Hammer's Essays, II, p. 276, Lybyer (p. 204) explains that the clergy of the Moslem institution was not highly regarded, but the teaching and judicial bodies were.

(15) Lybyer, p. 235 ; Davis, pp. 236-42

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- (1) Three volumes of Responsa, by R. Moses Almosnino, as well as other unpublished works, by the same author, see Naftali ben Menahem, Moses Almosnino (Jerusalem, 1946) pp. 51-55
- (2) M. Almosnino, Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinopla, (Madrid, 1638)
- (3) Sir Edw. Creasy, Turkey (N.Y.C., 1913, P.F. Collier), p. 145
- (4) W.S. Davis, A Short History of the Near East, (N.Y.C., 1922, MacMillan), p. 234 : S. Lane-Poole, The Story of Turkey, (London, 1891, G.P. Putnam), pp. 27-8.
- (5) The magnitude of the Ottoman Empire can be better appreciated, when it is understood that it was larger than the Empire of Charles V, who ruled over the Netherlands, the Austrian States, Spain, the territories of Naples, Sicily, Germany, Mexico and Peru.
- (6) A.H. Lybyer, The Ottoman Empire in the Times of Suleiman, (Cambridge, Mass., 1913, Harvard University Press), pp. 25, 33.
- (7) *ibid.* p. 34.
- (8) Davis, p. 35 : Creasy, pp. 179-82
- (9) Lybyer, pp. 90-1
- (10) *ibid.* p. 151
- (11) R.B. Merriman, Suleiman the Magnificent, (Cambridge, 1944, Harvard University Press), p. 148
- (12) Lybyer, pp. 165-6
- (13) *ibid.* pp. 167-74
- (14) According to references in Lybyer, pp. 208-9, the Mufti's position was "ever exalted"; but on ordinary occasions he yielded to the vizir, and at other times, "he was almost equal to the Sultan himself". Quoting Hammer's Geschichte, II, p. 236, Lybyer (p. 206) explains that the clergy of the Moslem Institution, was not highly regarded, but the teaching and judicial bodies were.
- (15) Lybyer, p. 233 : Davis, pp. 236-43

Notes on BACKGROUND (2)

- (16) Merriman, pp. 163, 204. "not the Ottomans, but the Christians and Jews, who applied the screws to the unfortunate subjects. The amount wrung from them, might easily double what the government received."
- (17) *ibid.* p. 165
- (18) H. Graetz, History of the Jews, (Phila. 1894, J.P.S.) III, pp. 424-7
- (19) M. Franco, Essai sur l'Histoire des Israelites de l'Empire Ottoman, (Paris, 1897) p. 28.
- (20) Graetz, IV, pp. 268-72 : S. Rosannes, Dibre Yeme Yisrael be-Togarma, (Husiatyn, 1911), I, p. 170
- (21) S.W. Baron, The Jewish Community, (Phila. 1942), I, pp. 196-7  
Graetz, IV, pp. 352, 364.
- (22) Baron, I pp. 197-8 : Graetz, IV, p. 404
- (23) I.S. Emmanuel, Histoire des Israelites de Salonique, (Paris, 1936) pp. 50-1 : S. de Medina, Responsa, (Lemberg, 1862) III #124
- (24) Emmanuel, p. 18
- (25) *ibid.* p. 45
- (26) *ibid.* p. 49
- (27) *ibid.* p. 47 : Rosannes, I, p. 170
- (28) *ibid.* pp. 48-9 : S. de Medina, I #35
- (29) *ibid.* pp. 59-61
- (30) Rosannes, I pp. 145-6
- (31) *ibid.* I pp. 133-4
- (32) A. Danon, R.E.J., (Paris, 1900), XL p. 209, "--the Jews of Salonika use the Castilian dialect as their daily tongue.."  
Emmanuel, pp. 62-3 : S. de Medina, I #35

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- (33) Emmanuel, pp. 64-5
- (34) J. Nehama, Histoire des Israelites de Salonique, (Paris, 1935) III, p. 81 : Emmanuel, pp. 146-7
- (35) Rosannes, II, pp. 58-9 : Bernard Lewis, Notes and Documents from the Turkish Archives, (Jerusalem, 1952), pp. 25-6 Emmanuel, p. 114. A French writer, Nicolay, claimed there were 80 synagogues.
- (36) Baron, II p. 172 : Medina, II #174 *ובאגב אגל און אמסיה  
בימינה גאלו ישרא*
- (37) Nehama, II pp. 142-3; Emmanuel, p. 106
- (38) M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey in the 16th. Century, (J.T.S. 1952) pp. 20, 105
- (39) Emmanuel, pp. 103-5
- (40) M. Almosnino, Meamez Koah, pp. 9-11
- (41) Emmanuel, p. 11 : Goodblatt, p. 61
- (42) *ibid.* p. 69 : Medina, II #82
- (43) Nehama, II, p. 44
- (44) *ibid.* II p. 49, in addition to its formal duties, "the kahal Hebra Kadisha served a meal of hard-boiled eggs and raisins at the Seudat Habara. On Pesah the kahal dispensed Maza Shemura and H aroset made of dates and raisins.
- (45) *ibid.* II pp. 49-54
- (46) *ibid.* II p. 38
- (47) Medina, IV #364 *והיה הגולה של ה'ת"צ אקדמא באינשי -  
הצבור מעביר עם ערב התעורר כל מעלה ומעלה אפי' ענה*
- (48) *ibid.* IV #398 *והיה מה שמעשים בה קהל וקרא אפרוד גלגול עניים*
- (49) Emmanuel, pp. 122-4
- (50) Danon, REJ, XXXI, p. 58, Etude Historique sur les Impots en Turquie
- (51) A. Galante, Documents Turcs Concernant les Juifs Turcs (Istanbul, 1931) pp. 98-100

Notes on BACKGROUND (4)

- (52) Danon, REJ, XXXI, pp. 54-6; Emmanuel, pp. 125-6
- (53) ibid. XLI, pp. 250-2, La Communauté Juive de Salonique
- (54) Emmanuel, pp. 127-9
- (55) ibid. pp. 130-1
- (56) Danon, REJ, XLI p. 116
- (57) Emmanuel, p. 72, referring to Medina I #4 wherein it is indicated that there were differences in the community in the manner of animal inspection of the lung. Formerly, merely inflating the lungs (nephiha) was rejected.
- (58) Baba Batra, 28a
- (59) Baron, II pp. 292-3
- (60) Nehama, II pp. 84 et seq.
- (61) Emmanuel, p. 74
- (62) Danon, REJ, XLI, p. 259
- (63) Emmanuel, pp. 79-81
- (64) ibid. p. 76 : Goodblatt, pp. 85-6
- (65) Danon, XLI, p. 112.
- (66) ibid. pp. 252-3; Emmanuel, Histoire de l'Industrie des Tissus p. 37
- (67) Graetz, IV, p. 592; C. Roth, History of the Jews in Italy (Phila. 1946), pp. 186-7, 260-1
- (68) Emmanuel, pp. 133-5
- (69) ibid. pp. 136-7, 139-44; Graetz, IV, pp. 577-8
- (70) Rosannes, II, pp. 58-9, 242

Notes on BACKGROUND (5)

(71) Emmanuel, pp.156,221-2

(72) ibid.p.172:Danon,XLI,pp.108-9

(73) ibid.pp.110-115;A.Galante,pp.131-4,200-1

(74) Goodblatt,p.50;Medina,II #221/ כמה יפה כח מלך הא"י  
היה ממון מציון צמחה הא"י, וכן בניו אהרן  
במקום שאין ה"צ"ן ברור הא"י א"כ

(75) Emmanuel,pp.226-7,230

(76) Rosannes,II,pp.230-33

(77) Emmanuel,p.117

(78) Lewis,pp.25-6

(79) Goodblatt,p.72

(80) ibid.pp.62,65

(81) ibid.pp.87-9

of study THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOSNINO

Chapter II

Toward the end of the year 1492, a ship sailed from Venice, and put into the port of Salonika. It bore three Almosninos. When they disembarked, they were met by their relatives of the Cogombriel family(1). The newcomers brought the tidings that Don Abraham Almosnino and Don Abraham Cogombriel were burned alive at the stake, in the same auto-da-fe(2). Besides the three that arrived at Salonika, the other relatives of the executed, that escaped with their lives but not with their fortunes, were Samuel and Solomon Almosnino(3).

The oldest son of the martyred Abraham Almosnino was Hayyim, the granduncle of Moses Almosnino. Associated with Hayyim in trade and commerce in Salonika, were his brother Joseph, and his friend and cousin Cogombriel(4). Cogombriel married Hayyim's sister(5), who was destined to become the grandmother of Moses, the subject of the present work. Out of this union were born Abraham Cogombriel the younger, and a daughter, who married her relative, Baruk Almosnino. Moses Almosnino, their offspring, was born in 1518(6)

The education of Moses Almosnino must have been guided into secular, as into theological channels. Moses derived his rabbinical education from R. Moses de Boton(7), and most likely, from his father, R. Baruk and R. Samuel Almosnino, who were rabbis of the Catalonian Congregation and the Catalonian Yeshibeh. The courses



of study offered at the Yeshibah of the Catalonian community, were along the lines of instruction given in the yeshibahs of R. Joseph Fasi, founded in 1494, and R. Levi ibn Habib, of the Castilian community, founded in 1517. They were, namely, the study of Scriptures, Talmud and commentaries, the Turim (codes) of Jacob Asher, philology and grammar (8). His initiators and teachers in secular studies were the physicians R. Daniel ben Perahiah Hacohen, who taught him astronomy and mathematics, and R. Aharon Afia, his instructor in philosophy and medicine (9). Accordingly, his thinking developed along philosophical as well as rabbinical lines.

The influences of Hacohen and Afia, collaborator in medicine with Amatus Lusitanus, the Age's most distinguished physician, and the impressions they made on young Moses, bore early fruit (10). Almosnino was twenty years old when he wrote an introduction to R. Abraham Shalom's Neve Shalom (Habitation of Peace) (11). The book sought to point out, that Scriptural and Talmudic studies outranked philosophical studies in importance. It added that the need for investigation is not only permissible, but necessary, to better understand the Scriptures. Almosnino's praise of the author's views, as voiced in his introduction, reveals his attitude at an early age. These attitudes and convictions remained with him until the end of his days.

His penchant for preaching, in which he rose to the degree of highest excellence, was influenced by R. Samuel Almosnino, of the

Congregation Catalon. His sermons were worked out in a systematic way(12). A powerful and lasting influence over Moses was his mother. In a moving funeral oration, he paid fervent tribute to her noble influence over his life(13). Having been a son to wealthy parents, his father having donated the ground and money to erect the Catalonian synagogue after the fire of 1545, he realized that the common tendency to indulge him in whatever his heart desired, was ever present. Were it not for the gentle persuasiveness and perseverance of his mother, he would have naturally pursued the pleasures of his times. Almosnino declared in the funeral oration for his mother, that whatever he was and whatever he knew, he owed to her love, her vigilance over his training, and her sweet appealing to his heart and pride. He lauded her faith, piety and self-denial. Concluding the oration for his mother, "the granddaughter of martyrs", he prayed, "may the earth rest lightly on that angel of charity, and in heaven as on earth, may her modest virtue receive the reward her benevolence had merited"(15).

He was predominantly a moralist philosopher, and a teacher of ethics. Almost all of his works deal with ethical principles. His major work on morals and ethics is his Regimiento de la Vida (On the Conduct of Life)(16). His ideals followed closely those of Moses Maimonides, the man he alluded to and quoted most often, in that he accentuated the fundamental tenets of the Jewish Faith, and in arriving at such convictions through the intellect(17).

The Regimiento differs, however, from the Moreh Nebukim, in that the latter sought to guide Maimonides' perplexed contemporaries, through labyrinths of intricate philosophical and theological speculation. As a result, Maimonides' ethical teachings seem to come as a by-product, scattered unsystematically throughout his Guide. Almosnino's Regimiento is a forthright and specific manual, or text book on virtuous conduct, on good and evil, on moral responsibility, on the rules of decency, on the conservation of health. It also admits to man's destiny being ruled by the stars, excepting in the free choice of good and evil (17). It is intelligible and comprehensive, even if it did not subsequently attain the aura of antiquity and popular acceptance (18).

Written for his sister's son, Moshe Garcon, the Regimiento has three divisions. The first advises young people how to conduct themselves during their waking and even during sleeping hours. It advises on the correct way to sit, speak and almost every physical function. His sources for this portion are largely the Hilkot Deot of the Mishne Torah of Maimonides. The second treatise discusses the ten qualities of virtue, necessary to civilization. The third deals with justice and love, but is actually a continuation of the second treatise. Almosnino employs the works of Jewish, Christian and Arabic philosophers, in support of the validity of the virtues. His mention of Hippocrates, Socrates, Diogenes, Aristotle, Plato, Epic-tetus, Euclid, Porphyry, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Albertus Magnus,

galen, Algazali, Averroes and Avicenna, alongside the Jewish masters of the Bible, Talmud, Abraham ibn Daud, Maimonides, Abraham ibn Ezra, Levi ben Gerson and others, point up Almosnino's vast erudition. Sanchez, a Spanish critic, in his Collecion de Poesias Castellanas Anteriores, praises Almosnino's style as "pure, simple and natural, and the doctrine is good" (19).

He was also a mathematician, astronomer, geographer and physician. With the help of Aharon Afia, he translated Johannes de Sacrobosco's Tractatus de Sphaera Mundi, from the Latin into Hebrew. This thirteenth century astronomer-mathematician paraphrased part of Ptolemy's Almagest, in the terms of the thinking of his day, and was one of the first to use the mathematical writings of the Arabs. Sacrobosco extended the explanation of the celestial motions of the geometric system. Almosnino added his own comments on the translation, though Afia helped him with the technical Latin (20). The book discusses the Sphere's essence and center, the paths of the planets, climatic changes and the length of days at various latitudes, planets and eclipses, and the geography of Macedonia (21).

Almosnino's interest in mathematical astronomy was sustained over the years, for several years after translating Sphaera Mundi, he translated Georg Peurbach (Burbach's) Theorica Novae Planetarum. This fifteenth century Austrian mathematical-astronomer, having been the first Occidental to use trigonometric sines, applied the new triangular measurements to the heavens. On this work, too,

Almosnino added his own comments, in translating from the Latin into Hebrew. He titled this work the Shaar ha-Shamayim (Gate to the Heavens), and the preceding one, the Bet Elohim (House of God) (22).

He also wrote a book on history. While in Constantinople on a mission for the Jewish community of Salonika, he wrote his Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinopla, in Spanish, but in Hebrew characters (23). The Extremos tells of the habits of the inhabitants, the extremes in the city's climate, social life, religious life, merchandising and other extremes. It is divided into three books. The second book describes the funeral of sultan Suleiman, and Selim's entry into the capital subsequently. Its chronicle of the kings of the Ottoman dynasty differs from that of Haohen, his contemporary, and shows him to be in error (24). The third book describes the public works, as bridges and buildings, that Suleiman had built to improve the city. Because it was on the scene reporting (25), it was of great use to historians (26). The Extremos analyzed the times and gave a good description of the period and the conditions in the capital city (27). This work on a non-Jewish subject, also tells of some of the Jewish personalities of the day, their relationship to the Porte, and that they were subsidized by the Divan (28).

There were some effective speakers among his contemporaries, who also employed non-Jewish philosophers in the development of their sermons, but Almosnino apparently outranked them (29).

He probably influenced his colleagues, R. Isaac Adarbi and R. Mordecai Matalon, and R. Shlomo Halevi emulated him. Almosnino developed to a high degree, a favored pattern of homiletics, and expanded and inverted the pattern. He added Talmudic and rabbinic quotations, quotations from the Greek and Arabic philosophers, and adorned the premise with an allegory, or an anecdote. The Midrash, which usually leads to its Scriptural objective, by working up to it with other references that seem remotely related, Almosnino inverted, by treating with the objective at the very outset.

This method probably resulted in an innovation. It was the practice of using the opening Scriptural sentence as the topic sentence, and as the theme of his sermon. The opening sentence would reappear a number of times throughout the sermon, for purposes of cohesion and consistency. The peroration would inevitably come to an end with the opening sentence, making the sermon seem as fool-proof as a geometric theorem(30). For three hundred years after his death, he was regarded as the peer and model for subsequent preachers(31).

Almosnino's sermons offer comfort and hope to the dispirited, and urge faith in God, "Who watches over Israel everlastingly." He adds, "I have seen God's supervision(hashgaha peratit) over each step, even though it seemed coincidental in our eyes, and even contrary to our plans. This land wherein we dwell is a Tabernacle of Testimony(mishkan ha-Edut) of God's deliverance, and therefore I sing as Deborah did"(32).

He was twenty-three years old, when he occupied the pulpit of the Congregation Catalan, to which his family and relatives belonged. Until he assumed his duties in 1551, the pulpit was held by R. Samuel Almosnino (33). The following year he was appointed to the office of rabbi, of the Calabrese congregation Neve Shalom. This pulpit was formerly occupied by R. David Messer Leon, and before him, by R. Jacob Habib (34). In 1559, he resigned from the Neve Shalom, to assume his rabbinical duties with the newly formed Liviat Hen congregation. It was made up of the dissident elements of a number of smaller congregations (35), and a large number of Castilian, Evorian and Lisbonian ex-Marranos (36). He was succeeded at the Neve Shalom, by his colleague, R. Mordecai Matalon (37).

In his first sermon Almosnino declared, "that this congregation be dedicated to the service of God and be united as one. Because of this, God would bless you with grace (Hen) and honor. Therefore, the congregation should be known under the name of Liviat Hen; that the union be one of good will, rather than that the forces from without had impelled you to unite (38). The Liviat Hen was built and named in honor of Dona Gracia (Hannah-Hen) Mendes. Her nephew, Don Joseph Nasi, the Duke of Naxos, and his friends, also participated by making contributions. Later, the congregation merged with the Lisbonian congregation, and assumed the name of Congregation Jahia (39). Almosnino served in the pulpit of the Liviat Hen, until he died.

Because he was a gifted orator, many other congregations

invited him to preach on special occasions. Of the congregations that sought him to preach from their pulpits on notable occasions were the congregation Ashkenazim, upon the death of R. Joshua Soncino, of the famous publishing family(40); the congregation Italy, upon the death of R. Perahiah Hacohen, a senior colleague, and one of his teachers in secular studies(41); the congregation Aragon(42); the congregation Sicily, on the occasion of the death of his colleague, R. Shlomo le-Bet Hazan(43), and most frequently by the Congregation Catalan(44).

Considering the eminence of such rabbis as R. Samuel de Medina, R. Benjamin Halevi Ashkenazi and some of the above mentioned, it is noteworthy that Almosnino was regarded as "the most honored" of all the rabbis. Perhaps it was because of his successes in public relations, and in his role as a peacemaker in his generation. "What other Salonikan rabbis could not accomplish, Almosnino succeeded in doing", by the employment of patience and tact, firmness and mercy(45). He brought together and unified dissident elements and splinter groups, persuaded them to work together in relative harmony. His efforts ushered in a period of greater communal gratification in his congregation, and in the Salonikan community, after he represented it at the Porte(46).

Rabbis and administrators viewed with displeasure the creation of the Liviat Hen, which was in violation of the hascama of 1525. This hascama forbade the creation of a new quarter, community or synagogue, at the risk of a herem. It was inevitable, however,



control and staticism yield to progress and a bustling population. The principle of 'al tifrosh min hazibur' (do not separate from the community) so commonly quoted then, had to give way to the new quotation of 'lo titgodadu' (do not make yourselves into (permanent) groups). The Liviat Hen was helped along by the prestige the Nazis enjoyed, and the respect they showed Almosnino (47).

When Almosnino assumed his duties as the rabbi of the Liviat Hen, he appealed to the congregation, "that you help each other with grace and lovingkindness, and that it is for that reason that the congregation was formed" (48). To assure the continuation of the congregation brought together from so many diversified elements, he urged them to accept certain rules and policies, "to assemble the Tabernacle that it be as one" (49). He added, "that you come at least thrice weekly to the synagogue, on Mondays, Thursdays and Sabbaths, for public prayers. By so doing, your love and friendship for each other will blossom, as a result of seeing each other regularly. In cultivating this relationship, you will safeguard and improve public welfare". He further requested of them, that should disputes arise between them, that it be made obligatory, that peace be effected within three days. Should they fail to resolve their differences, then it would become mandatory, for the disputants to present themselves before a 'peace committee', lay bare their grievances, and submit to the ruling of the committee. "I, myself, take it upon me", said Almosnino, "to be the means of enforcing this ruling, for in peace among individuals, lies public

progress and security. For even after we will dwell in security in our land, if there will not be peace among us, we shall not be able to live serenely". His final request was that members of lesser wealth, learning or station, hearken to those of greater substance and higher standing, with respect to the conduct of the synagogue and the community; that the more exalted assume the obligation of alleviating the tax burden of the poor, and help them gain useful employment; that the members of lower economic station, help the leaders of the community to put plans and decisions into execution (50).

Almosnino's participation in citywide problems, can be noted from some of the *hascamot*, that he and his colleagues issued. From the rulings of the *hascama* of 1554, it can be understood, that because of the independence of the *kahals*, ritual slaughtering and the sale of kosher meat was at least suspect and getting out of hand. Almosnino and his colleagues, rabbis I. Adarbi, B. Ashkenazi, S. de Medina, J. Samut, A. Seralvo and S. Taytazak, ruled that no Jew may slaughter ritually, unless the fowl or animal was for his own use. He was not permitted to sell the product of his slaughtering to others. That is what was meant by the ruling, that no Jew may slaughter in the *abbattoirs* of Turks or Christians. If two or more Jews would band themselves together, to slaughter for their own use, they would be permitted to do so. The *hascama* also ruled, that no Jew could slaughter or inspect in the Jewish *abbattoir*, except those chosen by the majority of the rabbis in Salonika (51).

In spite of the improved conditions in Turkey, in contrast to those in Christian lands, strictures common to most European lands were still being exercised. Christians enacted strict ordinances to guide their constituent religiously; Jews did likewise, but also slanted some of their enactments, to the end that non-Jewish envy of the prosperity of Jews, might be prevented or reduced. The following three hascamot by Almosnino and his above mentioned colleagues, ruled that (for a period of ten years in force) a bride should be led to the house of her groom, only in the daytime; that music should not be heard at joyous Jewish occasions, such as weddings or circumcisions; that women should not be seen in public places, or markets, adorned with jewels, but were permitted to wear them while at home.

The second hascama forbade men to dance with women at weddings, or at a Ben Zakor (celebration prior to a circumcision). The third, enjoined Jews against gambling. Because <sup>of</sup> the competition of the Jews in business, because their success and opulence had stirred the envy and hostility of the Christian-Greeks, and because public display of their wealth had incited the non-Jews to overt acts of cruelty, the above hascamot were, obviously, less for religious, than for protective purposes (52).

Of greater significance was the hascama of 1560, ruled in the Catalonian synagogue. It asserted its authority over the Jewish community, when a number of Jews turned away from its jurisdiction. It forbade Jews to resort to Turkish courts, in the mat-

ters of inheritance claims and dower right claims. It is probable, that Almosnino was solely instrumental in receiving the backing of the Constantinople rabbinate on this hascama. In the records of the Salonikan rabbis, Almosnino's is the only name that appears, attesting to the approbation of the rabbis of the capital city(53). The hascama of 1565 by Almosnino and his colleagues, stipulated that unless a hascama was signed by the majority of the rabbis in Salonika, it was to be deemed invalid(54). Almosnino participated in hascamot of lesser note, such as the one of 1561, which ruled against assessing rabbis with taxes. This hascama resulted because some kahals assessed rabbis with taxes, and some did not(55).

His greatest usefulness to the Jewish community of Salonika, resulted from his efforts in its behalf, at the Porte, in 1566 and in 1567. From the time that the Spanish Jews immigrated and settled in Salonika, delegations were sent to Constantinople, the capital city, only as a last resort. First, there were appeals to, or negotiations with the Moslem Governor of Salonika. When these failed to relieve the problems that pressed on Jews, they appealed to higher authorities. The delegation to the capital city, in 1546, headed by R. Ashkenazi, had as its purpose to get help from the Porte, to protect Jews against the hostile acts of Christian-Greeks. Though the Jews outnumbered the Christians, they were split into so many kahals, that because of their disunity, they were vulnerable to attacks. In 1551, R. Samuel de Medina headed a delegation to the Porte, to seek permission to rebuild the synagogues that were destroyed in the fire of 1545(56). The mission of R.

Moses Almosnino in 1566, was for the purpose of seeking a settlement in back taxes, and freedom from the added taxes that the Muslim (Governor of Salonika) had imposed. Suleiman had previously exempted the Jews from the sheep tax. In 1537, the sultan visited Salonika, and accorded the Jews this relief, among other privileges. The records of the privileges were presumably destroyed in the fire of 1545. When the records could not be produced, the privileges accorded to the community were no longer respected.

Prior to Suleiman's visit, the community had to furnish the Porte with a certain number of sheep annually, in addition to the other taxes it was obliged to pay. The sheep tax that Suleiman cancelled in 1537, was demanded again in 1546(57). The mission of R. Ashkenazi in 1546, fell short of its objective, and Almosnino had to appeal again for protection against the hostility of the Christian-Greeks (58). The Janissaries attacked and robbed Jews in broad daylight. Selim, himself, was embarrassed by the boldness of the Janissaries, when they demanded gifts on the day that he acceded to the throne. Almosnino also appealed to the Porte to protect Jews from the extortions of the Janissaries (59)

The Jewish community fell in arrears in paying its taxes to the government, due to the many fires and pestilences, between the years 1500 to 1565, which put it to the strain of gathering money, for the many reconstruction projects. To plead for some relief from the taxes due, and from the taxes the Jewish community owed from the past, the community commissioned R. Moses Almosnino, R. Jacob Nehemias, and R. Jacob Baruk to go to the Porte.

The latter two died en route to Constantinople via Brusa, and Almosnino fell ill. After he finally arrived, he formed a committee of ten influential Jews. There were many delays before the negotiations got to the serious stage, primarily because Suleiman was waging war in Hungary. On September 5, 1566, the sultan died in Hungary and was succeeded by his son Selim II. Almosnino relied on Don Joseph Nasi, because of his friendship with Selim, to plead for the return of former privileges, and having some concessions granted to the Salonikan Jews (60).

The delegation remained in Constantinople for almost one year and a half (61), during which time there was no agreement between its members, what to plead for and what to request (62). A number of efforts in the negotiations came to naught. On January 25, 1568, the Porte allowed the arrear taxes to be reduced to 300,000 aspers (63). The arrear taxes were paid off in the following ten years, because the community levied a tax on its merchants, on all merchandise imported or exported from Salonika. This tax was known as the Muselimlik (64).

The pashas and the Vizir and the Sultan signed for the government. The signatories for the Jewish delegation were Nasi, Judah de Segura, friend of the Chief Defterdar, Joseph Hamon, the sultan's physician, Abraham Selma, friend of the Mufti Abu Schud, Meir Sancho, a court physician and men of lesser note. The sheep tax was rescinded, and the firman assured the Jews, that they would not be molested by local functionaries. This firman is rep

ferred to as the Charter of Liberation(Gezairat ha-Herut)(65).

Almosnino visited Constantinople again in 1573,presumably to appeal to the Porte,that some particulars of the 1568 firman be enforced. He died there between the years 1574 and 1579(66).

In addition to having distinguished himself as a peace-maker, as an orator(67),and in the field of public service(68),he was also the author of many works,that encompassed scientific and theological subjects.As stated above,his Regimiento de la Vida(69) was his major work on ethics and morals.His other works in this field were his commentaries on several books of the Bible,and commentaries on the works of Bible commentators.They are written in a clear,elegant style,and at times make references to philosophy,astronomy,history,geography and astrology.The secular subjects played supporting roles to his theology and ethics(70).

The Torat Moshe,was a commentary on the Pentateuch,taken from the lectures he delivered before his students on every Sabbath(71). His other commentaries were on the Book of the Proverbs of Solomon(72),the Book of Job(73),the Yede Moshe,a commentary on the Hamesh Megillot(Five Scrolls),wherein he stresses that intellect and virtue are life's most desirable acquisitions(74). Almosnino's Pirke Moshe,on the Pirke Abot(Ethics of the Fathers) magnifies the wise counsel of the Tanaim on the good life,and draws the six chapters together,as if the guidance in all of them derived from the words of Simon the Just(75). The Tefillah le-Moshe explains the beauty that can be found in the Pentateuch

and the later chapters give the significance of the Keriat Shema al ha-Mitta (Prayer before Retiring) (76). The Meamez Koah is a collection of 28 sermons, mostly funeral orations, given for some of the most notable Jewish personalities of the period. Emphasized in this collection are his beliefs and the reasons for his beliefs in the immortality of the soul, and God's personal supervision (77). Other commentaries by the author are a commentary on the commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra on Genesis (78), and a commentary on Rashi's commentary on the Torah (79).

Almosnino's Migdal Oz, is a commentary on the philosophy of Algazali. Among some of his unpublished works are a commentary on the Book of Psalms, the Binyan ha-Herut, which probably dealt in greater detail of his mission to Constantinople, to obtain the Charter of Liberation. Also known from references are his Iggeret Tehiat ha-Metim and the Iggeret ha-Nefesh, on resurrection and immortality respectively, and the three volumes of his Responsa (80). His Pene Moshe was a commentary on Aristotle's Ethics, and his Un Tratado de los Sueños, is an explanation of dreams, that he wrote at the behest of Don Joseph Nasi (81).

It is probable, that the intellectual differences and preoccupations of the generation that preceded him and that of his own times, moved him to write some of his works. The Greek rabbi, Sabbatai of Salonika, a specialist on the works of Abraham ibn Ezra, criticised the three volume work of Mordecai Comtino on ibn Ezra, which Comtino felt obliged to answer by his Answer to Sabbatai



NOTES ON THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOSEINO

ben Malkiel. R. Moshe Kapuzato, Sabbatai's contemporary, and author of a commentary on the Pentateuch, was also opposed to the opinions of ibn Ezra and those of Maimonides. A generation later, Almosnino, a champion of Maimonides and ibn Ezra, defended the positions of the 12th. century scholars(82). It is even more probable, that Almosnino left his mark on his younger contemporaries. R. Shlomo Halevi, wrote his Regimiento de la Casa (on Family Conduct) among his many rabbinical writings(83).

His writings reveal Almosnino to have been an avid student, who persevered in his studies and writings, even when he was away on urgent business. He wrote the Extremos, while on a mission for the community to Constantinople(84). He hated prolixity(85). He was an exact reporter of events and things(86). He hated honors and detested vanity(87), and he acted in the support of the poor, and for the advancement of education and schools(88).

(10) Emmanuel, p. 204

(11) M. Steinschneider, Hebraische Uebersetzungen (Berlin, 1855) p. 453  
Emmanuel, p. 177

(12) Emmanuel, Leqole Malvika la-Dorotan (Tel Aviv, 1958) p. 129  
tracts, IV, p. 82, "worked out his sermons... in scientific shape."

(13) M. Grätz, Monatschrift (Berlin, 1864) p. 29; Hebrew Echo, p. 77

(14) Hebrew Echo, II, p. 82; Emmanuel, p. 176; Medina, IV, #353; Hebrew Echo, IV, p. 7

(15) Hebrew Echo, p. 77

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Chapter II

- (1) E. Carmoly, La Famille Almosnino, (extract from L'Univers Israelite, Jan. Feb. Mar. 1850) p.1. (Paris, 1850)
- (2) M. Almosnino, Meamez Koah, (Venice, 1588) p.97
- (3) Carmoly, p.1.: Emmanuel, p.58, says that among those that came were Samuel and Baruk Almosnino, and that they established themselves in 1493.
- (4) Given name unknown
- (5) Carmoly, p.6. Sources examined for this study, are silent on birth, marriage and death dates of Almosnino's ancestors, excepting the dates of the death of his parents.
- (6) Emmanuel, p.176. states that Almosnino was born in 1518. Rosannes' date of birth (II, p.61) in 1523 is erroneous. He is also in error when he avers that Almosnino was an only child. The fourth sermon in Meamez Koah, mentions his brother, Absalom's son.
- (7) Meamez Koah, Sermon #10, at Moses de Boton's funeral.
- (8) Nehama, II, pp.145, 147-8: Graetz, III, p.282, IV, pp.86-8 Emmanuel, pp.103-4
- (9) Rosannes, II, p.61: Emmanuel, p.176. Afia composed Opiniones sacadas de los mas Antiguos Filosofos y Autenticos. He also helped Almosnino translate the Sphaera Mundi, from Latin into Hebrew. Nehama, IV, p.8
- (10) Emmanuel, p.204
- (11) M. Steinschneider, Hebraische Uebersetzungen (Berlin, 1893) p.465 Emmanuel, p.177
- (12) Emmanuel, Gedole Salonika le-Dorotam (Tel Aviv, 1936) p.129 Graetz, IV, p.608, " --worked out his sermons.. in scientific shape.."
- (13) H. Graetz, Monatsschrift (Berlin, 1864) p.29: Meamez Koah, p.97
- (14) Rosannes, II, p.62 : Emmanuel, p.176: Medina, IV, #353: Nehama, IV, p.7
- (15) Meamez Koah, p.97

Notes on THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOSNINO (2)

- (16) M. Almosnino, Libro Intitulado del Regimiento de la Vida, Latin characters edition used for this study (Amsterdam, 1729) First edition in rabbinic script, (Salonika, 1564)
- (17) Almosnino refers to Maimonides admiringly as "nuestro doctissimo rabbeni Moshe" throughout the book. Cites Maimonides in Meamez Koah as his authority, 31 times.
- (18) Nehama, IV p.13
- (19) Emmanuel, p.181
- (20) Meamez Koah, p.107: Extremos, p.78: Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.29
- (21) Emmanuel, p.182, cites Neubauer, #2036, p.37
- (22) Meamez Koah, p.178: Regimiento, p.13: S.P. Rabinowitz, Mozoe Gola, (Warsaw, 1894) p.345
- (23) M. Almosnino, Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinopla (Madrid, 1638); Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.64
- (24) Extremos, p.63 : Nehama, IV, p.11
- (25) ibid. p.58. "I was in a store with friends, from where we could see.."
- (26) Joseph von Hammer, Geschichte des Osmanisches Reiches, (Paris, 1836), IV, pp.5, 240
- (27) Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.25: Rabinowitz, pp.346-7
- (28) Extremos, p.77: Emmanuel, p.173
- (29) Rosannes, pp.102, 105, 97: Emmanuel, p.178, "...the chief among the excellent orators".
- (30) Meamez Koah, (Venice, 1588); Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.31
- (31) Rabinowitz, p.345: Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.31
- (32) Meamez Koah, p.5
- (33) ibid., p.135
- (34) Emmanuel, pp.85, 98-9, 177
- (35) Rosannes, II, p.63

Notes on THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOSONINO (3)

- (36) J. Nehama, III, p.93: IV, p.10 : Emmanuel, p.177
- (37) Emmanuel, p.177
- (38) Meamez Kosh, p.177, Sermon #22
- (39) J. Nehama, III p.93: Emmanuel, p.177
- (40) Meamez Kosh, p.62, Sermon #8
- (41) ibid. p.196, Sermon #25
- (42) ibid. p.213, Sermon #27
- (43) ibid. p.120, Sermon #13
- (44) ibid. pp.179, 185, 189, wherein he also cites his Torat Moskee, on sermons delivered for every Sabbath of the year.
- (45) Rosannes, II p.63: Rabinowitz, p.345
- (46) Emmanuel, p.177, 211-15
- (47) Nehama, III, pp.93-4
- (48) Meamez Kosh, p.177: Emmanuel, pp.177-8
- (49) ibid., Ex.26:6

(50) ibid.

(51) Danon, REJ, XLI, pp.114-5

זהו חלק מאינן כחה בצרכים וסייזים  
 בחלק הגדולה והלחטה, וזמה באוננותו הרבים  
 - הולכים אלמול במקומו של הארמים

(52) ibid. pp.253-4

בו גבונה כל הנשים בפני כסף ודפלי נעם  
 ברחובות והשווקים חלקים אחרים - וזו  
 פני אובדן לאות - עם הנאמם גם לאדם  
 נצטו ומ'3 -

ibid. pp.255-6

אם היכחו כל האדם 33 בעולם והלום זמן  
 פאצ'ה בא'אלאר puede  
 con hombre bailar mujer

"...that a man cannot dance with a woman..."

Notes on THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOSNINO (4)

- (52) continued. מי נהג חשיסה יסרד וישרא, נאפלה בייכיל -  
 שלום אול ושרא ושחך בקורבניא זיל קלם מיני שמוך  
 בתוך חומה סיר לאזוניקי
- (53) *ibid.* pp.113-4 וזכר נוסח סופס הפסקה השלמה מקושטנינה  
 - ממנו פה קיום א' אצל אורי א' יעד השל"ג  
 - מלה אחרונה
- See p.15, and note #65 on p.24
- (54) *ibid.* XLI, pp.108-9 יזן טור כאויל רביא משי הארץ מן קקלים  
 ומגפ"סוס זפסקים הסכמה דמי רשותו - זכר אמרו -  
 פתוראים אמרה - על הפסקה אשר לא גביה חומה  
 מרב מרביב, תורה -
- This hascama was also signed by rabbis J. Firman and S. le-Bet Hazan
- (55) *ibid.* XLI, p.116 : Goodblatt, p.80
- (56) Rosannes, II, p.60: Goodblatt, p.27
- (57) Extremos, p.89 : Emmanuel, pp.212-3
- (58) Emmanuel, pp.159-60: Medina, #55
- (59) *ibid.* pp.117-8: Extremos, pp.50-1
- (60) *ibid.* pp.213-4
- (61) Extremos, Prologue p.2 "...at the expense of drain of blood, bodily fatigue and spirit".
- (62) *ibid.* p.34 "...out of ourselves was born the cause of not coming to a conclusion."
- (63) *ibid.* p.35
- (64) Emmanuel, pp.214-5
- (65) Extremos, p.89 : von Hammer, II p.128, p.154
- (66) Emmanuel, p.184: Nehama IV, p.10
- (67) Goodblatt, p.17

Notes on THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOsnino (5)

- (68) Extremos, p.1 "...being constantly on the go, day and night, with the ze-al and love required to effect the desired intention, for the benefit of our noble Republic of Salonika".  
Emmanuel, p.224. Almosnino appealed to the community to aid 70 Jews seized by the Maltese Templars, who demanded 200,000 aspers for their ransom.
- (69) p.28
- (70) Emmanuel, p.178
- (71) Meamez Koah, p.22 : Tefillah le-Moshe, p.15
- (72) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.15
- (73) ibid. p.24
- (74) Salonika, 1572
- (75) Salonika, 1563 : Pirke Abot, I, 2
- (76) Salonika, 1567; Cracow, 1590, 1820
- (77) Venice, 1588.
- (78) See Naftali ben Menahem's Moses Almosnino, p.1 et seq.
- (79) Emmanuel, pp.182-3
- (80) Ben Menahem, pp.51-5: Rosannes, II, p.94
- (81) ibid.
- (82) Rosannes, I, p.32
- (83) Emmanuel, pp.188-90, ... Emmanuel states that Halevi mentioned Almosnino's Regimiento de la Vida, in his commentary on Abot, and in his Responsa, Dibre Shlome
- (84) Extremos, Prologue, "...taking me from my continued study and state of contemplation.."

Notes on THE LIFE OF MOSES ALMOSNINO (6)

(85) ibid., p.33 "...that I will leave out, not to be guilty of prolixity."

Alm. p.56, "...I will make brief summary of what I saw." (1)

(86) ibid., p.64, "...ascertained from original sources, I saw an abridgement in the Turkish script and language... that all experts of this nation hold it as true." (On his differing with Joseph Hacoen on the dynastic successions of the Ottoman sultans) (2)

(87) Tefillah le-Moshe, Preface : Emmanuel, p.184 to popularize ethics

(88) Yede Moshe, p.66 because the majority of Jews in Salonika, did not understand Hebrew (4). It is also probable that he was impelled to write the book, because his colleagues and he tried to raise the respect for and the observance of Jewish Law (5).

The goals of ethics, as Almosnino conceived them, are to live in dignity, to discourage the growth of vice, to love virtue, to achieve self-mastery (6) and happiness (7). Ethics has as its objective, to help create a sound heredity through the proper choice of a mate of moral virtue (8), and a better environment of friends and associates. The influence of right environment is more important than hereditary influence, for thus "the thread of virtue" acquired in the parental home is not torn asunder (9). The purposes of ethics, moreover, are to acquire good habits (10), avoid a tragic old age (11), and achieve perfection and tranquillity (12). To love God is the ultimate end (13), for thereby the purpose of creation is realized (14). The ethics as expounded in the Yodeh draw man to God.

## ALMOSNINO'S ETHICS

### Chapter III

Almosnino's major ethical work, El Regimiento de la Vida(1), is his only work on ethics in the Spanish language. His ethical works in Hebrew(2) are exegetical and homiletical, and have neither the plan nor the system of the Regimiento(3). It is probable that he wrote the Regimiento in Spanish to popularize ethics amongst the masses, because the majority of Jews in Salonika, did not understand Hebrew(4). It is also probable that he was impelled to write the book, because his colleagues and he tried to raise the respect for and the observance of Jewish Law(5).

The goals of ethics, as Almosnino conceived them, are to live in dignity, to discourage the growth of vice, to love virtue, to achieve self-mastery(6) and happiness(7). Ethics has as its objective, to help create a sound heredity through the proper choice of a mate of moral virtue(8), and a better environment of friends and associates. The influence of right environment is more important than hereditary influence, for thus "the thread of virtue" acquired in the parental home is not torn asunder(9). The purposes of ethics, moreover, are to acquire good habits(10), avoid a tragic old age(11), and achieve perfection and tranquillity(12). To love God is the ultimate end(13), for thereby the purpose of creation is realized(14). The ethics as expounded in the Torah draw man to God.



The Regimiento is composed of three treatises. The first introduces the subject of ethics, by pointing out the advantages that are derived from associating with virtuous people, why the wicked are prosperous and why the righteous are tested, and the true character of faith. Discussions of the practical virtues follow, telling of how and when it is proper to eat, drink, sleep, walk and speak. It ends in trying to explain why some evil men live long while some virtuous die early in life, and the illusion that the former days seem to have been better than the present(15).

In the second treatise, Almosnino argues for man's freedom of choice. In doing so, he refutes the doctrine that man is born to be good or evil, happy or unhappy. He next proceeds to discuss ten of the twelve moral virtues as Aristotle enumerated them, namely, fortitude, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, modesty, humility, affability, truth and courtesy(16).

In the third treatise, he discusses the last two of the twelve Aristotelian moral virtues, namely, justice and friendship-love(17), and also the intellectual virtues. He brings the book to a close by recommending the books that the average man should read to have a well rounded education, and lastly, an allegory on the ultimate triumph of virtue(18).

The Regimiento being a book on ethics, Almosnino, accordingly, draws support from many of the books of the Bible, and the ones most frequently cited are the books of Deuteronomy, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Of Almosnino's citations from the many tracts of

the Talmud, those from Abot and Berakot appear most often, because they are replete with moral injunctions. He also refers to the Tosefta and to the Midrash Rabbah.

Among the non-Jewish sources that Almosnino refers to is Aristotle. He refers to him most frequently, especially to his Ethics (19). Other Greek classical writers and personalities that he refers to, or alludes to, are Bias (20), Lycurgus (21), Socrates (22), Hippocrates (23), Dionysius (24), Plato (25), Demosthenes (26), Diogenes (27), Euclid (28), Epicurus (29), Plutarch (30), Epictetus (31), Porphyry (32) and Themistius (33). Cicero (34) and Seneca (35) are the Latin writers which he uses.

Avicenna (36), whose name appears most often of the Muslim writers he employs, is essential to Almosnino, to project his theories on health and medicine, when he develops the practical virtues. Algazali (37) and Averroes (38), the other Muslim authors, are infrequently referred to in the Regimiento.

Of the medieval Jewish writers, Maimonides' works serve best in support of Almosnino's ethics. In fact, Maimonides is the most quoted of all the authors that appear in the Regimiento (39). The commentaries of R. Shlomo Yizhaki (40), R. Abraham ibn Ezra (41), and R. Isaac Bederesi's Sefer ha-Pardes (42) are mentioned a few times. Also referred to are R. Abraham ibn Daud, R. Solomon ibn Aderet and R. Levi ben Gerson. Lastly, he refers frequently to his own Pene Moshe, a commentary on Aristotle's Ethics (43), and to his Migdal Oz, a commentary on Algazali's Kawanot ha-Filosofim (44).

The ethics of Almosnino are essentially Jewish. The ethics

of Greek, Latin and Muslim authors are incorporated into Almosnino's system. Almosnino makes Greek, Roman and Arabic principles fit into, corroborate, serve to explain or give support to Jewish ethics. Such non-Jewish ideals that contradicted the Jewish view, he rejected or refuted by bringing to bear an opinion of a non-Jewish author, that supported the Jewish view. The practical virtues are developed out of Jewish sources, supplemented and enriched by non-Jewish thoughts. The moral and intellectual virtues are in an Aristotelian frame, reinforced with Jewish and non-Jewish concepts. Almosnino's ethics, accordingly, cannot be separated from the teachings of the Torah.

Almosnino maintains that Jewish ethics are universally true. At times, non-Jewish opinions can be used to support the teachings of Jewish ethics. However, in the case of disagreement, Almosnino accepts the Jewish view, and rejects the non-Jewish. When Cicero is cited as saying that fortitude is "suffering through adversity" as being the philosophical concept of courage, and when Almosnino ascribes to historians, that those that endanger their lives in defense of country, or martyrs, are courageous, he gives support to the Jewish idea of courage, as quoted in Abot (45). "All three are related and even contiguous" (46). In speaking against indulgences, Almosnino uses Seneca to corroborate a Talmudic saying (47). The Biblical verse that commands that revenge be taken of Amalek (48), is explained in justification, with Cicero's "Vengeance is in man with just cause" (49). Aristotle substantiates a verse in Psalms (50), with his "Justice is the habit whereby the just do deeds of Just-

ice"(51).That is how Almosnino absorbs his non-Jewish sources,in the development of his Jewish ethics.He uses Maimonides often to defend the Jewish view,as in the refutation of the position held by the Sophists,that man has no freedom of choice(52).Almosnino's original contribution lies in his skill of integrating the various sources,into one comprehensive system of ethics that is Jewish and all-embracing.

While Almosnino patterned his moral virtues after the Aristotelian ethical system(53),it is the Stagirite's plan that is emulated more than the content.In discussing the virtue fortitude, Scriptures,rabbinical references and Euclid serve his purposes best in the development of the subject,and Aristotle's thesis plays but a small supporting role.

As stated above(54),Almosnino conceived the purpose of ethics to be the rules whereby a Jew could live on the path of virtue, and for his soul to enjoy inestimable delight(55).In observing the rules,success, happiness and peace, could be realized(56). Self-discipline, which leads to self-mastery, can only be achieved by observing the Biblical moral code(57).The code helps in the triumph over animal passions and sensual appetites(58). Observing the moral laws includes furnishing the ensuing generation with a virtuous background,by carefully selecting the right mate in marriage(59). It calls for emptying the soul of vices, and filling it with good habits(60),for a virtuous man can live

in spiritual pleasure even with little material wealth(61). If discipline is not exercised in youth, only weakness is left in old age(62). By putting ethical principles into practice, bodily and spiritual injury to self and others is averted(63), humiliations can be cheerfully endured(64), and when troubles come they can be accepted graciously(65). It is, above all, by knowing God through every experience(66), never forsaking Him(67), revering Him(68) and loving Him(69), that perfection can be reached as far as it is humanly possible to do so(70), and to "come to the summit of virtue", for which purpose man was created(71).

The moral virtues are introduced with a prolegomenon attempting to prove, that virtue is desirable and triumphant in all cases and under any circumstances. Almosnino did not believe that a man's character could solely be judged by the acts the man committed, without taking into consideration the conditions under which and the will with which the deeds were done. Nor did he believe that real misfortune ever befell the virtuous, or that real good fortune came to the evil-doer. These two conceptions were necessary to him, to prove that virtue is ever desirable.

Almosnino understood happiness to be that of the spirit(72), and possessed by those that contemplate divine matters. He regarded fortune as bringing to man neither good nor evil, for it was man himself that made the instruments of fortune produce good or evil(73). The author argued that because the virtuous put their wealth to good purposes while the evil use their substance

to encourage corruption, fortuitous gifts are no advantage. The virtuous are content and happy with whatever Providence provides, and with little they can live in spiritual bliss. Therefore, it cannot be said that their lot is grievous. The evil-doer, on the other hand, whatever his material condition, is ever dissatisfied and melancholy. Accordingly, the virtuous continues to live in joy, whereas the wrongdoer dwells in the vales of sorrow. "Fortune cannot deprive man of his virtue", which is the key to happiness.

Two examples are adduced to illustrate the above conception. The first tells of Alexander the Great, who prized learning and virtue. He said, "If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes". By that he meant, that were it not that he had a responsibility to his people to lead them, he would pursue the life of virtue and learning, even as Diogenes. The second mentions Seneca, who believed that "the chance evils that happen to the virtuous are like clouds that hide the clarity of the sun, but not its warmth and light."

Amplifying the problem of 'the prosperity of the wicked and the trials of the righteous', Almosnino adds, that as a result of the misfortunes that visit the virtuous, they improve in character. They learn how to weather the thrusts of ill-luck more easily. They become, as Plutarch described them, "like sweet scented grass, which, the more it is pounded the sweeter it smells". Almosnino further explains that that was how God tested the faith of Job, and that is the way He puts the virtuous to trial, so that

direct(73), fortitude must also conform to reason. Thus, "killing a  
tyrant for the purpose of defending the republic" conforms to  
they may prove their faith in Him. The faith of the virtuous  
in God through their trials, also serves as an example to the  
less virtuous, that they be more enduring in their faith(74).

It follows from the above, that if a man should try to per-  
fect himself in order to be rewarded, he must be given the free-  
dom of choice. Almosnino believed in the freedom of choice, with  
respect to choosing virtue or vice(75). The fact that God knows  
of the deeds of man beforehand, does not cancel out man's freedom  
of choice, nor does it rule out God's right to mete out justice.  
He argues, "that this human power {to choose evil} can be put to  
the contrary" (by choosing virtue), wherein man of his own free  
will can choose the opposite path, and change the nature of retribu-  
tion. If man chooses virtue, he is rewarded, if vice, he is punish-  
ed(76). By virtue of the freedom of choice, man becomes responsible  
for his actions. Moreover, since it is from man's actions that  
evil stems, and not from God, the good are justly rewarded and the  
evil are justly punished(77).

Reasons having been given that virtue is man's most desir-  
able aspiration, and that the justice inherent in God gave man  
the freedom of choice, Almosnino then enumerates and discusses  
the moral virtues. Fortitude is the first moral virtue in the  
Aristotelian system, and Almosnino, too, deals with it first. As  
all the Aristotelian moral virtues are the mean between surfeit  
and lack, so with fortitude, which is the mean between boldness and  
fear. Since all moral virtues are to be done as right reason may

direct(78), fortitude must also conform to reason. Thus, "killing a tyrant for the purpose of defending the republic" conforms to reason, but killing him "to reign in his stead" does not(79). When kings expose themselves to danger in battle, they do not conform to reason, because their people depend upon them for leadership. Such acts cannot be called fortitude. David would have sacrificed himself for Absalom, as an individual, but he could not do so as king. In his dirge over his son he wailed, "Would God 'I' (Ani) had died for thee"(80). By that he meant, 'I' as David, but not as king David. However, right reason does not apply to acts of idolatry, incest or bloodshed, for rather than to be guilty of any of them, man should rather sacrifice his life(81). Akiba showed the true mark of fortitude, when he awaited death in patience and in joy(82).

In discussing fortitude, Almosnino mentions five conditions which inhere in all virtues. The virtue must be understood, done with freedom of will, dictated by reason, result from a fixed habit, and done joyously. Aristotle lists three, while Almosnino adds two, namely, that the virtue must be understood and done joyously. Almosnino's two involve Jewish ethical attitudes, in stressing the distinction between right and wrong and love of virtue(83). Hillel is a good example of a man that understood fortitude, because his faith was unshakable, loved virtue, and accepted his lot in joy(84).

Almosnino considers and explains the nature of counsel, because no act of virtue should be undertaken, unless counsel is taken beforehand(85). Counsel cannot be taken on matters beyond man's powers, or out of his domain. Counsel does not apply, there-



fore, to permanent things, forced matters, natural phenomena, things known to be certain, chance happenings, and that which concerns others. It applies to acts within human power, that allow a reasonable time to accomplish the acts, that happen usually, and those that admit reasonable doubt. Counsel does not apply to matters that cannot be judged by the senses. The proposed act must have the means to arrive at an end. If the means are there, the doer must still know if he has the power to do the act. If the effort exceeds the utility that can derive, it should be abandoned. It must not bring him bodily or spiritual injury, and "above all, it must not injure others". Almosnino sees all of the above particulars in one sentence of the Psalms, "Grant thee according to thine own heart and fulfill all thy counsel" (86).

In discussing the virtue, temperance (87), Almosnino opposes the Epicureans, who advocated the quest of pleasure, by contending that "speculation and virtue are the natural delights of man, insofar as he is a man." He argues that temperance applies only to the curbing of animal appetites, and not to speculation and virtue. Like Aristotle, he describes the functions of the physical senses, by pointing out that temperance applies directly to touch and taste, and not to sight, hearing and smell (88). However, he urges that restraint be put on all senses, since all of them lead to sin and excess. He cites the anecdote of Demosthenes and the meretrix, to show that restraint averts regret. The orator, thinking the price too high for the favor he asked of the lady, replied, "I'll not buy regret that dearly". Almosnino also cites Seneca, who spoke against indulgences at banquets, and the Talmud that censured overindul-

gence in sex(89). Liberty that those enriched by their own toil,  
Liberality is defined as the mean between prodigality and  
avarice(90).It applies to receiving as well as to giving,though  
giving is the greater virtue,as it is in emulation of God(91).  
Giving must be for its own sake,and not in the hope of receiving  
praise,or becoming famous thereby.Not all giving can be termed  
liberality.A distinction must be made between giving joyously  
and justly. Acts that are required of a man come under the categ-  
ory of justice,even though they involve giving.If a man gives to  
a worthy cause,on the recommenadtion of another,because he does  
not know where to give,it is liberality with a touch of prodigal-  
ity.According to Seneca,liberality must be ordained by reason,  
justice and prudence.According to Scriptures,it must be enacted  
joyously(92).In receiving,liberality manifests itself by taking  
from those that are able to give,and from those whose gratitude  
he had earned. The liberal man makes a habit of giving,does not  
accustom himself to ask for gifts,and conserves the least signif-  
cant of his material goods(93).Thus,he is never put in a position  
of depending on others.He lavishes his gifts on the worthy,and  
supplies their needs,but consistent with his ability.

The truly liberal person acquires money to do acts of kind-  
ness,rather than to enrich himself.He is depressed if he cannot  
give as much as he would like to.He is saddened to learn that he  
gave to the unworthy.He is pained to learn that he had neglected  
someone worthy,and regards the recipient as if he were his part-  
ner.Almosnino believed that those that inherited wealth,should

show greater generosity than those enriched by their own toil, because, not having earned their money, it imposes less of a sacrifice. He urges responsible parents to teach their sons how to manage their estates, and how to and on whom to distribute charity (94). Of the extremes between which liberality is found, avarice is a greater vice than prodigality. Prodigality can be more easily corrected. The avaricious "perish in infamy and must pay Divine Providence, as we have seen often in our times; many whose estates fall to tyrants and usurpers" (95). Liberality means to dispense funds properly, as the Talmud says, "the salt of money is its proper distribution" (96).

In discussing magnificence, Almosnino opposes Seneca's "all virtues are possible to all men", and cites Aristotle's opinion to the contrary, that "for this reason a poor man cannot be a magnificent man" (97). When the magnificent man selects the right man to administer his estates, he does not question his spending on maintenance. Magnificence differs from liberality in magnitude, and manifests itself in spending on Houses of Prayer, and in support of teachers and students. This mean, between Niggardliness and Vulgar Profusion, shows itself only in the noble rich. It shows to advantage in aiding the Republic (State), in general benefits to the community, as the building of hospitals, bridges and harbors. Privately, it is displayed by the splendor of weddings, receptions for friends and gifts to servants. Spending on useless people, things, or on officials that squander public wealth, is a vice. Magnificence, is mainly shown in the manner of the munificence (98).

Magnanimity differs from magnificence, in that the former relates to honor, and the latter to goods (99). According to Almosnino, modesty has a similar relationship to magnanimity, that liberality has to magnificence (100). Magnanimity deals with matters on a grand scale, high dignity and high honor. Moses possessed this quality, that is composed of fifty characteristics, according to Almosnino. Some of these are mentioned by Aristotle on magnanimity, some in Abot (101), and a few, such as the fiftieth, "to avoid law suits", are probably from other sources.

The relationship of modesty to magnanimity is, that he that has perfected himself in the virtue of magnanimity, can aspire to the virtue of modesty. An extreme of modesty is ambition, wherein a person yearns for honors beyond his just deserts (102).

Humility is the mean between great anger and the complete absence of anger. Reason is not corrupted because of justifiable anger. The meek heed the angry rebuke of the wise<sup>103</sup>, forgive others their sins, but show the cruel no pity. Almosnino agreed with Cicero's "Man has just cause for vengeance", and argued that in justifiable circumstances Israel was commanded to take vengeance (104). He contended that "anger is necessary to draw out the pain", and refuted Seneca's "anger is never good". He conceded that "excessive anger is reprehensible".

As stated above (105), the Aristotelian frame is filled with the observations of others. To explain the mean between anger and its denial, Almosnino cites the four natures as described in Abot (106), and discussed by Avicenna, namely, the sanguine, irate, melancholy and phlegmatic types. As meekness and greatness go hand

in hand(107), anger should be controlled, as it breeds haughtiness. If the irate man achieves greatness, it is a greater accomplishment, than were the phlegmatic to do so, because of the latter's natural advantage(108). This does not mean that the penitent outrank the non-violators in virtue. Quoting two contradictory statements from Maimonides(109), that, "his virtue is greater than those that never sinned", and "the worthy soul will not yearn for any of these(sins)", he concurs with the latter, that the pure outrank the penitent in virtue. However, he allows that the penitent outrank the pure in "the virtue of suffering"(110).

Affability, the mean between being overcomplaisant and contentious(111), reveals itself in the castigation of other, which is done only when necessary, and then by inflicting the least possible hurt. The affable avoid unworthy conversation, speak with dignity, and with each according to his station. When the conversation inevitably turns disagreeable, the affable will seek the means to reduce the ill-will generated.

According to Almosnino, truthfulness exists in thought, speech and deed. Aristotle spoke of men speaking, acting and living the truth(112). In the extremes are those that praise themselves beyond their worth out of pride, for gain, or to be honored. The hypocrite that speaks of himself modestly, to draw praise from others, also belongs there(113). God is pure truth(114), followed by the truth of science and doctrine, truth in conformity with understanding how to govern life, conforming to Justice in government(115), and

truth which is the habit of the virtuous soul.

Lies result from not knowing the truth because of ignorance, because the truth is concealed, because the truth is denied, and because of contradicting the truth. Is it permissible to lie for the sake of peace? "When God made the miracle, contrary to nature, the same universal nature of the object that inheres in it from the Creation, obliges it to obey the opposite law when the Creator ordains it" (116). Similarly, though lying is a vice, when justice and peace require it, it is permissible to lie. Truth is a moral rather than an intellectual virtue. When Adam violated God's command and ate of the fruit, he learned the true difference between "good and evil", and not between abstract "truth and falsehood" (117).

Courtesy is the mean between being excessively stern and excessively jocular (118). Laughter and joking can be good for the body and the soul, but buffoonery is demoralizing (119). The hermit and the buffoon lack courtesy. The former wishes to escape society, and the latter "seeks to escape serious human conversation". The courteous man is a sober individual, who instructs even when he jests. Those that habitually incite others to laughter are buffoons. "Farces are written by prudent men, and those that hear them derive a benefit. Dancing and joking, where it is proper, are not only not odious, but praiseworthy". A courteous man is not a slave to his appetites, speaks that which is pertinent, is agreeable, and orders his speech so that he is eloquent and brief. He obeys the Divine precepts, so that others come to respect and emulate him (120).

In discussing Justice, the eleventh of the Aristotelian virtues, Almosnino stresses the Jewish aspect, that human justice reflects Divine justice. Man, who "walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness", should therefore emulate "the righteous Lord (Who) loveth righteousness" (121). Justice is one of the cardinal virtues necessary to preserve the Republic (State). Almosnino also uses the term Republic in referring to the Jewish community of Salonika. According to Cicero, justice includes the following: justice in religion, wherein nature demands that man honor God; in piety, that children honor parents; in reverence, that citizens honor heads of states; in gratitude, that neighbors honor each other; in natural law, that all deal honestly and defend the right. Almosnino understood Aristotle to conceive of justice as being legal, social and commutative. It is also the mean between doing and suffering injustice.

In dispensing justice, judges should not consider the rank of a person (122). The term Elohim is applied to God as well as to them. Therefore, as God is incorruptible, so, too, must they be. The Pythagorians took commutative justice literally; the Jewish attitude is opposed to their view (123). Almosnino contended, that in legal justice, "at times a judge must rule against the laws", and consider the times and conditions (124).

Of all the moral virtues, friendship is the noblest, and it "is natural in man" (125). The conservation of the Republic depends upon it, "for in friendship men help each other, which is not so with justice". Cicero contended that friends are necessary, for the rich to communicate their likes, and the poor their dislikes.

The Scriptural "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself", implies that the loved be like the lover, that the welfare of the friend be sought, and that the friendship be open and demonstrative (126). He that likes a friend for his usefulness, or the pleasure of his company, does not like him purely for friendship's sake (127). "Such friendships", says Almosnino, "are accidental and last as long as the pleasures". Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, promised to pay a musician a great sum of money for entertaining him. After the concert, he retracted, and claimed that the musician enjoyed the hope of being paid, as long as Dionysius enjoyed the music.

True friendship survives only because of the good character of the friends, and not for any other reason (128). The friendship must go through a test of time and circumstances; according to Aristotle, "until they have eaten the requisite quantity of salt together" (129). The friendships between David and Jonathan, and Cicero and Siphion were of that nature, and could not be corrupted. Seneca believed that not even the heavenly constellations could take back the gift of friendship, once bestowed upon two people. True friendship even transcends the grave. Ruth's vow to Naomi, that "if ought but death part thee of me", can only be construed to mean corporeal separation, but not spiritual. Minandro, the Greek, deemed a person most fortunate, if he had one friend. Friendships between father and son, husband and wife, young and old, employer and employee, however, are predicated on different motives, and do not equal the love of true friends.



It is better to love than to be loved, though the common people would prefer to be loved and honored, rather than love and honor. True love is natural. A mother loves her infant, though she knows it does not love her. Almosnino interpreted Solomon through Avicenna. Solomon compared love to water (130), because, according to Avicenna, elements are simple bodies and are incorruptible; friendship, too, is indestructible. Love of God is the highest delight and the end of all ends (131). Almosnino's virtues cannot be separated from the love of God. He asserted, therefore, that "these virtues have other meaning in our Holy Law, than in philosophy" (132).

The intellectual virtues that follow, also have a different significance in Judaism than in philosophy, according to Almosnino. Aristotle maintained that "truth and falsehood must be the good and bad of the Intellectual operation, which is purely speculative and concerned neither with action nor production". In Judaism, the whole purpose of speculation is that it lead to action. The intellectual virtues are discussed, because they bear on moral action, and because moral choice is dependent upon the intellect (133). The moral virtues are of the will, and the intellectual virtues are of the understanding. Theoretical understanding (entendimiento teorico) deals with universal matters, if they be true or false. Practical understanding (entendimiento practico) deals with human affairs, if they be possible or not possible (134).

Of the five intellectual virtues, Almosnino terms three theoretical and two practical. The theoretical are understanding, science and wisdom. The practical are prudence and art. Understand-

ing is man's native intelligence, which Aristotle calls Intuition. Knowledge (science) means to know things by their causes, which Aristotle explains as that which is capable of being taught. Wisdom is gotten through syllogism, when the premises and conclusion are understood. It is known in Aristotle as science, or the equivalent to Intuition and Knowledge. Prudence is speculation calculated to bring the action to a useful end, whereas Art speculates on making the deed perfect. Aristotle terms these two, Practical Wisdom, which has as its object that which is good for man, and Art, which has to do with contrivance.

When Almosnino differentiates between God's eternity and the eternity of the world, the differing significances of Jewish intellectual virtues and Aristotle's can be understood. Only God's eternity is absolute, the rest are similar and relative, in the manner that man's intelligence resembles God's (135).

Art, which seeks perfection, implies the perfection of the work, the material and the artist. It also implies the possession of the intellectual virtues, without which the practical intellectual virtues cannot function. Bezalel succeeded so eminently in constructing the Tabernacle, because he was gifted with all of the intellectual virtues (136). Prudence considers human good and usefulness, rather than perfection. It is similar to temperance of the moral virtues. When temperance is corrupted, then prudence is lost.

Understanding is the first step, and the source of all the

Wisdom comes only through calmness; therefore, wine should be the intellectual virtues(137). The relationship of the intellectual virtues to each other, simply stated, is that science follows from understanding, as wisdom follows from science. Wisdom has truth as its object, prudence judges what is best for man, and art seeks perfection. One should not drink in public, especially in

The practical virtues referred to above(138), are dealt with in the first treatise of the Regimiento. They follow the moral and intellectual virtues in this thesis, because they do not fit into the Aristotelian pattern as the others do, and because the treatment of them is not much more than a rearrangement of what his predecessors wrote on the subject. Their purpose is to help in the destruction of animal lusts, which is requisite to the acquisition of virtue(139). Continence in eating is manifested by eating at appointed times, by not being the first to begin unless in the presence of persons of lower rank, by eating in repose, by not casting avid glances at the food, and by keeping one's hands close to one's plate. Should not sleep in such places where he is

It is advisable to accustom oneself to a one course meal, as a variety of courses damage the stomach, disquiet the spirit, coarsen perspicacity and retard the understanding(140). Avicenna advised against eating hurriedly, looking into the faces of others, or loading the stomach with food. Sweet and fatty foods should be avoided, because they dim the vision and injure the understanding. The evening meal should be smaller than the midday meal, for that makes for easier study in the evening. The purpose of food is to maintain good health(141). Doctors say, that sleep should begin

Wisdom comes only through calmness; therefore, wine should be denied to young men before they marry, as "it adds fire to fire". According to Avicenna, wine drinking retards progress in the sciences. Water should be taken an hour after the meal, as "it disturbs the chyle", and common colds result in the winter and indolence at all times. One should not drink in public, especially in the presence of important people, excepting at mealtime. Drinking during study hours creates a mood of lethargy.

Sleep is a suspension of feeling and voluntary movement. It is a time for bodily rest. One should sleep "only as much as is necessary for the health". Almosnino compared sleep in its microcosmic function to the macrocosmic function of vapor, or evaporation. The quicker the digestion, the easier it is to keep awake. According to Algazali, "sleep comes to repair the damage done to the body during the day". Avicenna taught that "oversleep brings laziness and negligence of virtue". He therefore suggested eight hours for sleep, eight for work, and eight for eating, drinking and speculation (142). One should not sleep in such places where he is likely to be seen, nor submit to his passions in the night.

Because study at dawn is advantageous, as "the vapors that rise from the stomach" to the brain had already been purified, Almosnino differed with Maimonides and contemporary physicians, that it is good to sleep into the day. He gave some justification to Maimonides' point of view, because "el doctissimo Rabbenu Moshe sought what was best for the health", whereas Almosnino recommended what was "the proper path at the expense of least convenience" (143). He sided with "what most doctors say", that sleep should begin

while lying on the right side, on the left until midnight, and then on the right side again until the end of sleep, though it opposed Maiminides' view. One should not sleep in a bed that is too soft, nor should the room temperature be too warm in the winter, nor too cold in the summer, so that the flesh does not become spongy, but remain solid. A young man should learn to emulate Diogenes, by learning to endure the heat in the summer and the cold in the winter. It is advisable to go to sleep at least four hours after eating, so as not to injure the brain. As sobriety in all matters is advantageous, one should lie quiet for a while after awakening. Perfumes and cosmetics should be avoided, as they tend to corrupt the soul.

It is essential to the acquisition of virtue, that "one should not leave home too often, but only out of necessity, as idleness is the mother of all vices and the great corrupter of virtue". Life becomes filled with anxiety and confusion because of idleness. It was because of the perseverance and consistency of the Jewish sages, exercised from their early childhood, that their lusts were forced to yield to their passion for study and virtue. They were therefore graced in their old age (144). "Misfortune visits the aged as a result of idleness". Almosnino repeated what the Talmud says on the subject of how to show respect for men of rank, while walking with them, or being with them during prayers (145). He adds that "one must not brush his teeth nor pare his nails in the presence of others, as it is disrespectful" (146).

Almosnino divides speech into four categories; words said in

Notes on ALMOZNINO'S ETHICS

derogation of others, that redound to the injury of the speaker when gain or advantage is the motive; words said in derision of others with no hope of any gain, and bring the same fate; gossip to pass the time lowers the dignity of the speaker, and future credence is denied his words, and words that speak well of others that net just reward. As "speech is the ambassador of the soul", brevity should be cultivated. "There is one thing about the Turks that is nice", says Almosnino, "and that is their brevity in speech and writing. That is because they employ Arabic, which has the elements of the Holy Tongue, and which no other language can emulate" (147). To learn the art of good speech, a young man must especially "submit to the correction of his teachers".

The moral, intellectual and practical ethics of Moes Almosnino are Jewish in essence. He gave Jewish ethics added support, by showing that it was homologous to the worth and value of the reasoned ethics of Greek, Roman and Arabic philosophers. Whereas Almosnino's Hebrew ethical writings are Jewish almost in their entirety, and his theological dissertations expound ethical principles, his Regimiento de la Vida has plan and system. Although his ethics correspond to the ethics of non-Jewish philosophers, it has a beyond the human relationship; it is tied to the essential force of the universe, to God.

(17) Ibid. p. 242. According to Almosnino Amistad (friendship) and Amar (to love) are one and the same, "—hence, the friend loves."

(18) Ibid. pp. 242-243

Notes on ALMOsnINO'S ETHICS

- (1) M. Almosnino, Regimiento de la Vida (Salonika, 1564, in Hebrew characters), (Amsterdam, 1729), all references to latter edition.
- (2) M. Almosnino, Yede Moshe, a commentary on the Five Scrolls, (Salonika, 1572), Pirke Moshe, a commentary on Pirke Abot, (Salonika, 1563), Tefillah le-Moshe, on the utility of practicing the precepts of the Torah, (Salonika, 1567), (Cracow, 1590, 1820), Meamez Koah, 28 sermons and eulogies, (Venice, 1588)
- (3) Almosnino, Pene Moshe, a commentary on Aristotle's Ethics, (cf. M. Steinschneider, Heb. Ueber, 215), Migdal Oz, a commentary on Abu Hamed Algazali's Kawanot ha-Filosofim (cf. M. Steinschneider, HEB. UEBER, 322). These two mss. were not available to me.
- (4) Regimiento, Prologue, "--because the knowledge of Hebrew is scant."
- (5) see pp. 37-8
- (6) Regimiento, Prologue
- (7) Meamez Koah, p. 16, Sermon #2
- (8) ibid. p. 22, Sermon #3
- (9) Regimiento, pp. 1-2, "No con quien nascas, sino con quien pasces."
- (10) ibid. p. 1
- (11) ibid. p. 16, "some interpret (Lev. 19:32) אמני ליבה תקום והנרת arise before you are old and perfect yourself, so that you look venerable in your old age."
- (12) Tefillah le-Moshe, p. 34
- (13) Yede Moshe, Cant. Cantor., p. 8
- (14) Regimiento, Prologue, "--for if the Law and Israel are always together, the whole purpose of creation is realized."
- (15) ibid. pp. 1-80
- (16) ibid. pp. 81-202
- (17) ibid. p. 245, According to Almosnino Amistad (friendship) and Amar (to love) are one and the same, "--hence, the friend loves!"
- (18) ibid. pp. 202-288

- (19) Aristotle, Ethics (in Regimiento), pp. 38, 93, 96, 106--  
De Anima " pp. 90, 116, 117----  
Politics # p. 93  
De Somniis " p. 32
- (20) Regimiento, p. 235 (Sixth Century, B.C.E., author of apothegms)
- (21) ibid. p. 13, "--el sagissimo rey."
- (22) Ibid. p. 55, (from Plato's Phaedo)
- (23) ibid. p. 36, (Wherein the 'father of medicine' served Almosnino in practical ethics)
- (24) ibid. p. 233
- (25) ibid. pp. 16, 275, Ref. to Plato's Republic and Phaedo
- (26) ibid. p. 120
- (27) ibid. p. 6
- (28) ibid. p. 277, Ref. to Elements, Almosnino discusses the value of Geometry in studying parts of the Talmud.
- (29) ibid. p. 115, in opposition to his doctrines.
- (30) ibid. p. 8, Parallel Lives
- (31) ibid. p. 4 Handbook
- (32) ibid. p. 106
- (33) ibid. p. 106
- (34) ibid. pp. 203, 238, 247, 275
- (35) ibid. pp. 4, 7, 122, 126--
- (36) ibid. pp. 21, 36, 41--Canon of Medicine
- (37) ibid. pp. 34, 277, 278, Kawanot ha-Filosofim
- (38) ibid. p. 278
- (39) Maimonides, Moreh Nebukim (in Regimiento) pp. 14, 34, 84, 87---  
Mishne Torah, # pp. 19, 36, 40, 41---  
Shemona Perakim, p. 179
- (40) Regimiento , pp. 128, 212, 260
- (41) ibid. p. 278
- (42) ibid. p. 87



Notes on ALMOSNINO'S ETHICS (3)

- (43) ibid. p.84 (cf. Steinschneider, Heb. Heber. 215) This work has not been published .
- (44) ibid. p.24 (cf. Steinschneider, Heb. Ueber. 322) This work has not been published.
- (45) Abot, Ch. 4:1
- (46) Regimiento, p.100
- (47) Ber. 22a *שלא יבאו תלמידי אבותינו אלא ללמוד ולא ללמד*
- (48) Deut. 25:17
- (49) Regimiento, p.169
- (50) Ps. 11:7
- (51) Regimiento, p.205
- (52) Moreh Nebukim, III, ch.19: Shemonah Perakim, Ch.8: Regimiento, p.83
- (53) Aristotle, Ethics, trans. D.P. Chase, (N.Y.C., 1950, E.P. Dutton)
- (54) p.50
- (55) Regimiento, Prologue
- (56) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.34
- (57) Regimiento, p.77 "The undisciplined appeal to music and entertainment in vain to drive away their sadness".
- (58) ibid. p.37, "--and this is how vice grows, because they were not indoctrinated with virtue." : ibid. p.81: Meamez Koah, #5
- (59) ibid. Prologue, B. Bat. 110a , *היה בנין צומחין מאין חסד, חסד*
- (60) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.9 *שעושה אלה צדיק שוב צדק באמת*
- (61) Regimiento, p.5
- (62) ibid. p.47
- (63) ibid. p.113
- (64) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.17, Sab. 88b *חשוב מאד להקביל וללמוד ביסודות*
- (65) ibid. p.23
- (66) Regimiento, pp.17, 261, Prov. 3:6 *בשם צדיק צדקה, והוא יולך אחרות*

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S ETHICS (4)

(67) ibid. p.82, Jer. 2;L9

כ"ג ונתן עסקן אור 3

(68) Yede Moshe, p.3b.

(69) Regimiento, pp.82,258

(70) Tefillah le-Moshe, pp.13,34

(71) Regimiento, p.67

(72) Ibid. p.2 "True happiness is spiritual, called the wealth of the soul--those that contemplate universal matters, ignore specific things--it is of the persons themselves."

(73) ibid. pp.5-6, "Fortuitous good is not good nor evil in itself, except by the esteem that man attaches to it, and the use to which it is put".

(74) ibid. pp.6-9

(75) ibid. pp.83-4, "Let me warn you not to believe that man is born virtuous or evil--that he is forced in all his acts".

(76) ibid. pp.85-7, "But if a man looks at another doing an act, his looking did not force the doer--his freedom of action is not taken away".

(77) ibid. pp.88-92, Lam. 3:38

נפשי תליון לא אגזא והטאקו

(78) Aristotle, Ethics, 1114b,44; Chase III, p.61

(79) Regimiento, pp.95-6

(80) II Sam. 19:1

(81) Tosef. Peah, 1:2,

אם אלה צדקים (פירוש) מן האדם קטן המה  
אם אלה צדקים ואלו אדם גדול ואלו צדקים

(82) Ber. 61b.

(83) Aristotle, Ethics, 1114b,38-44; Chase, III, p.61

(84) Ber. 60b.

והוא הנהו העקל - אומר מוקטנו לאון זה קטן ביה  
א"ק אצמא קרן על הוצע שלם למקור על העוב

ibid., 54a.

(85) Regimiento, pp.111-4

(86) Ps. 20:6

(87) Aristotle, Ethics, 1117b,34; Chase, III, p.71

(88) ibid. 1118a,30-1; Chase, III, p.72, "--it is not in the lowing of the ox but eating him." Regimiento, p.116, "The lion likes to hear the voice of the ox to eat him."

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S ETHICS (5)

- (89) Sanh.107a אורח קטן יש באדם מרעיון למע, ומקומו רע
- (90) Aristotle, Ethics, 1119b, 34: Chase, IV, p. 78
- (91) Regimiento, pp. 123-5; Deut.28:9 דענה בצנינו -
- (92) Deut.5:10 Sot.14a זכ אפטר זו מאדם זולק אמו הגיונה? אפא וכו' זכא ירצ זכק בתקיו, כי קצו הנקר קפה
- (93) Gen.32:24 וימדי אור כי אשכאן עיין קש"ו, תדומה והמטאטף זכר זכנו כיו אטר, ונשד מכאן זמניה מכאן
- (94) Regimiento, pp. 127-33
- (95) ibid. p. 136
- (96) Ketub.66b סו"א מאה מאון סו"א, in the anecdote of Nakdimon ben Gurion's daughter and R. Johanan ben Zaccai
- (97) Aristotle, Ethics, 1122b, 40: Chase, IV, p. 87
- (98) Regimiento, pp. 138-43
- (99) Aristotle, Ethics, 1123a, 55: Chase, IV, p. 89
- (100) ibid. 1125, 1-4; Chase, IV, p. 95
- (101) Abot, VI, 5: Regimiento, pp. 144-61
- (102) Aristotle, Ethics, 1125b, 1-38: Chase, IV, p. 95; Regimiento, p. 163
- (103) Ecc.7:5, טוב דמור אהר חכמ
- (104) Deut.25:17, טובי אור אור ערע זק עמק
- (105) p. 54
- (106) Abot, V, 14, אכרד מבור בצבור
- (107) Meg.31a, כי מקום אור מוצא זכאם כי קרה למ
- (108) Sanh.99a מקום רבאי אהרד זמרון למ, צציקים איך עמ'א
- (109) Mishne Torah, Teshuba, 7: Shemonah Perakim, VI
- (110) Ber. Rabbah, 2; 7, כו קמסיהו למ צציקים אפ"ו
- (111) Aristotle, Ethics, 1126b, 18: Chase, IV, p. 98
- (112) Regimiento, p. 184; Ethics, 1127a, 55: Chase, IV, p. 101
- (113) Isa.29:13 דפ"ו זרעונו ככזוני זק רחוק ממנו
- (114) Jer.10:10 א"ו אכריבם אמת

- (115) Prov. 29:12 מוטל מקשהו קצתו לקר כח נלחמוו נלחמו
- (116) Moreh Nebukim, II, ch. 29 פתח ה' המגיד אורגו מלחמתו ה' ה'
- (117) ibid. I, ch. 2
- (118) Aristotle, Ethics, 1127b, 53: Chase, IV, p. 103
- (119) Abot, III, 14 שמוק וקלוה ראש מקיטום אור האצט איצו עכ"ל
- (120) Regimiento, pp. 198-202
- (121) Aristotle, Ethics, 1129a, 1: Chase, V, p. 107: Regimiento, p. 203  
Ps. 15:2
- (122) Deut. 1:17 עלו תבירו סתום ה' מלפני
- (123) Ketub. 38a  
Moreh Nebukim, III, ch. 41 אין מנה עין ווא אין ונפל מנה עין  
והמנה אורגו אין אופסר חזקוה כו"ל
- (124) Deut. 17:8  
Sanh. 7b: אקוה אור הארץ אורגו וקיה ב' מים ק' הם  
אם המנה' צ' יין לאויל האן פ' אורגו ק' אורגו ק' אורגו
- (125) Aristotle, Ethics, 1155a, 1: Chase, VIII, p. 222: Regimiento, p. 219
- (126) Prov. 27:5 סוקה מנהגו מנהגו מנהגו מנהגו
- (127) Plato, Lysis, p. 29: ed. I. Edman, (N.Y.C., 1927, Modern Library)
- (128) Abot, V, 19. ה' אהקה שמויה קצתו
- (129) Aristotle, Ethics, 1156b, 46-7: Chase, VIII, p. 200: Regimiento, p. 235  
wherein Almoshino paraphrases Aristotle, "--before men know each other, they eat a great measure of salt."
- (130) Prov. 27:19 כ' מים הקוק אפניו כ' ארם האצט ארם
- (131) Deut. 6:5-6, Moreh Nebukim, III, ch. 51
- (132) Regimiento, p. 263
- (133) Aristotle, Ethics, 1139a, 42-58: Chase, VI, p. 140: Moreh Nebukim,  
I, ch. 2: III, ch. 13
- (134) Regimiento, pp. 263-4
- (135) Gen. 1:26 נ' אורגו אורגו כ' ארם כ' ארם
- (136) Ex. 35:31-2 ויטא אורגו ח' א' ק' אורגו ק' אורגו  
אורגו אורגו -

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S ETHICS (7)

(137) Prov. 16:22

מקור חיים על תפילין

(138) p. 51

ALMOSNINO'S THEOLOGY

(139) Tefillah le-Moshe, p. 18 : Tamid 32a.

מה יסלק אדם וחי'?

meaning, death of lusts.

(140) Regimiento, pp. 17-19: Mishne Torah, Hilkot Deot, Ch. v

איוון אולם

(141) Prov. 13:25

כאן גרסו אולם אולם

(142) Mishne Torah, Hilkot Deot, 4:4

אולם אולם אולם

(143) ibid.

כפי שנתנה, משהיה שנתנה עז לאלהי ישראל

(144) Sab. 152a

האניני חכמים כל זמן שמקומו מנהיג ויסקר קה' קה'

(145) Ber. 27a

(146) Regimiento, p. 51

(147) ibid., pp. 62-3

## ALMOSNINO'S THEOLOGY

### Chapter IV

Some aspect of the theology of Moses Almosnino is manifest in all his works. Not even his Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinopla, a book of historical tableaux on the capital city and the Ottoman Empire, is entirely free of it(1). He discusses Jewish concepts of theology, as found in the Talmud and as developed in rabbinical literature. Major sources of his theology are in his sermons(2) and in his commentaries(3), and appear intermittently, each aspect suiting the subject of his dissertation.

His sermon consists of taking a Scriptural quotation as a topic sentence, which also suggests his subject. The premise of the subject is then examined, by posing questions and doubts concerning its truth and value. A series of Talmudic and rabbinical quotations and anecdotes follow with their respective explanations, that try to answer the doubts and questions he projected, in order to give the premise validity. Another characteristic of his sermon is, that the topic sentence recurs, when a set of arguments are exhausted, and what is left is the topic sentence to show its validity. The sermon, which contains some theological notion in its basically ethical body, inevitably ends on the opening quotation.

His commentaries follow the book examined, and interpret sentence by sentence. Almosnino's interpretations are invariably moralistic and ethical. They attempt, at times, to tie all the ideas of the book commented on, into one all-embracing proposition.

As an example, all the ideas in the six chapters of Abot, are related to the saying of Simon the Just(4). Thus, the observation of Simon the Just, "Upon three things the world is based, upon Torah, Temple service and the practice of charity", is expanded on and explained by Rabbi Hudah ha-Nassi(5), Akabyah ben Mahalalel(6), and all of the other Tanaim in Abot.

Almosnino did not write a systematic work on theology, as he did on ethics in the Regimiento. Philosophy played a major role in the development of his ethical system, whereas in theology he made use of it sparingly. Whenever he employed the findings of the philosophers, it was merely to fortify the views of the rabbis, or Scriptures, upon which his conceptions were based. Aristotle's ideas on love and friendship, as an example, are useful to Almosnino because they fortify the counsel of the rabbis, which in turn is the base for Almosnino's dissertation on the love of God(7). Indeed, philosophers held views that were opposed to Almosnino's concept of immortality(8).

His sources, accordingly, are almost entirely Jewish. Because Jewish theology treats of such subjects as the soul, immortality and of resurrection, Almosnino referred frequently to the Midrash Rabbah(9). Of the medieval Jewish writers, R. Shlomo Yizhaki(10), R. Abraham ibn Ezra(11), and Moses Maimonides(12), appear most frequently in his sermons and commentaries. Others of that period that are mentioned are R. David Kimhi(13), R. Jacob Tam(14), R. Asher ben Jehiel(15), R. Shlomo ben Aderet(16), R. Moshe

ben Nahman(17), and R. Levi ben Gerson(18). Those referred to of the period closer to his times and also his immediate predecessors are Hasdai ibn Crescas(19), R. Isaac Abrabanel(20), R. Joel ibn Shu'ait(21), R. Isaac Arama(22) and R. Abraham Shalom(23).

His theological attitudes and convictions were fixed at an early age(24). Almosnino relied more on an intuitive and Scriptural conception of God, than on philosophic speculation. He found and accepted God, rather than that he sought Him through philosophic probing. The existence of God and God the Creator, which was pondered at great length by the medieval philosophers, was simple and obvious to Almosnino, through Scriptures, intuition and the convictions of his rabbinical predecessors. Talmudic interpretations suffice to show that "the words of the Song of Songs refer to the existence of God, wherein God is the Holy of Holies"(25). As to whether God is the Creator of the world, or, the world was uncreated, Almosnino asserted that "Philosophers labor on the problem as to whether the world is eternal or created, but through religion, every Jewish child knows that 'In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth' "(26). His references to God as the "Cause of all Causes"(27), and the Prime Mover from Whom all motion emanates(28), are quotations from Aristotle and Maimonides. He recognizes God to be Omnipotent(29), Omnipresent, in space as well as in time, for "with God there is an eternal present, what the future hides from us God sees--"(30), and Omniscient, not only insofar as He is related to man but in the full universal



sense and beyond it. He believed that "God's knowledge of infinity is as different from ours as is day from night", and "with God all stands revealed" (31).

The concept of God's personal supervision (hashgaha peratit) he accepted on experience and faith (32). "I have seen", writes Almosnino, "God's personal supervision over each step, even though it seemed as coincidence in our eyes, and even contrary to our plans". His concept of God's personal supervision is not lost by the belief that some aspects of life are ruled by the stars and constellations under which man is born (33). God gives benefits to each according to his character. He gives benefits to those that can advance themselves spiritually, and withholds benefits from those that might impede their spiritual progress therewith. But having relegated some authority to the stars which rule through Him, He personally supervises when man improves his character, which is entirely within the province of man's free will (34).

When he speaks of "God mercifully supervises over the sufferings of Israel", as being implied in the first Alpha-Bet of the Lamentations, he leaves it to others to infer, whether or not God's supervision merely assumes the mitigation of Israel's sufferings, or also includes the amelioration of its lot. There is further refraction in Almosnino's Hashgaha Peratit, when he declares that "Great sufferings visit Israel when the Shekina ascends and leaves Israel", which is the meaning of the second Alpha-Bet of the Lamentations. Israel, because of its many sins, forfeits part of God's supervision, and lives partly on its own devices. God's "Hashgaha is

suggested with the assertion that the souls of the righteous were removed when Israel's sins are too many". Herein, God's supervision is entirely removed from Israel, because it did violence to basic moral principles, and is restored when Israel becomes penitent (35). Of God's other attributes, especially as they relate to man, he uses terminology in the characteristically rabbinical and traditional manner. God is the greatest of all healers (36), to "Whom we need but listen with our ears to be completely healed", God is just "and His decision is just" (37), God provides the needs of mankind (38), God as the Uniter of men and women in marriage (39), and others.

Almosnino believed that the soul of man "was hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory, as a part of God above" (40), and after the body and soul separated, "the soul returns to cleave to Him that sent it here" (41). The soul can survive death, if it perfects itself through the study of Torah and the observance of its laws (42). It can be stained and restrained from achieving perfection by the body (43). But as a sick body can be cured if it submits to medical authority, so can the ailing soul be restored by submitting to the Torah (44). By living in a mortal body and achieving perfection, the soul can rise to a higher degree of purity, after its release from the body, than before it entered the body (45). That, indeed, is the reason why it is sent down to sojourn in the flesh. Because the soul will be held to account for its actions on earth (46), the body should be supplied its barest needs (47), and the soul must make the body submit to its will, so that the soul is not deterred from achieving the highest perfection (48). Almosnino does not explain how men's souls that derive from "as a part of God above", can be

equated with the assertion that the souls of the righteous were created at the Creation(49).

Upon birth, there are three divisions of the soul, the vegetative, the sensitive and the intelligent. For purposes of sustaining life, the first two are more important than the last(50). The soul of virtue is born in the 13th. year of man(51). Among the soul's desires are the desire to exercise friendship(52), the striving after art(53), and theoretical and practical wisdom(54).

On the subject of transition and resurrection, he interprets the three considerations of Akabyah ben Mahalalel to refer to the three worlds, this world, the world of souls in the grave, and the resurrection(55). The first world is the world into which man is born, the second is from the day of death to the resurrection, and the third is from the resurrection to the time that the soul stands to be judged(56).

Pointing to the Scriptures as the source of all later authority, he draws his evidence from them to show the path of the soul's three journeys, but is vague otherwise(57). He intimates, however, that there is some kind of activity in the world of souls, though he does not say just how "souls achieve perfection in the other world, that they cannot possibly acquire in the flesh"(59) (58) Almosnino also hints at both the resurrection of the body as well as the continuation of the soul, that even the sinners return to Heaven after twelve months, but the bodies and souls of the Poshai Yisrael, those that defy the God of Israel, will be destroyed(60). While none can escape Gehenna, even for a brief period,

almost none can help but enter Paradise(51).

In the general sense, the righteous are rewarded in the world to come, while the evil-doers are punished(62). With respect to retribution, Almosnino's emphasis is on this world. The virtue that man acquires in this world, remains with him in the world to come. He that serves God out of fear, will be happy in the next world, but he that serves God out of love, will be happy in this and in the next world too(64). Almosnino disagrees with Gersonides, who agrees with Maimonides and Nahmanides, that the soul cannot achieve a higher intellectual reward in the world to come. Since man is unencumbered by the body and bodily needs, it can rise to a higher degree of spirituality and intellect and its attendant pleasures. The ten words whereby the world was created refer to the Ten Commandments, to reward or punish man for observing or violating them in this world(66). Divine Providence metes out retribution to man, measure for measure. Where the laws of man fail to protect the poor and downtrdden, God sends punishment on those that inflict suffering(67). "As we redeem captives", Almosnino urges, "so shall we be redeemed"(68). He interprets the third Alpha-Bet of the Levenbat- ions to indicate that "trouble comes to Israel in stages, like the stages of a fever(69), and that the evil carries the hidden punishment in having the power to infect others(70).

Punishment can be avoided by fearing and serving God, and by turning away from animal passions(71). Passion is the forerunner of sin, and since man is accountable for his deeds, it should be under

(13)

control(72). Punishment is not necessarily injurious. God in His love can cause man to suffer in order to improve him(74). In the case of a saint, even his life may be taken. This is done to pardon a perverse generation, so that the generation realizes that it was because of its perversity, that the saintly man was taken from it(75). As for the saintly man, no truly religious person rebels against the troubles that are visited on him, and he accepts them with grace and with gratitude(76), because of his overwhelming love of God(77). Some truly pious men fast, do benevolent acts and constantly pray to God, not to bring down punishment on a generation that deserves to be punished(78). Thereafter the gift was taken from them. The matter of completing the destined complement of years, why some die young, Almosnino resolves by saying, that "once perfected in virtue, it does not matter if they die young or old; their destiny is completed and God removes them, not to allow time in which they may be corrupted"(79). Eliphaz feared that Job could not endure his sufferings, that he might be corrupted and lose his perfection(80). Only then does God remove a perfect man from this world before his natural time, when a generation is so thoroughly corrupted, that its punishment becomes inevitable, so that it repents(81). As for the real reason why the righteous is tested by sorrows and misfortunes, that will be revealed to him in the future world(82). One called "Job", man of spiritual fire, as Gabriel and Michael. It was indicated above(83), that some of his theological concepts came through his sermons and commentaries. Almosnino's this is not one of their g... 87 ties(93), but man, she is composed

sermons and commentaries reveal less on the subjects of prophecy, angelology and miracles, than on the theological subjects already discussed. Of prophecy, he mentions that it is the highest quality that man can achieve, and that it cannot be practiced except in a state of tranquillity and out of joy (84). A prophet that achieves complete communion with the First Cause, is influenced by Him and influences others (85). The prophet points out to the people that misfortunes befall them only because of their sins (86), and by sins he means their deeds, thoughts and inclinations (87). Prophecy was also given to exceptional men among the Gentiles, until the Tabernacle of Moses was erected, and thereafter the gift was taken from them. Balaam was the exception, but he prophesied after the Tabernacle was erected only because he prophesied for the welfare of Israel. The prophets of Israel prophesied in purity and in truth, whereas the prophets of the Gentiles prophesied in impurity (88).

In a similar manner, Almosnino alludes to angels, in passing, only to give added weight to some moral principle, or that man aspire to be like the celestial beings. "Men must aspire", writes Almosnino, "to the highest dignity, as did our master Moses," who rose to the realm of the angels. The angels objected to man born of woman as being their spiritual equal (89). The angels resemble man's spiritual side (90), they live eternally (91), and are made up of two classes. Those called "Ish", man of spiritual fire, as Gabriel and Michael the archangels, are more exalted than "B'nai Adam", sons of the earth (92). Angels cannot distinguish between good and evil, as this is not one of their qualities (93), but man, who is composed

(1) *Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinople*, p. 33  
of spirit and substance, is capable of higher conceptions than  
(the numerical value of the letters of the Tetragrammaton)  
the angels (94). *See His Essence and Infinite Mercy*. (The Essence

Almosnino believed in the miracles of the Bible unreservedly, and thought that they were pre-ordained and influenced by the position of the heavenly constellations at the time of the event. He regarded natural events, in which Israel was saved from seemingly inevitable destruction, as a greater miracle than when the laws of nature were altered. This was because God changed the pre-ordained position of the stars, at the time when they augured misfortune. This was the case in the times of Esther (95).

Finally, he believed in astrology, that the destiny of man is ruled by the position of the stars, and how they combine and trine at the time of his birth. Consequently, he believed in determinism, but with reservations. Insofar as material things are concerned, he believed that "fortune comes from being born under a particular constellation" (96). This does not include man's choice to do good or evil, in complete freedom of the will. He stressed that "all things depend upon the constellation under which man is born, except serving God" (97). Despite man's destiny, which is determined by the stars, not even these can deny him his opportunity of reaching the height of felicity (98). The same is true with the converse, "that man makes himself evil and abominable by his own doing, though people are born under different stars and constellations" (99).

(18) *Ibid.*

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S THEOLOGY

- (1) Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinople, p.33  
"and not to exceed the number 26, the cipher in God's Name,  
(20) (the numerical value of the letters of the Tetragrammaton)  
which denotes His Essence and Infinite Mercy". (The Essence  
(21) of Omnipresence and God's Name as the Merciful God.)
- (2) Meamez Koah, Tefillah le-Moshe.
- (3) Pirke Moshe, Yede Moshe.
- (4)  
Pirke Abot, I, 2.
- (5) ibid. II, 1.
- (6) ibid. III, 1.
- (7) Pirke Moshe, p.81b. on quotation in Abot, V.19,  
Almosnino explains,  
בגבר אהבה הטוב והעדר והמוחל, והוא חזירה ערה זכר  
see Aristotle, Ethics, 1156a, 4-32, Chase VIII, pp.197-8  
Meamez Koah, p.9a  
ראו אמו ארוסטו קסטר המצוי להאקה השלמה  
כאן שגורה עם אמו אבז וזא קלים -
- (8) Meamez Koah, p.65b,  
הפסוקים שאנוק האמונים בהלכות ואנוק  
אושקום שהמין האנושי הם כאורחום בזה  
שהוא צדק אף חזק הבא
- (9) Yede Moshe, pp.16a, 22b, 23b, 26a, 44b, 49a-Meamez Koah, pp.64a, 77b--
- (10) ibid. pp.10a, 12b, 15b, 19b, 20b, 25b, 28a--ibid. 35a, 43b, 70b--
- (11) ibid. 16b, 18a, 22a, 26b, 27b, 30a, 36b, 37b, 42a---
- (12) ibid. 37b, Meamez Koah , pp.45b, 57b, 62a, Pirke Moshe, pp.2, 37a--
- (13) ibid. p.150a, Meamez Koah, pp.85a, 89a--
- (14) Meamez Koah, p.42a,
- (15) ibid.
- (16) ibid., pp.62a, 109b
- (17) ibid.
- (18) ibid.



Notes on ALMOSNINO'S THEOLOGY (2)

(19) ibid. p.109b

(20) ibid. p.90b

(21) ibid. p.57a

(22) ibid. pp.81a,82b

(23) ibid. p.109b

(24) p.27

(25) Yede Moshe, preface to Cant. Cantor; Yedayim, III, 5,

Shab. 35b

אפי"ר  
הכתובים קובץ ועליו קצת קצרים  
בשמה האמיתי קשה היה קובץ שיחתי להלוא זה

(26) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.44

(27) Regimiento, p.85; Aristotle, Metaphysics, p.218 (Random House, 1947, N.Y.C., R. McKeon ed.)

Mishne Torah, Mada, ch. I, 1.

(28) Yede Moshe, p.167a

הסבה הראשונה והעיקר הראשון - שפירא  
וגם מהסבה הראשונה

(29) Regimiento, p.86, "God has absolute power--"

(30) ibid.

(31) ibid. p.87; Meamez Koah, prologue.

(32) Meamez Koah, p.3.

לק מ"צ מה שמה דנפלאה - איוני בוכים  
הא שאל היה נמר - ור' אנה איוני

(33) Regimiento, p.10; Moed Katan, 28a.

אמר רבא, מון גני ומנוני יאון  
בבבואא גביא אמרא אלא במזא

Tefillah le-Moshe, p.39

(34) ibid.: Bera 33b.

הא קובי שמיו און מירא. שמיו

Mishne Torah, Mada, III.

כא הבכרים ופלאים כאלו בשמי  
נפש וצורה, ועם גיום ומכיון ארמי שאלו וביה העולם

(35) Yede Moshe, Preface to Lamentations.

(36) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.10; Isa. 55:3,

מהו אמי נסעם

(37) Meamez Koah, prologue.

(38) Regimiento, p.124

(39) Meamez Koah, p.41

הק"ה ממוז' זיווגים

(40) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.10b.

(41) Meamez Koah, p.85b.

(42) ibid. p.82a.

(43) Yede Moshe, p.14a

(44) Pirke Moshe, p.2b

(45) Meamez Koah, p.76b.

(46) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.10b

(47) ibid.

(48) ibid. 12a.

(49) Meamez Koah, p.75b

(50) Yede Moshe, p.179a

(51) ibid. p.180a

(52) Regimiento, p.245, "True friendship is the habit of the soul."

(53) ibid. p.268, "Art is the habit of the rational soul."

(54) Pirke Moshe, v. IV, on Abot, IV, 1.

(55) ibid. ch. III, on Abot III, 1

(56) ibid. p.64b.

(57) Regimiento, p.65; Deut. 6:24; Malachi, 3:23; Hos. 6:2

after which, Ber. 17a

(58) Meamez Koah, p.60b.

Jer. Shek. 11a

(59) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.58

ונלאר אב תלמי צנעה חמרה  
 גבול אמרה מצב טרוב החומר המדי  
 ומטרוב אונב מהלים השמחה  
 אב האב שומעם של פי סכרי הכפא אה  
 זאא וטה ומין ושמאן, כן בחאני הנפל  
 נפל באצמ בהמברה אה גאוף, כפי  
 זפלים מזהה לצורה ואלך ממה שפיהב או מקוצם, זעק "  
 זמצק זית צין ומלכון לפני מתימם  
 שראני זמח אאוף צי אמסנו  
 זמכניז המור כפי שפא יהיה מניד ומטרוב אהלמג  
 השמחה, האגרון  
 נפשו צציוזים נקראו משל ומי ככא  
 הנפל הצומח והנפל המרגל והנפל  
 פועל, ויחמקו עליהם אקיום אה פאמ, אהה העל  
 שפא שאין זמח של  
 היצר הטוב שנוצ שנו ית שנה שרוב הכאשן  
 אינהו חכמ  
 נסתה השלמה בקרים  
 ככאשן ככא ח"י השמה" אולע עולב פי, הכ' ככא  
 חלם הנשמות, והכא מואם המור עז כמן המגיה, והכ'  
 מעמדה כמן המגיה עז וזמכו כצין  
 יקמנו ונחיה  
 זמני  
 צצוקים וזקנים וזמנו  
 ש חמיו חכמ שאמרום כדר תכנה עמין  
 כמח"ש שמואלו כמאשור זמח קקד, שכו  
 מבוש ככבוז

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S THEOLOGY (4)

- (60) Pirke Moshe, ch1. כ' ושלמה ושלמה על עולם הבא  
פולס ושלמה אבן ספרדי ונשמע נלכח
- (61) Meamez Koah, p.17. ש' הצלה מצור אהר מסיבין לו
- Ked. I, 10.
- (62) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.18: Dan. 12:2 אלו הא"י שלום ואזיה ארופ'א  
ונצח' שהמרה למזב מצוה"ל אל אהר
- (63) Pirke Moshe, p.100b. המוט צחק קנפ'ל  
הצוקב מונאג המז'ה הלא - והצוקב מאהג'
- (64) Meamez Koah, p.53a. הוא מאולל הצולל וקצוק הקט
- (65) ibid. p.109b. לא'כו לשע' הנפש מושל' ושל'מ בהל'מ הקט  
(צחק' שנה י'ה ספר מ'ממו' צ') - לאוין בו א'כ'יה ושלמה -  
המנ'צים את הפל'ס - ונהנן מעו העל'ה
- (66) Pirke Moshe, p.68a. ch. V on Abot V.1. קצ'רה ט'ל'הו
- (67) ibid. p.67a-b. ש' אלה צ'ה הצוין הצ'ק י'ב נ'צ ה'אל'ים  
לאוין אלו י'צ'מ אצ'כ' נ'צ'ה הצ'י'נים ה'ע' שו'י'ג  
וקט' ח'י'ב'ם ח'כ' - מנה כ'נ'ע' מנה
- (68) Meamez Koah, pp.19-20 ש' המצור קט'ו / מנה כ'נ'ע' מנה ז'א' קט'ו
- (69) Yede Moshe, Lamentations, ch. "Ani HaGeber"
- (70) Extremos, p.23, "There are a few Jews (in Constantinople) so wicked that they are a contagious pestilence to the Republic and only God can reduce them."
- (71) Regimiento, p.80 "Fear God and serve Him and good fortune and glory will be your lot in life."
- (72) ibid.: Eccl. 12:14 כ' אהר מעלה אלקים ובא קמל'ה
- (73) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.17
- (74) ibid.: Prov. 3:2 כ' אהר אלק ואהב צ' ולי'ו
- (75) ibid. p.9; Moed Katan, 28 א'ץ מומן של צ'כ'קים מכ'רה
- (76) ibid. p.23: Sota, 5:5 לא צ'קב אונ' את הק'ל'ה אלא ט'א'הג'
- (77) ibid. p.24. ושל'מו' ה'א'ה'ה ת'אי ק'ק'ז'ה ה'יס'ור'ן ח'ס'כ'ר ק'ים י'פ'א'ג
- (78) Regimiento, p.26 :Extremos, pp.24-5
- (79) ibid. pp.66-7: Ps. 37:18 ו'צ'ד צ' ומו ת'ח'יים ונ'ה'ר'ם א'צ'וק'ם ת'ה'
- (80) Tefillah le-Moshe, pp.20-1: Job, 4:6. ה'לא יט'א'ף כ'ס'א'ף ק'מו'יק  
ומ' צ'כ'כ'יק

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S THEOLOGY (5)

- (81) Meamez Koah, p.125a. להשיל אינו אנוך מיעה אז הפסמים קוצם  
 זמנם אלוה, אומא כאלש יקרה אלה הוצו כ כן פרוש  
 קצקרוה שהוא אוקר מהם הוציום לקה אהצוילם אבני שילוחו
- (82) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.20. Isa. 35:5 באז תבקנה צוילי זללים
- (83) p.80 איון הנקאה שוכה
- (84) Yede Moshe, Cant. Cantor: Moreh Nebukim, II ch.36 זאמאן וצקוה
- (85) ibid. p.9a.
- (86) ibid. p.116a. של החד נמשק מזונועו ויהיה בנו וקקונו הלאו
- (87) ibid. p.119a למפוקים אונג מילה וציהם ואל האמו מלצ  
 צקורם וסוקם
- (88) Meamez Koah, p.35a : Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra, ch.1 קשה שמה מלה זמרו אמו
- (89) Tefillah le-Moshe, p.34: Sab. 88a מאבי השר, מה זלוצ אלה קוילי
- (90) Yede Moshe, p.15a ותמאבים הוצוים אלם הרוח
- (91) ibid. p.165b. וסלן אלם המאבם להם קויוים אלולם
- (92) Meamez Koah, p.66a יצו שיקצו זמלי מוים, ונקטוים קולם סוים  
 פאוים הקרסו - זלם אלו עם קע אלם
- (93) ibid. p.81b. כי איון המאן ווצד טא ורה, ואון זה מילה בו
- (94) ibid. 78b. היה מלש העה לצוה יוגר מהם
- (95) Yede Moshe, Preface to Esther, איון קל ספר הלה נס וקלא  
 ואון צקר ווצא מההקש הטקס, אולא הנס הלה קע צל  
 האמה - הויה אצו מל הנסיים - הפלא הלה נל  
 אפלו השמים וס צקאם
- (96) Regimienyo, p.3
- (97) ibid. p.10
- (98) ibid. p.12, "When you know the whole truth, it will be easy to be happy under all circumstances, no matter what constellation you were born under."
- (99) ibid. p.89.

## THE NATURE OF DREAMS

### Chapter V

Having been requested by Don Joseph Nasi, the Duke of Naxos, to write on the subject of dreams, Almosnino wrote the Un Tratado de los Sueños(1). The request came after a number of discussions on the subject, that the two had held. The last and most comprehensive of these talks took place in Belvedere, Nasi's palace near Constantinople, one Sabbath when Almosnino was his guest(2). Almosnino also claims that he "was moved to explain all this", because he dreamed of the Duke on two separate occasions(3). It is probable that the discussions of this ever-engaging subject, was given added impetus by the mystic movement, that was flourishing at that time in Safed and Salonika(4).

Almosnino attempts to explain the mechanics of a dream during sleep, and its effect on a person when he is awake. He describes the various types of dreams. He also discusses the rational and the irrational elements in dreams, dreams influenced by Divine Providence, and the interpretation of dreams. Lastly, he describes and interprets the two dreams he had about Don Joseph Nasi.

Almosnino's sources on the subject of dreams are limited, and his references are few. The Bible, particularly the book of Genesis, is the background for his thesis, in explaining the dreams of Joseph, Pharaoh and Laban. The Talmud, especially the tract Bera-kot(5) and the Midrash Rabbah(6), offer a number of observations, opinions and anecdotes, helpful to the development of his subject. Maimonides' Shemona Perakim and Moreh Nebukim (7) and Aristotle's

De Anima and De Somniis(8), give Almosnino's treatment its more philosophic foundation. He also refers to Ptolemy's Almagest(9), to Albertus Magnus(10), to Algazali(11), to Avicenna(12), and lastly to his own Regimiento(13), Pene Moshe(14) and Tefillah le-Moshe(15), which play minor supporting roles.

In order to explain the nature and the mechanics of dreams, the differing forms they assume and the relative confusion or clarity that pass through the mind, Almosnino had to refer to his Regimiento de la Vida, wherein he explains the condition of the soul during sleep. "When the soul is inactive and the senses are passive" writes Almosnino in the Regimiento, "that is what we call sleep"(16). There is, however, some awareness, if not activity or animation, "as Ptolemy explained in the first part of his Almagest"<sup>(17)</sup>. The Talmud says that sleep is 1/60 part of death. No number can be divided by all small fractions as can the number 60. As all fractions can enter 60 (completely), so can "the sleeping body receive impressions from all the senses (and not some or parts)", when sleep (or the state of unconsciousness) is 1/60 part of death(18). When the soul is awake and active, dreams and sleep vanish, and the impressions of the dream are attracted to the memory. After the imagination had acted upon the first impressions, new forms are created in the mind, "which is what phantasies are formed of, and which the vulgar call demons". Fear can stir the imagination further(19), and this activity can so absorb the soul, that vivid impression is deemed real(20). In this state of preoccupied with one thing,

from dream and from dream to reality".

"we do not see things before our very eyes, and at that moment the sense of sight is in vain". This phenomenon also holds true with the other senses, when the sense's natural function is diverted by an emotion, and it "occurs most frequently in women and children". "If someone imagines something and thinks of it often

Almosnino indicates that there are three categories of dreams; the simple dreams with uncertain elements in them, the simple dreams with the more certain elements in them, and the prophetic type dreams. The first two categories lend themselves readily to interpretation, and the third can be but partially analyzed because of the Divine influences that inhere in them(21). These dreams come

The first category includes three types of personalities that have these dreams. The first type includes "the warm-blooded individual(who) dreams of fires and snows, melancholy and fearsome", to that point of excitability, that he feels that he cannot flee nor rescue anyone. Also in this type dream is the individual of a cold-blooded nature, who "imagines himself in snow-capped mountains, suffering in the fear of storms and hurricanes". In both cases, "fear causes the corruption of rational thought". In this type dream too, is the person that feels exaggerated passion during sleep. All these frequently result in nightmares. All have the element of fear, or fear of consequences, carried into the unconscious by some conscious experience. Almosnino gives an example of this interplay of reality to dream to reality. "Even in infancy, when an infant chokes while sucking at the teats of his mother, or coughs because of the humid atmosphere, the experience can be transferred from

fear to dream and from dream to reality".

The second type of dreamer, in the first category, relates to him "occupied with profound thoughts during waking hours". These thoughts continue to repeat themselves during the day, and by force of repetition imbed themselves in the mind, and visit the dreamer during sleep. "If someone admires something and thinks of it often and at length, the thought becomes imbedded and can become an obsession", just as when "a person fears something, he will dream of it frequently"(22). As an example of the uncertain elements in the dream of this type of dreamer, Almosnino gives the motive of conquest. Whatever aspiration of conquest the person might be possessed with, he dreams of himself hungry and eating. These dreams "come from thoughts that repeated themselves during the waking hours, and then transfer themselves during the hours of slumber"(23).

The third type of dreamer, in the first category, belongs to "simple, weak people of vile nature, unimaginative and of few words". Because he possesses little imagination, and the original visualization of the idea, or picture, is not greatly changed by his imagination, "the forms in the dream are simpler and the content less complex". But this type of dreamer, as the above two types, dreams a simple dream, with uncertain elements in it, which lends itself readily to interpretation(24).

The second category of dreams contain the more certain elements. "As the uncertain dreams comes as a result of dreaming early in the night and mostly due to overeating(25)", the more certain dreams visit the dreamer "early in the morning, or just before dawn".

dream in behalf of Socrates, and in the case of Ibsen's dream to



send Jacob(28). God ordained divinely inspired dreams to pass through unworthy vessels, because no other natural way was possible. They are reasonably predictable and true(26). Despite this more natural and rational type of dream, the concepts formed during the waking hours, can also assume weird and strange forms during the dream(27). "Judgment and prudence are necessary", asserts Almoshino, "to separate the natural and rational" aspects, -from the strange apparitions. "Experience, calm and wisdom are essential in the interpretation of dreams", for as in astrology, the same dream experienced by two individuals cannot be interpreted in the same way(28). As the variations in the imaginations of two people, that dream the same dream exist, and therefore differences in the strangeness of the respective forms, so are there differences in the imaginations of the interpreters, though they interpret rationally and intelligently(29).

The third category of dreams are also simple dreams, but prophetic, whose purpose is "to avert public misfortune". Referring to Maimonides, Almoshino explains that one type is influenced by Divine inspiration(30), and aided by native intuition. Understanding, intuition and Divine contemplation and influence are the fabric out of which the prophetic dreams are spun, and woven into the cloth of ordinary dreams. It should be understood, that these sublime men have higher and more exalted qualities, than the average man(31). There are exceptions, as when divine visions appear to the unworthy; but on such occasions, Divine Providence works in behalf of noble souls. Such was the case in Abimelek's dream in behalf of Abraham, and in the case of Laban's dream to

fend Jacob(32). God ordained divinely inspired dreams to pass through unworthy vessels, because no other natural way was possible.

Prophetical dreams are no different than the dreams described in the first two categories, save only that in these, God inspires the dreamer. Almosnino explains that that is why the sages of Pharoah did not interpret well, because they thought that the King's dreams were simple ones, and without divine inspiration(33). Making his own deductions from Midrashic quotations, he adds that Pharoah himself considered his dreams as different than those he dreamed in former years. Pharoah felt himself influenced from outside of himself. The unsatisfactory interpretations of the King's savants, made the butler aware that there were supernatural elements in the king's dream, as there were in his own prior to that. When the butler made this known to Pharoah, and his own experiences during his period of incarceration, Pharoah had Joseph summoned. Joseph, after having heard Pharoah narrate his dreams, confirmed the existence of supernatural elements(34).

"The elements in a (Hebrew) prophet's dream are pure, unmixed with foreign elements, or double dreams", and unlike Laban's dream, which was an ordinary "dream in the night"(36), with some divine influence but no divine inspiration. Laban was God's instrument as was Pharoah. Pharoah's double dream had a particular significance. The cows and corn symbols in the dream, served to alert the Egyptians, to prepare themselves against the famine that impended; the cows symbolized sowing and the corns suggested reaping. "The dream of a prophet, in contradistinction, is inspired by God, but

without the interjection of foreign ideas, vain matters, or transposed and confused things"(37).

Drawing from the Midrash and Maimonides, Almosnino explains that the prophecy of Moses was of a higher degree than those of the other Hebrew prophets, in that Moses saw things in their pristine clarity, "as if through a sparkling mirror"(38). The others, on the other hand, received divine messages through allegories and visions(39). All the Hebrew prophets merited the gift of prophecy, because of their "thirst for justice", and were divinely inspired in their dreams, whether they dreamed in the night, or during the day(40).

The Gentile prophets, unlike the Hebrew prophets, were divinely influenced only in the night, and with partial messages(41). The "elements in the dream of a Gentile prophet were coarse, while those in the dream of a Hebrew prophet were refined". Their prognostication of evil could have come to them, because they were so directed by their constellation, "and the vision is not as clear as prophecy"(42). Moreover, even this gift was taken away from the Gentile prophets, after the Tabernacle was erected(43). Balaam, who prophesied after the erection of the Tabernacle, was only permitted to do so, because he prophesied to the advantage of Israel.

Almosnino discusses the various types of interpreters. "The sages weigh the causes of things to determine what will happen, even as the astrologers know from the position of the moon at the child's conception, when it will be born". A natural philosopher, on the other hand, would judge "from the complexion(material com-

position), disposition and other conditions known to him", how to interpret the forms and figures in the dream, and give them rational meaning. "Interpreters that are not sages, but are gifted with natural prudence, prognosticate according to antecedents, and interpret in the light of their own experiences". Joseph, the Viceroy of Egypt, presumably combined the qualities of an interpreter inherent in the sage, and a man of natural prudence.

"Joseph knew the past histories of the butler and the baker(44). He could conclude from the symbols in their dreams, as well as from the testimony of the butler"(45). Almosnino claims that the defection of the butler followed a pattern. He then has Joseph concluding, from the impending birthday of Pharaoh, and the fact that the butler still languished in jail, that the symbols of the three blooming clusters in the butler's dream, confirmed the previous deductions. Now, while the butler and the baker were equally guilty of defection and slovenliness(46), the king had greater need of his butler for state functions. Therefore, the basket symbols in the baker's dream, could not have been interpreted in any other way, except that they foretold of his doom. Moreover, while the dreams were similar, their dispositions were different. "The butler was a sensitive and imaginative man; the baker was a coward, who made inquiries only after the interpretation of the butler's dream sounded reassuring"(47). Moreover, they not only dreamed their respective dreams, but the interpretation of the dream of the other was revealed to each within his own dream. (48)

Continuing the subject of the mechanics of a dream, he men-

tions that Algazali and Avicenna had written on the subject, and that he expressed similar thoughts in his Pene Moshe. "I too have mentioned", says Almosnino, "that since the exterior senses are dormant, the interior senses experience indecision, and the degree of intellectualism and intelligence (possessed by the dreamer) play a role in uniting themselves with the dormant senses, to form a confused picture". This confused picture forms an imprint on the mirror within, and then the forms and figures transpose themselves. "If the imagination is a dominant one, the imprint on the mirror within becomes even more confused and blurred; for the imagination does not understand form, except through the external senses(49)".

Though intelligent people experience more natural dreams, which lend themselves more readily to interpretation, they are nonetheless not exempt from this phenomenon. During sleep, the imagination is freer than during the waking hours. The imprints that are guarded in the mind, even those seemingly forgotten during the hours of awareness, will be presented by the imagination, in whatever manner the dormant understanding links the elements. "Such is the texture of the dream, which is largely the work of the imagination". Notwithstanding natural and rational explanations, "the men mentioned in the Torah and of whom the Talmud speaks(50), could not have interpreted without the aid of Heaven". Despite the complex forms and the confused patterns, the interpretations of these dreams can safely point to future happenings(51).

As stated above(52), one of the reasons that prompted Almosnino

to write the Un Tratado de los Suenos , was that he dreamed of Don Joseph Nasi on two occasions. In his first dream of Nasi, it seemed to him that large, grated doors were being swung open. Within, he saw Nasi's wife, daughter and niece seated alongside each other. Also present were other members of the duke's family, and high dignitaries. Lastly, he saw the sages of Israel seated on an elevated bench. Nasi ordered that books be placed under the bench upon which the sages of Israel were seated, between his place and that of his brother, Don Samuel. Nasi then motioned to Almosnino that he be seated. *the dream was repeated (53). As for those*

Every sage had a beautiful esrog and a fresh lulab in his hand. Don Joseph then described the movements of the lulab, while chanting, "Let Israel say, that His mercies endure forever" (53). Those present responded, "Give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercies endure forever" (54). Almosnino's dream then vanished. On another day before dawn, he had the very same dream, with the exception that this time Nasi chanted, "Let those that fear the Lord say that His mercies endure forever" (55).

This is how Almosnino interpreted his own dreams of Nasi. The lulab was a symbol of Nasi's triumph, and with the help of Providence, he would continue to flourish (56). The esrog and the books signified that the children of Don Joseph and Don Samuel would be virtuous and learned. As for the women first seen near the grated doors, it meant that God would always protect and enlarge them. The response of the guests to Nasi's chants, implied Israel's gratitude to God for having sent a helping medium to Israel and its sages. Presumably, he meant Nasi, and the assistance

he gave to Jews and rabbis, especially to the Marranos that immigrated. The elevated bench was a sign that the Torah would be highly aggrandized. The repetition of the dream with a variation, could only mean that God had repeatedly rescued Israel, and would continue to do so, whenever and wherever Israel suffers.

Almosnino then concludes by saying, "I hope that all that I dreamed and interpreted will turn out to be so", because, as the Talmud says, he dreamed it of a friend (57), because he saw part of the interpretation in the dream (58), because he dreamed it before dawn (59), and because the dream was repeated (60). As for those elements whose interpretation was not revealed in the dream, Almosnino adds, "I divined the rest through my own weak judgment" (61).

Another dream of Almosnino is worthy of attention, though it is not mentioned in his Suenos, because it further reveals his concern with dreams, and because it tells of his negotiations with the Porte, on behalf of the Jewish community of Salonika (62). "On five occasions the matter (negotiations with the Porte) was nearly consummated, but not quite. On the eve of the 25th. of Shebat, in 1567 (63), my daughter bore a son in Adrianople, and I could not sleep that night. At dawn I slept for a brief while, and a sentence came to me in the dream. I recited this (Scriptural) sentence over and over again in my dream, at the top of my voice, until those that heard me, came to rouse me (64)..... That very day, I was ushered in again into the presence of the Divan, and this time, they (the rights for Salonikan Jews) were granted".

Notes on THE NATURE OF DREAMS

- (1) M. Almosnino, Un Tratado de los Suenos, (Constantinople, 1564), published with and appended to the Regimiento de la Vida.  
(22) ibid., pp. 143-4
- (2) Suenos, preface.  
(23) cf. Aristotle, De Somniis, p. 622, "From this it is manifest that
- (3) ibid., p. 159. Illusory movements--present themselves not only when persons are awake, but also then--which is called sleep".
- (4) S. Schechter, Studies in Judaism, (J.P.S., Phila., 1908), pp. 220, 225  
(24) cf. H. Graetz, History of the Jews, (J.P.S., Phila. 1949), p. 405
- (5) Suenos, e.g. pp. 146, 151, 161. 622
- (6) ibid., e.g. pp. 148, 152, 157
- (7) ibid., p. 140, ref. to Shemonah Perakim: pp. 151, 156, 157, ref. to Moreh Nebukim
- (8) ibid., p. 140, ref. to De Anima: p. 140, 141, ref. to De Somniis that different men are subject to illusions, each according to
- (9) ibid., p. 140. Different emotions present in him".
- (10) ibid. למה לא יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום
- (11) ibid., pp. 140, 149
- (12) ibid. למה לא יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום
- (13) ibid. Prologue, למה לא יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום
- (14) ibid., p. 149
- (15) ibid., p. 156 למה לא יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום
- (16) Regimiento, pp. 34-6, cf. Aristotle, De Somniis, p. 619 (Random House 1947, N.Y.C.) "But we have assumed that in sleep one neither sees nor hears".  
(35) Gen. 20:7; Gen. 31:24.
- (17) Suenos, p. 140
- (18) Ber. 57b. למה לא יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום
- (19) cf. Aristotle, De Somniis, p. 621, "--the coward when excited by fear".
- (20) ibid. "---that he sees the object of his desire."
- (21) Suenos, p. 141
- (22) Kishno Torah, Shema, ch. VII. למה לא יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום אשר יראו חלום



Notes on THE NATURE OF DREAMS (2)

(22) ibid., pp. 143-4

(23) cf. Aristotle, De Somniis, p. 622, "From this it is manifest that the stimulatory movements--present themselves not only when persons are awake, but also then--which is called sleep".

(24) Suenos, p. 145

(25) cf. Aristotle, De Somniis, p. 622

(26) Ber. 55b.

(27) ibid.

(28) cf. Aristotle, De Somniis, p. 623, "moreover, as we have said, that different men are subject to illusions, each according to the different emotions present in him".

(29) Ber. 55b. *ז' תחומות מתקיימין, האדם שלם למינות ידוני כלם שאי אפשר להם להאזין, וכן אי אפשר להאזין בלי צרכים גדולים.*

(30) Moreh Nebukim, II, ch. 41

(31) ibid. III, ch. 18

(32) Gen. 20:7; Gen. 31:24.

(33) cf. Midrash Rabbah, Mikez, 6

(34) ibid.

(35) Gen. 41:28

(36) ibid. 31:24.

(37) cf. Moreh Nebukim, II, ch. 41

(38) Midrash Rabbah, Vayakra, I, 14

(39) Moreh Nebukim, II, 45.

(40) Mishne Torah, Mada, ch. VII.

Notes on THE NATURE OF DREAMS (3)

(41) Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra, I, 13.

אין הקל"ה נאמר אף א"ה  
בא"ה בא"ה צבור וכו'

(42) Suenos, p. 158

(43) Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra, I, 13.

משמך המלך נסתקת  
מבני העם (עקביאלהם)

(44) Gen. 40.

(45) Midrash Rabbah, Vayeshev, ch. 88

צבור נמצא במקום פייזין פוטרין שא  
צבור נענו במקום פייזין פוטרין שא

(46) ibid.

שני האופים צבור נמצא במקום אלוסר'א שא

(47) Suenos, p. 149

(48) Gen. 40:5  
Midrash Rabbah, ch. 88

אולי כפועבון אמתו המלך והאן פה  
ל"א גר אבא אומר אלוס  
ופתבונה אלוס אקריה

(49) Suenos, pp. 149-50

(50) Ber. 55-7

(51) Suenos, p. 151

(52) p. 95

(53) Ps. 118:2

(54) ibid. 118:1

(55) ibid. 118:4

(56) ibid. 92:13.

(57) Ber. 55b

(58) ibid.

(59) ibid.

(60) Gen. 41:32.

צ"כ כמתי יפנה  
ואתם לאלה או חבנו  
ואתם לפרג במק אלוס  
אלה של אמריה  
ורא העלם האלוס

ALMOSSINO'S HISTORY OF HIS TIMES

Notes on THE NATURE OF DREAMS (4)

- (61) Suenos, p.162
- (62) Meamez Koah, p.5b.
- (63) Hebrew date used in the text, is couched in a Scriptural sentence of good omen וּמֵעַתָּה אֶרְבֵּי, wherein וּמֵעַתָּה has the numerical count of 328(5,328), or, 1567-8.
- (64) The sentence he recited (in full text) was from Deut. 33:29.

he wrote. Joseph von Hammer, who lived in the Ottoman Empire, used Almosnino's Katresos as source material(2). Heinrich Graetz praised his abilities as a historian, and said that he wrote "of the development of the Turkish Empire, with the pen of a master"(3).

The Katresos is made up of three libros (books). The first book deals with the extreme opposites in living, in the capital city of Constantinople. Among the twenty-six extremes that he discusses, are the subjects of climate, health, food supply, social life, commerce, politics, philanthropy, housing, population and Jews. The other topics on extreme opposites could properly fit into one or another of the subjects just listed.

In the second book, Almosnino tells of the death of Sultan Suleiman, describes the preparation for the funeral, and the funeral itself. He also lists all the kings of the Ottoman dynasty, and how he differs with Joseph Eubank, a Jewish historian, on the number of kings in the dynasty, and the years of their accession. Lastly, he relates how Suleiman succeeded his father

## ALMOsnINO'S HISTORY OF HIS TIMES

### Chapter VI

Between the years 1566 and 1568, while Almosnino was in Constantinople negotiating with the Porte for the reduction of tax debts, on behalf of the Jewish community of Salonika, he wrote the Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinopla(1). It is the only book on historical information that he wrote. Joseph von Hammer, the most exhaustive historian on the Ottoman Empire, used Almosnino's Extremos as source material(2). Heinrich Graetz praised his abilities as a historian, and said that he wrote "of the development of the Turkish Empire, with the pen of a master"(3).

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In the second book, Almosnino tells of the death of Sultan Suleiman, describes the preparation for the funeral, and the funeral itself. He also lists all the kings of the Ottoman dynasty, and how he differs with Joseph Hacoen, a Jewish historian, on the number of kings in the dynasty, and the years of their accession. Lastly, he relates how Selâm succeeded his father

Suleiman, and Selim's altercation with the Janissaries.

The victories of Suleiman and the victories of his generals and admirals are the subjects of the third book of the Extremos. In this last book, Almosnino also lists Suleiman's vizirs and muftis, and tells of the intrigues at court. Finally, he describes several of the public works that were constructed in the reign of Sultan Suleiman.

"All these things I saw a year ago, when I came through to Constantinopæ", writes Almosnino, "and I speak as a witness that saw it" (4). Von Hammer praised the authenticity of the things described by Almosnino as an eye witness. However, he did not accept Almosnino's accounts of some of the events in his times, as will be pointed out below. Merriman, who wrote on the Ottoman Empire of Suleiman, and used the original sources of the period, as well as some of the original sources used by Lyb- yer and Von Hammer, also makes some of the accounts of Almos- nino suspect and unacceptable (5).

Suleiman's first campaign in 1521, which resulted in the fall of Belgrade, that "unconquerable fortress well defended with arms and provisions", Almosnino treats with accuracy (6). The victories of Suleiman's generals, Ibrahim, Suleiman the Eunuch and Achmet, in Hungary and Persia, and those of his admirals, Khaifeddin (Barbarossa), Sinan the Jew and Piali, against Charles the V, at Tunis, Majorca, Naxos, Tripoli and in the Mediterranean, are faithfully though sketchily documented (7).

Almosnino On the description of Suleiman's second campaign against Rhodes, Almosnino is held to be correct in describing the theatre of battle, but incorrect in the strategy employed in the storming of that promontory fortress (8). Almosnino claimed that because "the walls could not be demolished, Soliman ordered that an artificial mountain of mud-dirt, that would stand higher than the wall" of the fortress be erected. Merriman's description of the strategy is that "It took the besiegers all the month of August, to get men enough to the ramparts to burrow under them" (9). In listing the ten victorious campaigns that Suleiman personally conducted, Almosnino did not distinguish between a military campaign and a raid. The Mohacs campaign culminated in a series of bloody battles, whilst the Vienna expedition which failed at the gates of Vienna, and which Almosnino claimed to have been a battle, was nothing more than a series of raids (10). Von Hammer also claims him to be wrong, presumably for that reason, in listing the campaigns of Suleiman as having been ten in number (11). On the other hand, it would seem that Almosnino did not make mention of some battles at all, and treated others as skirmishes (12).

Four other admirals served under Suleiman, besides Khair-uddin, Sinan and Piali. Almosnino makes no claim that they distinguished themselves, "except that they guarded the coasts against corsairs" (13). His account of Suleiman's ten grand Vizirs and ten Agas of the Janissaries, is corroborated by Von Hammer (14).

Almosnino treats all the other departmental heads under Suleiman in the same manner, giving them little space in his book, and telling of those that accomplished something, or did something singular. Piali, already mentioned among the admirals, was Suleiman's first Vizir; he is called Piri by Von Hammer (15).

The second Vizir, Ibrahim, "acted like the President of the Corte, for none did anything until he arrived. He went to see the Sultan at anytime that he wanted, not like his predecessors, oftentimes ate with the king, for they were like brothers". The third Vizir, Ayaz, was removed because of his indifference to the suffering of people, caused by the great fire in Constantinople in 1539. (16)

Suleiman's fourth Vizir was Lutfi, his brother-in-law. Lutfi protected the gold and silver miners against the corrupt government officials. The government guaranteed the miners their costs of operation and 80% of the metals mined. The officials let the miners incur costs without reimbursing them subsequently; they were justly dealt with by Lutfi. In 1540, he also protected those that trafficked in sheep and the sheep butchers, from the greed of officials in Constantinople. This sheds some light on the practices of the officials in Salonika, that ignored the privileges that Suleiman bestowed upon the Jews of Salonika in 1537, in exempting them from the sheep excise. Almosnino says of Lutfi, that <sup>he</sup> "was deemed more honest than all his predecessors" (17)

Of the muftis in Suleiman's reign, who were the high-

est religious dignitaries,"learned in the Alcoran(Koran) and in civil and criminal law,and for that reason called Mofti, meaning demonstrator,or who knows where the truth lies where there is doubt", writes Almosnino,"of two will I speak,who were sages".Kemal was the first,and he"answered questions put to him on the Law and Justice,and made a voluminous book out of them that serves as a guide," to the cadis(judges) of the kingdom.The last and the most eminent was Abu Sohud,whose tenure extended into Selim's reign!He sometimes answered 200 questions in the law a day,--and he did what ten judges could not do".Almosnino claims that he answered them instantly,and no contradictions seem to be found in all the cases he wrote down,"which was a sign of his marvellous memory".He also wrote the Heddix,a commentary on the Koran and dedicated it to Suleiman. It was finished a few days before Suleiman died. When the Heddix was presented,"the king arose to receive the book with open arms.Having opened it and read it,he raised his eyes to Heaven,giving thanks and praise that in his day,there was to be found a person so erudite,to do that which none of the ancient sages was able to do". Almosnino also writes of his own relationship with that mufti."Having known of my arrival,he sent to call me,to deal with some possessions he had in Salonika where some Jews dwelt.Showing me courtesy,as he did to all men of letters,he made me understand that to every sage,whatever his religion,he wished him well;and because he was informed about me,he of-



ferred me his help as far as is possible." At that time he discussed problems in Aristotle, Galen and of perspective with Abu Sohud(18).

Almosnino relates about how Selim I intrigued against his son Suleiman. The latter, finding himself in need of expense money for himself and his friends, appropriated some from the treasury. The infuriated father sent one of his captains, to present his son with gifts, but with secret orders to have him done away with. The Vizir counter-intrigued to spare Suleiman. At a later time, when the melancholy king repented and refused to see his ministers, the Vizir drew from the king the cause of his sorrow. He then tactfully revealed that Suleiman was alive, because not even the king's captain could have access to the prince, without first getting the permission of the bodyguards. Because of his having spared Suleiman, and because he tactfully revealed that Selim's poisoned gifts never reached Suleiman, Piali (Piri) remained as Vizir. Almosnino claims that Selim took Suleiman's act as "a form of disobedience and the beginning of rebellion", but later historians judge Almosnino's account as a fairy-tale(19).

Another intrigue tells of the Vizir Ibrahim. He gave lavish parties, where "the Sultan and his sons spent forty days". During the night festivities of these parties, "there were so many tapers that it looked like midday". Almosnino ascribed a son to Ibrahim, that he never had(20). Following his account of the execution of Ahmed Pasha, for having rebelled against Sul-

eiman in Egypt, he tells of the execution of Ibrahim. Ibrahim begged the sultan for his life, claiming that "Ottoman rulers reward their true servants, and thus it is written in the Ottoman Chronicles". The Sultan consulted with the Grand Mufti, who sensed that the king was troubled in his conscience. The Mufti advised him "to have him killed in his sleep, for that would be like killing a dead man, as sleep is a part of death". Moreover, since "Brahem (Ibrahim) was a Greek, a worshipper of Hercules, a betrayer of the king and a wastrel", there need be no regret. The Sultan ordered the statue of Hercules in Ibrahim's palace torn down, because it was an idol (21). This account is also branded a fairy-tale by Von Hammer (22).

Of the removal of Lutfi, Almosnino tells that because Lutfi's wife comported herself with haughtiness "and indecency toward him, in anger he lifted his hand to strike her". As many courtiers sought their own advantage, they told the king that Lutfi struck his wife, the king's sister. He was accused of lèse-majesté and removed from office; the wife was sent to the Serai of women. Merriman, on the other hand, claimed that because Lutfi intrigued with the Germans, Suleiman had him pensioned, because he was fond of him (23). Almosnino also writes briefly of the intrigue of Roxelana, Suleiman's favorite wife, with Grand Vizir Rustem, in having Prince Mustapha strangled (24).

After the death of Suleiman (25), "Mohammed Pasha, his court favorite, examined him", writes Almosnino, "had him embalmed as

was custom, showing wisdom thereby, as there was usually tumult when a king died, especially one that ruled over so many nations". He gave orders in the name of the king that the battle be pressed forward, and Sziget fell two days later. The death of the king could not be hidden too long, accordingly, a communication was sent to Selim, who was in Khara Hissar (26), and to the Buztanji Pasha, that preparations be made to receive the body and have the new king sworn in. As not even the courriers knew of Suleiman's death, the secrecy until the coronation was intended for purposes of maintaining national calm.

Almosnino described the bridge that was constructed across the Draba River, over which the greater part of the army crossed on its return to Belgrade. The details and dimensions of the bridge are not accepted by Von Hammer (27). Because of the width of the river, they made use of jaicas (barges) to construct the bridge. Though this seemed impossible, "men of credibility certified to me", that 25,000 men and overseers were sent to the mountains to cut the wood for the bridge. "It was a stupendous bridge operation, and no one had seen or heard of anything like it! After the army crossed over, the bridge was ordered destroyed, "so that the enemy could not use it, holding it for certain that no other monarch could make another like it".

The Prince arrived on the frigate Sopha, and was escorted to the king's chamber of the Serrai (palace). Almosnino explains that the ceiling of the king's chamber was studded with jewels,

and in the center was a diamond of 115 carats. This idea of setting the jewels in the ceiling and walls, was suggested by a Persian ambassador, so that visiting dignitaries could see the king's splendor at once, without resorting to bring them up from the vaults in cases, every time an occasion presented itself. There was also a throne in the chamber, and those ushered into the king's presence, would approach the throne and kiss his hand.

A proclamation then went through the city, which stated in effect, that "there was a good century, to the continued glory of our lord, king Soliman, who lived many years. May the prosperous state of our king, lord Sultan Selim increase!" Messengers were sent throughout the realm to publish the proclamation, so that calm would be maintained everywhere. On Tuesday, the 26th. of September, the king left the palace to be seen by the public, and proceeded to the Sepulchre of Job to offer sacrifices. These and money were distributed to the poor. On the following Thursday, he left Constantinople for Belgrade, attended by his father's friends (28).

Selim was dressed in a black burnoose and wore a small cap when the army brought the body of Suleiman to the gate of the city. As the army unfurled the flags and pennants, and the curtains of the hearse were drawn, Selim jumped from his horse and burst into tears. There was a fifteen silence and the pennants were pointed groundward. Thereafter, the new king donned a plumed cap, and dressed in a military uniform, he bestrode another horse, and the lords of the Porte did likewise. Suddenly,

they all shouted, "Live, live, King Sultan Selim". The band struck a triumphal air, and the king was accompanied to the palace.

Selim gave the Janissaries 2,000 aspers each, in accordance with Suleiman's will. He gave orders that his father be interred "in the royal sepulchre of the Marata, which Soliman had constructed, the most sumptuous built in this century". Selim remained in Belgrade, with a complement of his pashas and defterdars.

The body of Suleiman arrived in Constantinople on November 22, received by the Mufti, religious dignitaries and Schender Pasha of the Royal Palace, who were all in mourning dress. The most important officials lifted the coffin from the military wagon, and carried it to a hearse. The clergy prayed aloud and everyone walked after the hearse, until they arrived at the Marata. Over the casket of Suleiman, that was covered with a brocaded cloth, was laid his sword and turban. The "learned attended to" and concluded the obsequies (29).

On November 27, the Aga of the Janissaries entered the city, with all the squadron heads and troops marching five abreast, with rifles, swords, halberds, scimitars and standards. The death of Suleiman was forgotten in the rejoicing over the new king. Selim entered the city on December 5th., as everything and everyone was ready to receive him. "An adequate guard was stationed in all the streets that none could do mischief", and permission was given to everyone to move about freely anywhere.

At midnight, the two main gates, Adrianople and Seliverya, were opened, and many left the city to receive the king. Two hours before dawn, the kettle drums were sounded, and thousands stationed themselves on the route that the king was scheduled to pass, up to the Adrianople gate, through which he would enter. "It is said for certain, that from the wall, people formed lines three miles outside the city. About 200,000 were seated on the ground, or standing in the trees, on rocks and on battlements, and many trees broke from the weight of the people." Jews, Greeks and French brought presents of brocade and damasks manufactured in the city. They also brought scarlet and mulberry-colored cloth, to cover the ground over which the king was to pass. Thousands screamed blessings at the king. At times, the king would bring his horse to a halt, to acknowledge the gifts and cheers.

"Everything was worthwhile seeing, for it is admirable to see such a multitude". From outside the city to the wall, and from the wall to the Serrai, the "whole route over which he passed, (all write it to be 18 miles) was thronged on both sides of the street." To attest that it was not hearsay that he was reporting, Almosnino writes, "I was in a store with some friends, from where we saw very well, how many passed from dawn until the king arrived, which was when they chanted in the mosques at mid-day."

The lords of the Porte, of the military and of the navy, led the parade. Their horses were adorned, pennants flying, and

themselves in spiked helmets, coats of mail and gilded gauntlets. The Mufti and the cadis followed. Then came the Janissaries, with bows, cross-bows and lances. Each squadron had different insignias, and some had plumes that swept the ground. "It is said for certain that 10,000 Janissaries marched in review". There followed the first secretaries of the realm and the defterdars, and behind them the guards on horseback carrying maces. Following the most exalted pashas, came His Highness, Selim, on the eleventh horse, for the other ten were riderless.

Almosnino interrupts his description of the parade, to disagree with Joseph Hakohen's order of the Ottoman dynasty. "So writes a Hebrew historian, Joseph Cohen, who wrote the general chronicles, wherein he interposes also the Ottoman kings. His number is unreliable, and even less of the times of which he writes, and during which time each reigned. Because, besides having ascertained the truth from original sources, I saw a brief summary (abridgement) in the Turkish script and language, from the first Ottoman until now, that all experts of this nation hold it as true. In order to better verify the matter, I begged a good friend, well versed in the Turkish language and script, and he translated for me from the Royal Chronicles (which is called Turix Otoman), who they were, conforming to the number I cited, -- that whoever sees this book, will see simple truth in all that I have written" (30). Von Hammer corroborates Almosnino's account, as can be seen in this comparative table.

<u>Almosnino (31)</u>	<u>Joseph Hakohen(32)</u>	<u>Von Hammer (33)</u>
*Ottoman Han(Khan) 1281 acceded	Ottoman, 1305? acceded	Osman(Ottoman) 1281 acceded
*Orhan Han, 1307 acceded	Orchan died,1350?	Urchan, 1307 acceded
*Morato Han, 1345 acceded	Murad died,1373	Murad I, 1345 acceded
*Derim Bayazeto Han 1383 acceded	Bayazid died,1419	Bayazid I, 1383 acceded
*Mahomet Han, 1399 acceded	.....	Mohammed I, 1399 acceded
*Morato Han, 1420 acceded	Murad II,died 1450	Murad II, 1420 acceded
*Mahomet Han Ghaci, 1450 acceded	Mohammed II,died 1481	Mohammed II, 1450 acceded
*Bayazeto Han, 1481 acceded	Bayazid II abdicated 1512	Bayazid II, 1481 acceded
*Selim Han, 1512 acceded	Selim died,1520	Selim I, 1512 acceded
*Soliman Han, 1520 acceded	Suleiman still alive when Hakohen's book was written.	Suleiman I, 1520 acceded
*Selim II 1566 acceded	.....	Selim II, 1566 acceded

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Table of the order of accession of the kings of the Ottoman dynasty, according to Moses Almosnino, Joseph Hakohen and Joseph von Hammer. Some of the Hakohen dates of the deaths of several of the Ottoman kings, square with the dates of the others, with respect to the accession of the succeeding sultan.

The fifth Ottoman king, "of whom Joseph Cohen writes and calls Kerim Cheliui, no such name ever existed."



"As I said", writes Almosnino, "--so that the number of horses to the right, except the king's horse, denoting the kings that had already reigned, and each horse represented a memorial to each king".

Behind the riderless horses, that were harnessed in gold and blanketed in gold mesh, came the king's personal guard, in white skirts and in wide, buttonless coats and broom-like hats. There followed the young pages, with enamelled half-moons on their hats, and their long hair falling over their shoulders. In the rearguard came the scarlet covered carriages of important officials, and lastly, the Aga of the Harem, his officers and eunuchs. The public followed the parade.

Having arrived at the Marata, the Janissaries did not move until the king ordered that they be given gifts, as the preceding kings were accustomed to do. (34) The march was delayed for an hour, and the king could not understand the reason for the discourtesy. His officials told him that some wagons became entangled in traffic, but they could not long conceal from him, that the Janissaries wanted gifts. Selim concealed his humiliation, conceded to the request, and the procession continued on. He also had to yield pensions to Janissaries grown old in the service, and the maimed. "While the claims were just", writes Almosnino, "the blocking of the way was not the manner" to employ to achieve their desires. When the king went to the Mosque, the following Friday, he did not show his anger. On the next day,

when the Divan was in session, Selim ordered forty sacks taken from the Treasury, with 10,000 ducats in each, to be distributed to the Janissaries (35). "They repented having shown the king the discourtesy". The following day, the Acham Olam (Renegade Christians), whose number exceeded the Janissaries, received six sultanis each. On December 10, similar sums were distributed to the "men of letters", in addition to finely lined clothing, and camelots, each being worth more than 2,000 aspers. The Mufti was given 500 sultanis, two changes of garments and two camelots; the Justices of the Porte, 250 sultanis, a gown and two camelots; the heads of the academies, 200 sultanis, a lined coat and a camelot (camelot, is made of wool, silk and hair), that is "to the eight branches of learning that Mohammed established when he conquered Constantinople". The Janissaries got additional money, for Selim punished them for their impertinence, but did not castigate them, "not to appear as a tyrant or vengeful".

In describing the public works constructed during Suleiman's reign, Almosnino says, "I will mention a few notable ones". The Marata, where Suleiman was interred, was made of "the finest stones and marble in the realm". Besides the four main columns, there are many other columns of the finest Egyptian marble, supporting the little mosque, from where prayers are offered. The mosque has three portals, the first facing between the North Pole and the East, the second facing between the Antarctic Pole and the West, and the third, between the West and the Arctic.

The fourth side faces Mecca, is called the quibla, and from there the funeral oration is given. Adjoining is a four walled square, the eastern wall being cemented to the Mosque. The three doors are as beautiful as those in the Mosque. Four Menaras (minarets) with high lamps, are in the four corners (36). In the center is a pool, with ten marble columns around it, supporting a marble roof. The water pours into the pool from the columns. There are beautiful gardens in the Marata's enclosure, which is a mile in circumference. Outside the enclosure, are four wall-surrounded plazas, where people promenade. There are 17 small fountains, for people to wash their hands and feet before worship. On a large patio, there are houses to lodge visitors. Nearby, are kitchens that prepare food for the poor, twice daily. Another courtyard, surrounded by houses and apartments, is for curing the sick of the poor, "that the Spanish call hospital, and they call Timah-rana, or, fruits of charity". The doctors attending are paid by the government, so that they do not occupy themselves with anything else. There are also in the Marata, the medressehs, each with its own head professor, in the departments of law, mathematics, grammar, logic, medicine, physics, Arabic philosophy and "the most exalted study is theology". The last is studied through the Koran and the Hedrix. The cost of maintaining the Marata schools, was seven thousand aspers daily, at the king's expense (37).

The second project of Suleiman that Almosnino describes is the aqueduct leading into Constantinople, that brought water

into the city from the River Pappel."As the conduits could not be carried over the high mountains,they were drawn over high arches". The undertaking encountered many engineering difficulties,not the least of which was the sinking of the jetties and the foundations of the pillars underwater,because of the soft silt at the bed of the river. The whole project until completion cost "eleven times 100,000 ducats,being one of the costliest in the world"(38).

The last project described in the Extremos,which Almosnino attributes to Suleiman,was the bridge across the Golden Horn, from the old city,to the newer suburbs of Pera and Galata.(39) "The great bridge,following its collapse after a great tempest, was ordered rebuilt,with better cement and deeper foundations. Each part was fitted and caulked all over. The lower part was inclosed by sharp steel spikes,like the edges of a sword,by which it was thrust into the bed of the river"(40). Almosnino concludes his description of the project with these words. "They tell me that they used to cross by boat,but when I came,I crossed the bridge,which was so wide that you could cross on horseback,as I did,and with heavy wagonloads.Even though those that went with me did not dismount,I did,to see and understand well,the nature of this work,which lasted three years".(41)

It is more than probable,that the Jews of the Ottoman Empire liked and admired Suleiman,and Almosnino articulated this admiration. In the third book of the Extremos,which Almosnino subtitled A Universal Compendium of the Chronicles of King Sultan

Soliman, he lauds the monarch for "his desire to sustain his subjects with justice and righteousness, his insatiable desire to ennoble the realm with fine buildings and structures, and the benefits that came from them"(42). Almosnino also mentions that Suleiman "was devoted to improve the Empire with manufacturing places"(43). Following his account of Suleiman's many officials, he praises the king "for the many beylerbeys he installed, far more than his predecessors. There were no more than five formerly, his father Selim added four, and this king added twelve more"(44). Almosnino also voiced his gratitude to Suleiman, for having shown friendship to the Jews of Salonika. "He showed his favor to the inhabitants", writes Almosnino, "and gave them privileges, franchises and liberties, which were burned in the fire of 5305(1545), for which reason it is not observed here after that. Before that, the Governor tried other imposts, especially bringing to the Corte(Porte) a certain number of sheep, besides other tributes. This was an intolerable thing, and this is the reason of my coming; being selected by the Republic(Jewish community of Salonika), and where I am now trying to negotiate, and confirm the above mentioned privileges"(45).

Of Selim, Suleiman's successor, Almosnino has an entirely different opinion of him than is the popular historical version(46). This is probably due to Selim's very friendly relationship with Don Joseph Nasi. "Selim was very thoughtful in business, making inquiries on getting at the facts, and he had an ex-

cellent memory of things past. He showed his appreciation to all that served him as a prince. He honored Don Joseph Nasi, a Jew by nationality, not giving heed to what he was, only to his services. After having made him a courtier of his house, distinguishing him with 55 aspers a day for his table, and to Don Samuel, his brother, with 25 aspers daily, (he had already interceded in his behalf before his father), he favored him at Phillipopolis, when he became the king. He gave him the state of Naxos, Paris, Ante-Paris, Melo, Santorinos and other islands annexed to these", possessed by the former duke(47). Later, the island of Andros was added. Almosnino also tells of Selim giving Nasi the privilege that "no cargo of wine could pass to the Black Sea without his(Nasi's) permission"(48).

The first book of the Extremos, deals with what Almosnino calls the extreme conditions that prevailed in the various aspects of life in the capital city(49). He tells of the extreme changes in the weather, even on the same day. This is because the Tramonte (north-wind) makes the atmosphere extremely cold, and the Poniente (westwind) makes it insufferably hot. "This can occur on the same day, either in the winter or in the summer(50)". The extremes in cleanliness result from the rains. Constantinople being a hilly city, the sludge-like mud accumulates at the bottom of the hills, while the hill-tops and slopes are clean. The rains at times assume storm-like proportions, and after such a rain, "the houses look as if they were washed and bathed"(51).

Speaking of public health, Almosnino says that "at times, no one

has as much as a headache". At other times, it seems as if everyone had "contagious diseases, abscesses, pestilential fever and drowsiness that occur together". Because of the exhalations of the Black and Mediterranean Seas, "it is very humid and (the air is) disposed to corrupt itself; as a result, there are all kinds of sicknesses". When the air is clear and "very rarified", everyone enjoys good health (52).

Food in the capital city is either very dear or cheap, "except meat which is essential, and when officials permit this commodity to be rare, they are castigated" (53). The foods imported by sea and overland exceeded national production. The time it took to land and unload the ships, determined the prices of the perishables. Fish in season that was plentiful, was held back by the merchants, to skyrocket the prices. "In the winter, all eat mutton. Beef is scarce and very few buy it. Therefore mutton is expensive and beef is cheap". In the summer time, it was just the opposite. "It is said", writes Almosnino, "that fish out of season is injurious, that it rots in the stomach and causes sickness".

Imported wines, as the Candian malmseys, were expensive. Other wine is "made of a blackish paste of decaying grapes, mouldy and foul smelling". Wine making in the city was prohibited. It was made in concealment, from the grapes brought into the city to be sold as fruit to be eaten. Under these extreme conditions, the usually cheap wine brought high prices.

Almosnino notes the extremes in economic conditions, conversat-

ional garrulity and restraint resulting from occupational associations, in the giving of gifts and bribes in business, in wine drinking as a social grace, in dinner hours, in the availability of merchandise, in trading and in the manufacture of jewelry. Many of them are no more extreme than the conditions that prevail anywhere, and in any age. This is also true of Almosnino's paragraphs on the society near to government officials, the nature of friendship, of Jews that do or do not pray, or give or do not give charity. The same is true of housing. One could expect the lords of the Porte, to have their palaces outside of the city, their underlings to have upper apartments within the city, "where it is light and airy", and the poor to inhabit the lower apartments, "where it is dark and dank", and "where the garbage is gathered" (54).

The aspers, ducats and copper coins in the realm were either pure or counterfeit. Almosnino claims that the customs of the busy port of Constantinople was hard put in trying to cope with a situation, that saw the coins of the world enter its harbor. He also speaks of "the pretenders", friends of high society that succeed in doing business with government officials, because they are vouched for, that they would split the profits with the officials. Others were obliged to make large gifts beforehand.

"Virtuous women are so chaste that they do not allow themselves to be seen, even by people frequently in the family circle. Others of low rank are so dissolute that they converse more with others than with their husbands", It is because the streets of



the city were narrow, and the houses narrow. The dissolute spoke with anyone that passed their doors, whereas, the virtuous women remained in the quarters, with their children and maids. They were busy working, "except (doing) the cooking and washing, which the servants do". The immodest could even be found in the stores of their husbands, "buying and selling, and doing what their husbands do" (55).

The last of Almosnino's extremes deals with the Generation. Some couples have 8 to 10 children, and some have none. Because of the air in Constantinople, "they multiply prolifically". Then, a pestilence sweeps the city, and all of the children of some families die. "Those that can flee from the place, and those that can take care of themselves, can save their children".

He concludes the first book of the Extremos by saying, "There are other extremes that will not be mentioned, not to be guilty of prolixity, and not to exceed the number 26, which is the numerical value in the letters of God's Name, denoting the Essence of His infinite mercy. We must all hope that all will be well at length, though it is not now so. As God brought rest after 6 days of Creation, and as the Hebrew slaves must be liberated in the 7th. year, God made known the excellence of this number, 7 planets, 7 Heavens and super-celestial bodies, so I hope that in this 7th. period of travail" our sufferings will end. The historian-rabbi ended the first book of his history, with a prayer from the Psalms.

gangen; auch hat es seine Richtigkeit mit dem 26ten (56)  
des Janitscharen."

Notes on ALMOSNINO'S HISTORY OF HIS TIMES

- (1) M. Almosnino, Extremos y Grandezas de la Ciudad de Constantinopla (Madrid, 1638), in Latin characters, transcribed from rabbinic script by Iacobo Cansino.
- (2) Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, Geschichte des Osmanisches Reiches, (Pesth, 1828, 10 vols.) Von Hammer's evaluation of Almosnino is brought below.
- (3) H. Graetz, History of the Jews, (J.P.S., Phila. 1949), IV, p. 608 Monatsschrift, p. 64
- (4) Extremos, p. 166
- (5) R. B. Merriman, Suleiman the Magnificent, (Cambridge, Mass. 1944, Harvard Univ. Press)
- (6) Extremos, p. 84: cf. Merriman, p. 58, "--in spite of the twenty different attacks which the Turks are said to have delivered--"
- (7) ibid. pp. 95-98; ibid. cf. pp. 103-4, 180, 188, 246, 272.
- (8) ibid. p. 85, "--enclosed by towers, walls and barbicans, whose defense the world admired".  
cf. Merriman, pp. 59-60, "The fortifications already formidable were vastly strengthened".
- (9) ibid. p. 85: cf. Merriman, p. 66
- (10) ibid. p. 87; cf. ibid. pp. 118-9, "--the Turkish campaign really degenerated into a great raid, almost all fortified places were left unmolested".
- (11) cf. Von Hammer, III, p. 456, "--aber er irrt sich mit den zehn Feldzügen die Suleiman in eigener Person angeführt." with Extremos, p. 84
- (12) ibid. "--den Ungarischen von 1541 mit Stillschweigen übergeht". also Merriman, p. 286, "It was his thirteenth campaign which he conducted in person".
- (13) Extremos, p. 101
- (14) ibid. p. 103, "--que tuviese diez Olviceres-"; p. 104, "--diez Agas de Genicaros--": cf. Von Hammer, II, p. 456, "Die zehn Grosswesire sind auch den gelehrten Rabbi Almosnino nicht entgangen; auch hat es seine Richtigkeit mit den zehn Aga des Janitscaren."

Notes on ALMOsnino's HISTORY OF HIS TIMES (2)

- (15) Von Hammer, III, p. 32, "Piri, den er ganz irrig Piali nennt--"
- (16) Extremos, p. 129
- (17) ibid., pp. 130-3
- (18) ibid., pp. 136-44
- (19) ibid., p. 105: cf. Von Hammer, III, p. 32, "Almosnino--erzählt ein Märchen nach welchem Piri den Sultan Suleiman als Prinzen von dem ihm mittelst ein vergifteten Kleides durch sein Vater Selim zgedachten Tode gerettet haben soll."  
(36) cf. also cf. Merriman, p. 30, "We have no sure proof of the rumors -- that the Sultan really hated his offspring, or thought to put him to death".
- (20) ibid., p. 119: cf. Von Hammer, II, p. 38, "Ibrahim hatte keinen Sohn".
- (21) ibid., pp. 124-8
- (22) Von Hammer, III, p. 163, "--auf eine ebenso Märchenhafte Weise."
- (23) Merriman, p. 185
- (24) Extremos, p. 135
- (25) ibid., pp. 37-80: The second book of Extremos is sub-titled, "Death of the Grand Turk Sultan Soliman and other Events."
- (26) ibid., p. 39: cf. Von Hammer, III, p. 496, who says that Selim was in Kutshije, across the Bosphorus.
- (27) Von Hammer, III, p. 444, wherein Von Hammer makes minor corrections of Almosnino's account. "Almosnino said 4,800 steps (pasos) rather than ells, and the bridge was completed in 16 days, rather than 17".
- (28) Extremos, p. 48
- (29) ibid., pp. 49-54
- (30) ibid., pp. 64-5
- (31) ibid., pp. 65-8

Notes on ALMOsnINO'S HISTORY OF HIS TIMES (3)

- (32) Joseph Hakohen, Dibrè ha-Yamim le-Molkè Zarpàt u-Vet Ottoman ha-Togar (Lemberg, 1859) pp. 26a, 27b, 29a, 31a, 34b, 43a, 49b, does not include Suleiman and Selim II.
- (33) Von Hammer, III, p. 455, "Suleiman der zehnte Sultan des Osmanen".
- (34) *ibid.* III, p. 504; "Ein Heuwagon der den Weg sperrt--welchen Almosnino ausführlich beschreibt."
- (35) Extremos, pp. 73-4: cf. Von Hammer, III, p. 505, "--jeden Mann in allem 60 Ducaten erhalten hatten."
- (36) cf. J. Murray, Greece, Turkey, Constantinople and Asia Minor, (London, 1845) pp. 195-6; also photographs of the Sulimaniyeh in the "National Geographic Magazine", May, 1945, August, 1951.
- (37) Extremos, pp. 145-55; see H. G. Dwight, Constantinople Old and New, (N. Y. C., 1915, Scribner), pp. 58, 360
- (38) cf. Dwight, p. 364, "--who (Suleiman) also restored the aqueduct". Merriman, p. 197; Murray, Constantinople, Brusa and the Troad, (London, 1803), p. 4, "Suleiman also repaired the water conduits."; Extremos, pp. 155-64
- (39) see Murray, Constantinople, Brusa and the Troad, p. 14
- (40) cf. Von Hammer, III, p. 405; "Über den Bau dieser Brücke gibt Almosnino umständlichen Bericht."
- (41) Extremos, pp. 166-7
- (42) *ibid.* p. 81
- (43) *ibid.* p. 145
- (44) *ibid.* p. 103
- (45) *ibid.* p. 90
- (46) cf. Merriman, p. 188, "Selim the Sot", "Selim was drunken, debauched and incompetent".
- (47) Extremos, p. 77: cf. Von Hammer, III, p. 565, "--heisst er Jusuf Nasi und so nennt ihm auch de Rabbi Almosnino".
- (48) *ibid.* p. 78

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(49) ibid. pp. 1-33

(50) cf. J. Murray, Constantinople, Brusa and the Tread, p. 7, "During the most severe winters, there are many warm summer days, and the changes from blighting cold to almost summer heat are often and unexpected."

(51) Extremos, p. 6

(52) ibid. p. 7, "--from the first of May to the 30th. of September is generally dry and healthy".

(53) ibid. pp. 8-9

(54) ibid. p. 27

(55) ibid. p. 32

(56) Ps. 19:15, "Sean a su voluntad los dichos de mi boca--".

יבין לאלהים -

The desire for a fuller life brought on the Renaissance. Avenues of many branches of learning were reopened or expanded. A galaxy of great names shone in the many heavens of knowledge. Among them were Dante the scientist-poet, da Vinci the naturalist-artist and Copernicus the astronomer, who helped to open the windows of the heavens of the arts and sciences.

The Reformation created a cleavage in Christianity, and drew open the doors to investigation and criticism. The Scriptures were re-examined and the authority of the popes was questioned. Wycliffe and Huss were the forerunners of the Reformation, and Luther and Calvin, who followed, made the schism permanent.

Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, and the manufacture of paper, put the new learning into the hands of a greater

Before Moses Almosnino was born, Christian lands had undergone a change in thought, studies and customs. The hold of the Roman Church on minds was loosened by Humanism. This movement was a return to the study of the Greek and Latin classics. It occupied itself more with the contents of the classics, than with their form. When the pagan and pleasure-loving contents of the classics became better known, a dissatisfaction arose against the austere life advocated by monasticism and the Christian clergy.

The desire for a fuller life brought on the Renaissance. Avenues of many branches of learning were reopened or expanded. A galaxy of great names shone in the many heavens of knowledge. Among them were Dante the scientist-poet, da Vinci the naturalist-artist and Copernicus the astronomer, who helped to open the windows of the heavens of the arts and sciences.

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Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, and the manufacture of paper, put the new learning into the hands of a greater movement that threatened to plunge Jewry into a life of unreality;

number of people. Not the least important factor was the impetus given to the expansion of learning, by the explorations and the discoveries at the end of the fifteenth and in the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. The increase in trade and commerce brought along a great interchange of information and ideas.

The generally entertained conception that the intellectual ferment in Christian lands did not change Jewish life, had its exceptions, and Moses Almosnino was one of them(1). It is true, generally, that while knowledge surged forward in Christian Europe, there was no comparable advance in knowledge in Jewish Life. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, and the persecutions and massacres of them on the continent of Europe, threw a blanket of despair over Jews, that robbed them of any desire to create. Their thoughts were directed toward an escape from horrid reality, and great numbers found it in the Cabala movement.

Sephardic fugitive Jews brought Cabala study to their new homes in Turkey and Italy(2). The mystical interpretation of the Scriptures, under the dislocated conditions, took possession of Jewish minds. Cabala was expounded from the pulpits. In particular, its theories were explained from the Zohar, the Bible of the Jewish mystics. As the expectation of the Messiah was the pivotal point of its system, the Cabbalists charged the atmosphere with high excitement and great expectations. Sober Jewish minds were also affected. Isaac Abrabanel tried to stem the tide of the movement that threatened to plunge Jewry into a life of unreality;

his writings and his prediction of the date that the Messiah would come, encouraged the movement instead. The enthusiasm with which the Cabala was received by high ranking Christians, as Cardinal Egidio and Reuchlin, gave the movement added prestige.

Forerunners of the Messiah, and Messiahs appeared on the scene, and offered themselves to rescue the persecuted people. Lammlein proclaimed himself a forerunner of the Messiah. He demanded repentance and self-mortifications of the Jews, as a pre-requisite to the Messiah's coming. The Spanish and Portuguese Jews and Marranos, who suffered the horrors of the Inquisition under the inquisitors Torquemada and Deza, were particularly vulnerable to Messianic suggestions.

A David Reubeni emerged from obscurity, claiming to be the brother of an Oriental Jewish king, and was received by Pope Clement(3). He wanted firearms for his imaginary brother's imaginary army of 300,000, from the Pope and the Christian kings of Europe, to drive the Moslems out of the Holy Land. The idea that the redemption would come through a miracle, seized hold of the credulity of the Marranos. A Marrano, Diogo Pires, influenced by Reubeni when he visited the Portuguese king, reverted to Judaism, assumed the name of Solomon Molko and hoped for a Messianic mission(4). He infected many of his followers with a longing for martyrdom, for which he yearned.

The longing for a Messiah, or some form of redemption, supernatural or otherwise, took on a number of forms in Jewish Life.



Jacob Berab and his colleagues adopted a more rational and historical approach to the problem. They believed that the Messianic period must be preceded by the re-establishment of the Sanhedrin, and by re-instituting the authority to ordain rabbis. Twenty-five rabbis assembled in Safed, and gave Berab the authority to ordain rabbis. Among the four Berab ordained in 1538, were Joseph Karo and Moses di Trani(5). There might have been an autonomous Israel, visible at first through the Sanhedrin, had not Levi ben Habib opposed the plan. Because Levi ben Habib, the rabbi of Jerusalem, was not sure whether the rebuilding of the Temple should not precede the assembling of a Sanhedrin, and because of his personal envy of and animosity toward Berab, a great opportunity in Jewish history had come to nothing.

A Talmudist turned mystic and hermit was Isaac Luria, a score of years after Berab. Luria thought himself to be the prophet Elijah, and the forerunner of the Messiah. He and his followers led an ascetic, meditative and praying life, and believed in the transmigration of souls. Luria held conversations, allegedly, with the men in the Bible and Talmud, and most frequently with the soul of Simon ben Johai, at whose grave he meditated oftentimes. Hayyim Vital, Luria's most intimate pupil in that Safed Society of Friends, carried on his master's work. Like his predecessor, he taught that men must purify their souls of sin. When that time will come, the most perfect world of the Messianic period will be realized; for then, men will be as stainless as was Adam before

he disobeyed God's command. (6)

Some of the sober minded scholars that were infected with Cabala fever were Joseph Taytazak, prominent Talmudist in Salonika, and Joseph Karo, author of the codes Bet Yosef and the popular Shulhan Aruk. They were both inoculated by Shlomo Molko. Karo also entertained a dream-prompter (Maggid), that disciplined him to persevere in his studies, and revealed future events. Solomon Alkabetz, Karo's friend, and the author of the Sabbath song, the Leka Dodi, was probably even more deeply enmeshed in the Cabala movement (7).

To the right of this emotional and mystic movement was the rather rigidly rational school of Talmudists, propogators of the Faith through rabbinical literature. Of the men that occupied that stage in Jewish history in Almosnino's times were Solomon Luria and Moses Isserles, of Poland. Luria, author of the commentary on the Talmud, the Yam Shel Shlomo, had an aversion to the casuistic method of study of Jacob Pollak and Shalom Shakna. This scholar, that wrote Hebrew with grammatical exactness, also opposed Maimonides for his philosophical preoccupations, and for not having quoted his sources in his works. Isserles, author of the Mappa, annotations to Karo's Shulhan Aruk, pursued philosophy through Hebrew sources. He also wrote a commentary on Purbach's astronomical work, the Theorica (8). In this group also belong the colleague of Karo, Moses di Trani, author of Responsa, who also opposed Karo (9), and the Talmudist and author of Responsa, Samuel

de Medina, colleague of Almosnino(10). Church Fathers, to prove

In secular studies and achievements, but nonetheless occupied with Jewish affairs, were the historians Joseph Hacoheh, Judah ibn Verga and Samuel Usque. Hacoheh, physician to the doge Andrea Doria, wrote The Annals of the Kings of France and of the House of Ottoman. This history of two opposing forces is written in an impartial way, and in the dramatic style of the Bible. Hacoheh also wrote the Emek ha-Baka (Vale of Weeping), on the misfortunes of the Jews. This careful historian, averse to believing in miracles, was baffled by Molko's martyrdom(11). Greek philosophy. The

Judah ibn Verga, a Cabalist and astronomer, wrote the Shebet Jehuda, on the persecution of Jews in many lands, in a simple and graceful Hebrew. Some of the accounts in this history are given through the medium of imaginary conversations, and some of his sources were taken from Latin documents(12). The poet, Samuel Usque, wrote the Consolation in Israel's Tribulations. It is a source for the history of the persecution of Jews. However, the history is written through the medium of conversations between three shepherds, that lament the fate of Israel and offer consolations(13). In, as Isaac Luria and Vital, nor a quasi-system, like

Not to be excluded from this group are Azariah dei Rossi, and Gedaliah Ibn Yahya. Dei Rossi made use of non-Jewish sources and applied scientific method to his work, the Me'or Ainayim. This physician knew the whole of Jewish literature and the Latin histories. He compared the statements in the Talmud and its offshoots

with those in Philo, Josephus and the Church Fathers, to prove the truth of historical narratives, from the witnesses in their respective times(14). The Shalshélet ha-Kabala(Chain of Tradition) of Gedaliah Ibn Yahya, has many specious stories in it(15).

Of the Jews of that period that distinguished themselves in almost entirely secular, or entirely secular work were Leon Medigo, Isaac Abrabanel's son, and Amatus Lusitanus. Leon Ebreo, as Medigo was better known, wrote the Dialogues of Love, a philosophical idyll. It favored the Scriptural doctrine of the Creation out of chaos to the principles of Greek philosophy. The Dialogues was not written in the spirit of Judaism, and was read by Italians rather than by Jews(16). Amatus Lusitanus was a famed physician, author of the Centuries. It is a seven volume work, each volume dealing with one hundred cases of illness and their cures(17). These are the outstanding men of the period in which Almosnino flourished, and these are their works.

As this is an evaluation of Moses Almosnino, his place in Jewish history can be determined better, by comparing him with the luminaries of his day. He was neither a mystic living in unreal worlds, as Isaac Luria and Vital, nor a quasi-mystic, like Taytazak and Karo, who found life's direction confusing. Almosnino did believe in the pseudo-science of astrology, because many learned men in his day believed in it. Pope Clement and most of his contemporaries had recourse to astrology, to learn from the stars, what was beyond the wisdom of men(18).

He did not veer to the severe extremes of purely Jewish studies, by limiting himself to the Talmud and its offshoots, as his contemporaries, de Medina, di Trani, S. Luria and Isserless, some of whom just tasted secular learning in seclusion. It is true that he studied philosophy and the Latin classics not for their own sakes, but to put them into the service of his ethics and theology. Nonetheless, he honored the wisdom of the Greeks, Latins and Arabs, and disseminated them through his works (19). Almosnino's references to sources, or quotations from the sources are altogether trustworthy, whether he took his information from Hebrew works or non-Jewish works. (20)

This is also true in the history that he wrote of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire. What he personally saw, and where he himself read from, is truthfully and authentically reported. Von Hammer's branding of some of the accounts of Almosnino as fairy-tales, fails to take into consideration Almosnino's own prefaces to such accounts in intimating that they were hearsay. He invariably led into such accounts with the words, "it is said for certain", or, "they tell me" (21), though later historians proved his hearsays unreliable. The evidence points to the fact, that he was more careful with his facts (22), than the not so careful Joseph Hacoen (23).

The ruling of the times seems to have been the idea, that old thoughts of bygone thinkers should be commented on, and super-commentaries on the commentators of the past. Freedom of philo-

sophical inquiry was not favored. Isaac Abrabanel thought that Maimonides writings were heretical. According to Joseph Jaabez, free-thinking was a sin, and philosophical preoccupations were responsible for the expulsion from Spain(24). Almosnino not only was thoroughly at home in philosophy(25), but also in astronomy(26), physics and metaphysics(27). He was completely acquainted with all branches of rabbinical literature(28), and mathematics and medicine were also in his arsenal of knowledge(29).

In his times, Jewish congregations were broken up into national groups. Their disunity was a misfortune, because little could be done for the public benefit. Almosnino succeeded in getting them to work together, by his persuasiveness and modesty, and was largely responsible in relieving them from their intolerable condition. The sermons preached in his days, were but Talmudic discourses in the German congregations, and uninteresting to laymen. The Spanish preachers spoke in beautiful language, but were full of pedantry. This most opportune and convenient instrument to disseminate information and enthusiasm to the public, this means of encouraging communal cooperativeness, the sermon, Almosnino made into a fine art(30). Moses al-Sheik, his younger contemporary, tried to imitate Almosnino's style of preaching, but he had only Jewish knowledge to support his efforts(31).

Predictions are the luxuries of historians. Heinrich Graetz indulged himself in the extravagance of second-guessing. He ventured that had all the Sephardic rabbis brought to their

sermons the vast secular learning and the skills of Moses Almosnino, the confounded and confounding Cabala cabals would have soon spent themselves(32). But by history's standard of parsimony of praise or condemnation, an evaluation of Almosnino can only be drawn on what happened, and not on what might have happened. His place in history can be judged by his value to his generation, and then by comparing him with the great Jewish sages of history.

In the first instance, there were undoubtedly those that excelled him in one or several of the fields of activity that Almosnino labored in. Almosnino was not the physician that Amatus Lusitanus was; nor was his usefulness to the Jewish Community of the Ottoman Empire as great or wide as that of Joseph Nasi. But in general usefulness and in all around skills and talents, he was the "Mushlam"(complete man) of his generation, to borrow Almosnino's oft used term.

He was not the philosopher that Maimonides or Gersonides were. He perpetuated the great Jewish masters and popularized them, but, more than likely, knew more than the medieval philosophers, because he had the advantage of being thoroughly familiar with later Latin and Arab thinkers. Admittedly, he added nothing new to philosophical thinking. He wrote on more subjects than his predecessors did. Though there is little that is original in his writings, the faithful servant Moses was faithful in all the houses of his studies and service, exact, polished and systematic. In his sermons, in which he excelled, he kindled a torch which burned brightly for three centuries.

Notes on A PLACE IN JEWISH HISTORY

- (1) H. Graetz, History of the Jews, IV, p. 477.
- (2) *ibid.* p. 481
- (3) *ibid.* p. 491
- (4) *ibid.* p. 496
- (5) M. L. Margolis and A. Marx, A History of the Jewish People, (Phila., 1945, JPS), p. 520
- (6) *ibid.* pp. 522-3; Graetz, pp. 618-25
- (7) *ibid.* pp. 520-1; Graetz, IV, pp. 496-7
- (8) Graetz, IV, pp. 635-8; Margolis-Marx, pp. 535-7
- (9) *ibid.* pp. 540, 580; Margolis-Marx, p. 522
- (10) see p. 34; also M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey in the 16th Century, (N.Y.C., 1952, JTS)
- (11) see p. 122: Graetz, IV, pp. 511, 555-6; Margolis-Marx, p. 509
- (12) Graetz, pp. 556-7; Margolis-Marx, p. 514
- (13) *ibid.*, p. 558; Margolis-Marx, p. 487
- (14) *ibid.* pp. 614-5: Margolis-Marx, p. 503
- (15) Margolis-Marx, pp. 508-9
- (16) Graetz, p. 480
- (17) *ibid.* pp. 569-70
- (18) *ibid.* p. 492
- (19) H. Graetz, Monatsschrift, (Breslau, 1864) p. 25
- (20) see notes #19 and #22 on p. 133
- (21) see p. 126
- (22) see p. 122



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- (24) Graetz, IV, p.479  
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- (25) see p.52  
*Mezuzah Koah*, (Venice, 1588)  
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- (26) Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.29  
*Yede Moane*, (Salonika, 1572)
- (27) ibid. p.30  
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- (28) see p.27--: Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.29, 33--  
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- (29) ibid.  
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- (30) Graetz, IV, p.478 : Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.34  
*La Famille Almosnino*, Paris, 1850. Extract from
- (31) Graetz, Monatsschrift, p.67  
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- (32) ibid.  
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