

## INTRODUCTION

### TOLEDO'S IMPORTANCE AS A CENTER OF CULTURE AND LEARNING

Toledo's Jewish population began to rise steadily after the city's Christian conquest in 1085 by Alfonso VI. The size of this community was increased progressively by waves of Jews fleeing *en masse* from the persecutions that followed the rise to power of the intolerant Almohad dynasty in al-Andalus during the mid-twelfth century. Administrative positions for the emerging Castilian state were quickly filled with many of the Jews already living in Toledo at the time of the conquest. Others gradually came to fill similar roles or served the king directly as court physicians, and thus attained a high degree of influence in the Castilian court. This in turn allowed them to offer refuge in the Christian kingdoms to the north to Jews fleeing Almohad persecution in the south.

Jews emigrating from Muslim Spain sought to continue developing the cultural and intellectual heritage of al-Andalus in Toledo and in other cities in the northern Christian kingdoms. The Andalusí intellectual tradition included the study of the sciences, mathematics, philosophy, grammar and poetic composition in both Arabic and Hebrew alongside traditional Jewish studies such as Biblical exegesis or the study and interpretation of the Talmud. The most prominent of the Andalusí émigrés to Toledo included Spain's first Hebrew chronicler, Abraham ibn Daud; Meir ben Joseph ibn Migash, the last rabbi of the famous Talmudic academy in Lucena; and several members of the Ibn Alfakhar family. By the twelfth century, a circle

of Hebrew poets comprised of Moses ibn Abi al-Aysh, Jacob ben Eleazar, Judah al-Harizi, Benveniste bar Hiyya and the aforementioned Abraham ibn Daud had already formed in Toledo. Their literary production alone attests to the high degree of culture which Toledo reached during the twelfth century.

Once Christian rule was established in Toledo, news of the abundant Arabic philosophical and scientific manuscripts available there reached scholars from various parts of the Latin West and quickly attracted them to the city. The patronage of Raimundo de Sauvetat, Toledo's second archbishop, marked the beginning of the first period of prolific translations of scientific and philosophical works from Arabic into Latin in Toledo. Although the translating enterprise of this period elevated the importance of Toledo as a center of culture and learning to new heights, it did not reach its highest point of intensity until after the death of Raimundo in 1152,<sup>1</sup> and lasted until 1187.<sup>2</sup>

Several Jewish scholars from Toledo participated in the translating projects which were carried out by teams consisting of an expert in the Arabic language, another expert in Latin, and a Mozarab or Jew fluent in both Arabic and the Castilian vernacular who translated the Arabic into Romance. At the end, a Latin expert committed the final product into writing. Unfortunately, all of the Jewish collaborators from this period remain anonymous, except for Avendehut, an astronomer who worked closely with the Latin scholar Domingo Gundislavo.

The continuity of the Andalusí intellectual tradition and its cultural heritage in Toledo following the Christian conquest is evidenced by the multitude of philosophers, poets, physicians, astronomers, and rabbis who lived there. Beginning in the mid-twelfth century, various members of the distinguished Ibn Shoshan and Abulafia families formed an integral part of Toledo's Jewish intellectual and aristocratic

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<sup>1</sup> D'Alverny (1982) 445.

<sup>2</sup> Sangrador Gil (1985) 19.

elites. Several of the poets, kabbalists and Talmudic scholars who lived in Toledo belonged to the latter family. Furthermore, their continuous service as fiscal administrators lasted until the end of the reign of Sancho IV (1284-1295) earning them great wealth and influence in the Castilian royal court.

During the first half of the thirteenth century, Toledo's Jewish elites included Judah ben Joseph Alfakhar, and Meir Abulafia (1165-1244) who were not only fluent in Arabic, but were intimately familiar with the literary and philosophical heritage of al-Andalus. Following this tradition more than a century after the Christian conquest of Toledo, Jewish scholars continued to write in Arabic and often contributed to more than one field of study. Noteworthy examples from this period include the astronomer Isaac ibn Sa'id and Judah ben Salomon ha-Kohen ibn Matqah. Writing in Judeo-Arabic, the latter is credited with compiling *Midrash ha-Hokhmah*, the first of the great medieval Hebrew encyclopedias of science and philosophy. Another extraordinary figure from this period is Judah ben Moses ha-Kohen who was fluent in both Arabic and Latin, possessed considerable knowledge of astronomy, worked on numerous translation projects, and also served as physician to Alfonso X.

During the thirteenth century, another group of Hebrew poets formed part of Toledo's intellectual elite. Todros ben Judah Halevi Abulafia was the most prominent among them and is especially known for the poetry he wrote in honor of Alfonso's Jewish courtiers, Solomon and Isaac ben Zadoq. His poems also make reference to Solomon Abudarham, Yaqar Halevi Abi R. Solomon, and Samuel ibn al-Naqawa, three lesser-known poets from Toledo, who were his contemporaries.<sup>3</sup> During the thirteenth century<sup>4</sup> another body of

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrew poetry and its social context during the thirteenth century is masterfully discussed in Sáenz-Badillos (1998) 199-238.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of Jewish Mysticism in Spain, see Scholem (1995); and Idel (2005) 120-142; Idel (2000) 53-82.

Hebrew literature was produced by Toledo's circle of kabbalists, which included Todros ben Joseph Halevi Abulafia, Isaac ben Abraham ibn Latif, Joseph ben Maza, and Judah ben Solomon ha-Kohen ibn Matqah.

Between 1252 and 1277 King Alfonso X elevated the intellectual life of Toledo even higher by sponsoring a second period of prolific translating activity. During this period, the focus of the translations shifted from philosophic to scientific works, especially works of astronomy and astrology; this time from Arabic into Castilian. While the Latin translations and the participation of Christian scholars coming to Toledo from other parts of Europe gave an international scope to the first period of translations, the reach of the Castilian translations was limited within the kingdom of Castile. Only occasionally were these works later translated to Latin. Five Jewish translators from this period have been identified,<sup>5</sup> while others remain anonymous. Their mastery of both Arabic and Castilian paired with their knowledge of the sciences made Alfonso's Jewish collaborators especially qualified to participate in the translating enterprise.

The known Jewish translators who were commissioned directly by the king are, Isaac ibn Sa'id, Abraham de Toledo, Judah ben Moshe ha-Kohen, Moses Alfaqi and Samuel Halevi Abulafia. The latter also constructed a water clock for the king and translated a manual for the use and construction of a candle clock while employed in the court of Alfonso X as a scientist.<sup>6</sup> Abraham de Toledo and Judah ben Moses ha-Kohen were also employed by the king as court physicians. In addition to their translating activities, Isaac ibn Sa'id and Judah ben Moses ha-Kohen were commissioned by the king to lead a group of scholars in the production of the Alfonsine astronomical tables between 1252 and 1256.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed summary of their careers, see Sangrador Gil (1985) 60-87.

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. "Abulafia, Samuel Ha-Levi".

<sup>7</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. "Ibn Sa'id (Sid), Isaac".

The years of the last translations made under the patronage of Alfonso X coincide with the estrangement from religious tradition which prevailed among the Jewish courtier class and the communal leaders in Toledo. These circumstances provided fertile ground for the development of Jewish mysticism in Castile which was promulgated in Toledo by Todros ben Joseph, Joseph ben Abraham ibn Waqar and Meir ben Isaac Aldabi. Social reform within Castilian Jewry was attained only after German-born Asher ben Yehiel was appointed as chief rabbi of Toledo in 1305. The *yeshivah* which he headed there introduced the Ashkenazi tradition of Talmudic study into Spain, and ushered in a new generation of Talmudists, Biblical commentators and Hebrew poets in Toledo. The new generation of scholars included Ben Asher's own sons Judah and Jacob as well as various members of the Ibn Naqawa; Ibn Nahmias; Ibn Waqar; and Ben Israel or Israeli families. The most prominent among them were: Jacob ben Asher (c. 1270-1340), author of the great legal code *Arba Turim*; the Biblical commentator Joseph ben Joseph Nahmias; the poet Israel ben Joseph al-Naqawa; and the Talmudist Israel Israeli.

A tragic series of events befell Toledo's Jewish community following the outbreak of the Black Death in 1348. These include a series of violent attacks on the Jewish quarter of Toledo in 1355; and the civil war waged between Pedro the Cruel and his brother Enrique II that lasted from 1366 to 1369. At the end of the war, the surviving Jews and their property were sold at the command of Enrique II as a source of revenue for the Castilian crown in June of 1369.<sup>8</sup> The massacres that ravaged Spain's Jewish communities in 1391 brought severe consequences to Jewish life and marked the demise of Toledo as the center of Jewish culture and learning in Castile.

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<sup>8</sup> Baer (1992) 367.

## HEBREW MANUSCRIPT PRODUCTION IN TOLEDO

Jewish literature and scholarship was available almost exclusively in Arabic until the twelfth century, when Jews began to use Hebrew alongside Arabic for scientific and philosophical writing. The prevalence in the use of Hebrew for literary compositions is especially evident in the work of Jacob ben Eleazar and Judah ben Solomon ibn Matqah. The advancing Christian conquest of al-Andalus and the continuous transition of its Jewish populations into a new cultural reality in Christian Spain also contributed to the gradual abandonment of Arabic for use in scholarly writing. Retaining a solid knowledge of Arabic however, was essential for making the intellectual heritage of al-Andalus accessible to Christian Europe. In spite of an increase in the use of Hebrew for literary production, Jewish authors like Israel Israeli, Joseph ben Joseph ibn Nahmias, and Joseph ben Abraham ibn Waqar, continued to use Arabic during the first half of the fourteenth century.

The *Maqamat* of al-Ḥariri and an Arabic version of the Indian narrative *Kalīla wa-Dimna* were the earliest works translated from Arabic to Hebrew in Toledo. They were made by the poets Judah al-Harizi and Jacob ben Eleazar, respectively. The abundance and variety of Arabic manuscripts available in Toledo, and the linguistic abilities of its Jewish intellectuals created ideal circumstances for producing Hebrew translations alongside translations into Latin or other Romance languages. Like their Latin counterparts, translations into Hebrew facilitated dissemination of the extensive corpus of philosophical literature in Arabic especially among Jews who were not only unfamiliar with the language, but with the very study of philosophy. The demand for Hebrew translations of the works of Maimonides and other philosophical works written in Arabic grew progressively higher, especially in France during the various phases of the Maimonidean controversy. Translations of grammatical treatises on the Hebrew language and commentaries on Jewish scripture and

liturgy, in addition to scientific<sup>9</sup> works from Arabic into Hebrew were equally instrumental for transmitting the intellectual heritage of al-Andalus among Ashkenazi Jews, whose scholarship until then, had centered on the study of the Talmud.

As we have already noted, Jewish scholars living in Toledo produced an impressive array of original compositions in Hebrew and engaged in a prolific translating enterprise which not only produced translations into Latin and Castilian, but also made the intellectual heritage of Al-Andalus accessible through Hebrew. Furthermore, the Hebrew translations made in Toledo played a central role in the transmission and dissemination of knowledge throughout Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The textual accuracy and precision of the Biblical manuscripts produced in Toledo garnered a reputation that extended from Germany to Northern Africa. Rabbi Meir Abulafia (Ramah) contributed significantly to this fact by acquiring Biblical manuscripts for his Masoretic research, and the copying of a Torah scroll which he produced as a result. In his discussion of the impact of Ramah's work, Bernard Septimus notes that "[f]rom Ramah's scroll, authoritative codices were copied".<sup>10</sup> Ramah's attempt to establish a definitive text of the Torah was codified in *Masoret Seyag la-Torah* which appeared in 1227 and heavily influenced laws governing the writing of Torah scrolls during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, the Torah scroll which Ramah himself wrote served as a master copy from which other scrolls were copied and corrected. The fame and quality of Biblical manuscripts from Toledo drew scholars who came to copy the manuscripts available there,<sup>11</sup> correct their Bibles and Torah scrolls, or

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<sup>9</sup> For more on Hebrew translations of medical and scientific works see Ortega Monasterio and del Barco del Barco (2009) 165-188; Romano (1978) 71-105; Ferre (1998-1999) 21-36; Ferre (2000) 191-205; Schatzmiller (1994).

<sup>10</sup> See Septimus (1982) 37.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Spanish model codices see Ortega Monasterio (2005) 353-383; Ortega Monasterio (2004) 163-174.

acquire new ones. Scholars like Rabbi Samuel ben Jacob came to Toledo from as far away as Germany for the sole purpose of making a copy from the manuscripts available in Toledo and R. Isaac ben Solomon of Morocco made another copy of a Toledo manuscript in Burgos in 1273.<sup>12</sup>

Approximately thirty manuscripts have come down to us which we can say with certainty originate in Toledo. Among the surviving Hebrew manuscripts from Spain, Toledo was the point of origin of the highest number of extant manuscripts, excluding unlocalized manuscripts which may have been produced there. The oldest, most sumptuous and most reliable of the extant medieval Hebrew Bibles come from Toledo<sup>13</sup> and are dispersed among the great collections of Hebrew manuscripts. Notable examples include Hébr. 26 and 105 at the Bibliothèque National in Paris; Ms 2025 and 2668 at the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma; Kennicott 7 at the Bodleian Library in Oxford; Or. 2201 at the British Library in London; L6 and L44a at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and MS M1 at the Complutense University in Madrid. The prevalence of Hebrew manuscripts from Toledo has led some modern scholars to believe that they were produced in workshops. In support of this theory, Benjamin Richler writes:

. . . apparently, such workshops existed in Toledo, for example, in the 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, for, several notable codices were produced there and Spanish Bibles were prized even outside of Spain for their accuracy and beauty. We know the names of several scribes who owned workshops and employed apprentices to help them, imitating the practices of non-Jewish scribes.<sup>14</sup>

Following the same line, Nahum Sarna holds that “the scribal schools of Toledo were the most prolific in the production of Hebrew

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<sup>12</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica* 2nd ed., s.v. “Abulafia, Meir”.

<sup>13</sup> Sarna (2000) 244.

<sup>14</sup> Richler (2000) 76.



manuscript Bibles”.<sup>15</sup> In his analysis of the colophon of MS Frankfurt Universitätsbibliothek MS Hebr. 8/o/56, Michael Riegler notes that this manuscript was copied in Toledo by eight different scribes in the *yeshivah* of Rabbi Isaac de León in 1477, offering further evidence of manuscript workshops during the fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Among the Biblical manuscripts listed above, Parma 2668 and Paris 26 represent some of the finest examples of Hebrew manuscript illumination from the so-called Castilian school. Katrin Kogman-Appel has identified artistic conventions which are characteristic of Hebrew Bibles from Toledo. They include carpet page designs inspired by models from Islamic architectural sculpture; calligraphic frames, and modest decoration of the *masorah magna* and *seder* markings. Furthermore, the three bi-folio quire is a distinctive codicological feature of manuscripts produced in Toledo. The textual tradition of Hebrew Bibles from Toledo is equally distinctive and has been studied at length by Emila Fernández Tejero and María Teresa Ortega Monasterio.<sup>17</sup> While a codicological examination of Parma 2668 shows that folios for illuminations were intentionally left blank when the manuscript was bound, it remains unclear when the illumination was added and whether or not it was actually made in Castile. The depictions of temple implements in Biblical manuscripts have no other precedents in any other Biblical manuscripts from Castile, but they are common in illuminated Hebrew Bibles from Catalonia in the fourteenth century. If the illumination of Parma 2668 was in fact made in Castile, it would be the first to appear in Spain.<sup>18</sup> Just as the majority of the extant Toledo manuscripts are currently

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<sup>15</sup> Sarna (2000) 244.

<sup>16</sup> See Riegler (1997) 392-393.

<sup>17</sup> See Ortega Monasterio (2008) 344-368; Ortega Monasterio (2005) 353-383; also Fernández Tejero (1977) 163-208; Fernández Tejero (1976) and Fernández Tejero (1979).

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed study of Hebrew manuscript illumination in thirteenth century Castile, see Kogman-Appel (2004) 57-97.

housed in collections remotely separated from their place of origin, this is also the case for the Hebrew manuscripts currently found in Toledo.

#### THE BIBLIOTECA CAPITULAR DE TOLEDO AND ITS PLACE AMONG THE SPANISH COLLECTIONS OF HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS

Spanish collections of Hebrew manuscripts can be divided into two general categories. The first is comprised of manuscript books gathered by private collectors or librarians. The other is comprised of loose documents and manuscript fragments. The largest collections of Hebrew manuscripts in Spain belong to the first category and are housed in the Royal Monastery of El Escorial, the Spanish National Library, the Special Collections Department of the Complutense University Library, and the Library of the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat. These collections have all been cataloged by Francisco Javier del Barco del Barco in *Catálogo de Manuscritos Hebreos de la Comunidad de Madrid* (2003-4) and *Catálogo de Manuscritos Hebreos de la Biblioteca de Montserrat* (2008) respectively.<sup>19</sup> Smaller collections of Hebrew manuscript books, that are comparable in size to the BCT collection, are housed at the Universities of Salamanca<sup>20</sup> and Valladolid.<sup>21</sup> These collections have received even less attention from catalogers than the collection of the Cathedral Library of Toledo or Biblioteca Capitulare de Toledo (hereafter BCT) has had hitherto.

The manuscripts that belong to the second category are much smaller in number and are dispersed more widely throughout Spain's archives and libraries. The largest collection in this category is housed

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<sup>19</sup> For a history of the collections and their provenance, see Ortega Monasterio in del Barco del Barco (2003-2006); del Barco del Barco (2004a) 215-230; del Barco del Barco (2004b) 163-174.

<sup>20</sup> Llamas (1950) 263-279.

<sup>21</sup> See Arce (1958) 41-50 and Cantera (1959) 223-239.

in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon.<sup>22</sup> Smaller collections of Hebrew documents and other manuscript fragments can be found in the cathedral libraries of Barcelona,<sup>23</sup> Gerona,<sup>24</sup> Zaragoza,<sup>25</sup> León,<sup>26</sup> Pamplona, Tudela,<sup>27</sup> Tarazona,<sup>28</sup> Calahorra,<sup>29</sup> and Cuenca.<sup>30</sup> In many cases, the fragments in these collections were used as binding material for other books and were preserved quite accidentally. Unlike the collection of Hebrew manuscripts in the BCT, the collections in the other Spanish cathedral libraries are comprised of manuscripts which have most likely remained in Spain since their creation. Additionally, Jewish marriage contracts which have also remained in Spain are preserved in the Biblioteca de Catalunya, the Tomás Navarro Tomás Library of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid,<sup>31</sup> and in the following archives: the Archivo Histórico Comarcal de Cervera, Archivo del Reino de Mallorca, Archivo del Reino de Valencia, the Valencia Cathedral Archive, and the Archivo General de Navarra.<sup>32</sup> Individual Hebrew documents and manuscript fragments have been found in the Archivo de la Real Chancillería de

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<sup>22</sup> See Riera i Sans and Udina Martorell (1978) 21-36.

<sup>23</sup> For a thorough study and transcription of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Cathedral Library of Barcelona see Klein (2004).

<sup>24</sup> For more on the recovery of Hebrew manuscripts used as bookbinding material in the Historical Archive of Gerona see <http://manuscritshebreus.cultura.gencat.cat> and Blasco Orellana (2004) 69-80; Blasco Orellana (2005) 175-186.

<sup>25</sup> See Millás-Vallicrosa (1930); Baer (1929); Tilander (1958).

<sup>26</sup> Castaño (2002) 459-481.

<sup>27</sup> See Lacave (1983) 169-179.

<sup>28</sup> Lozano Galán and Jiménez Jiménez (1985) 217-236.

<sup>29</sup> See Cantera (1946) 37-61.

<sup>30</sup> For more on the Hebrew manuscript fragments housed in the Archivo Diocesano de Cuenca see Sáenz-Badillos (1977-79) 95-104.

<sup>31</sup> The manuscript@ project offers catalog descriptions and digital images of the nine Jewish marriage contracts through the library's webpage: <http://biblioteca.cchs.csic.es>.

<sup>32</sup> See Lacave (2002).

Valladolid,<sup>33</sup> the Municipal Archives of Ágreda (Soria)<sup>34</sup> and Tudela (Navarra),<sup>35</sup> the Archivo Histórico de Manresa, the Archivo Histórico Comarcal de Igualada<sup>36</sup> and the Archivo Diocesano de Vic.

#### THE HEBREW MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION IN THE BIBLIOTECA CAPITULAR DE TOLEDO

Most Hebrew manuscript collections are comprised of volumes that have been removed from their place of origin; we very seldom find manuscripts in the same places where they were produced. Toledo is no exception. While the surviving Hebrew manuscripts from Toledo are dispersed among various libraries outside of Spain, the Hebrew manuscript collections currently housed in Toledo were brought there from Rome centuries after their production. The BCT houses one of two Hebrew manuscript collections in Toledo.<sup>37</sup> It is made up of twelve codices and one loose fragment. The codices were part of a larger collection comprised of manuscripts in various languages gathered in Rome in the second half of the eighteenth century by Cardinal Francisco Javier Zelada and bequeathed to the BCT upon his death in 1801. Ten of the twelve codices are Italian in origin. The other two were produced by Spanish scribes; one was copied in Seville while the other is unlocalized.

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<sup>33</sup> Pergaminos, carpeta 13, no. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Sección Histórica, Reg.15/98; exp. So- 165.

<sup>35</sup> For transcriptions of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Cathedral Archive of Pamplona, the Municipal Archive of Tudela and the Archivo General de Navarra see Lacave (1998).

<sup>36</sup> See Blasco Orellana and Magdalena Nom de Deu (2002) 574-584.

<sup>37</sup> The other collection is housed in Toledo's Sephardic Museum and is comprised mostly of nineteenth century manuscripts from Morocco, but also includes earlier manuscripts from Egypt, and a single leaf from the Damascus Keter, a manuscript from Burgos now in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. Access to the manuscripts for research purposes however, is heavily restricted.