

Devotion without End

I. Models of Devotion

1. A garden in Safed
2. Unnamed patriarch's devotion to his daughter Sarah
3. Chiya: the Male Principle
4. Sarah's devotion beyond the grave: Female Principle

II. In Search of the Clear Voice

1. The perversion & perfection of Torah study
2. The eyes & the voice: anatomies of deception
3. Miriam's devotion to her parents
4. Chananiah's arrival: pure voice & tainted eyes

III. Chanaiah's Osysey

1. Tale of Motherly Mis-devotion
Esther-Chanaiah-Mother
The teacher of false Torah
3-time failure to discipline him
decision to repent
2. Tale of Miserly Butcher
model of corruption
slavishly devoted to his daughter
arrival of the poor youth
Chanaiah's downfall
3. Transformations
Chananiah loses his learning
Carpenter [= lamed-vovnik] marries butcher's daughter
Esther marries poor youth
Chananiah changes places w/poor youth

IV. Resolution

- A. Chiya's dilemma
 1. Chananiah's parable of the cage
 2. 2 snakes in the garden: his test of faith
- B. Miriam's devotion
 1. her pure love of Chananiah
 2. her devotion unto death
 3. her dream of the dove & the bird of prey
- C. The wedding
 1. Chiya reveals the snake's plan
 2. the modest wedding
 3. שבע ברכות in the garden
 4. the staff blossoms & Torah returns
- D. Miriam's Devotion without End
 1. everything restored
 2. she lives

between Castile and Morocco after years of warfare—the young poet cried out in exultation, "The sighs are gone—relief has come!"

The evil days are over, and gone are the years when tyrants oppressed,
When villains amassed riches and arrant rogues great wealth possessed,
When asses, fit to carry straw or fodder, went laden with precious gold,
When boors and sinners were exalted and fatuous knaves grew bold,
When the nobles of the earth were humbled low, and fools the starry heights attained.
Today, your enemies are in their own fetters bound and their princes are in irons chained.²¹

The most powerful of the court Jews during the early part of our period was Don Solomon ibn Zadok of Toledo, who is called Don Çulema in the Castilian documents.²² During the reign of Ferdinand III he was entrusted with the collection of tribute from the king of Granada. Under Alfonso X he served as ambassador (*mandadero*) and chief collector of revenues (*almozarife mayor*). He was highly respected within his own community for his generous endowment of synagogues and charitable institutions. Young Todros Halevi lavished upon him such high praise as had not been accorded to any Jewish notable since the days of Judah Halevi and Moses ibn Ezra. When Solomon died, in 1273, all of his property in Seville, Carmona and Ecija, consisting of houses, vineyards, olive groves and warehouses full of goods, was confiscated by the king and donated to the cathedral of Seville. He undoubtedly also left some property in his native Toledo.

Todros Halevi's own patron at court was Solomon's son, Don Isaac ibn Zadok, who was called in Castilian Don Çag de la Maleha.²³ A journey through Castile, in the company of his patron, is described by the poet in exaggerated metaphor

And it happened in the dear and delightful days of our youth, when this noble (Don Isaac) was "prince and commander of nations," that we travelled through the vineyard country, boldly for all to see, accompanied by a large retinue of wealthy, worthy and wise men. We made a tour of all the Castilian ports. Time was kind to us and the days were pleasant and free from fear. . . .

When we passed through the salt marshes, they turned gold mines for us. We travelled pretentiously, in regal style, over hill and mount. . . . We went a-dancing, holding hands with fair and well-born maidens. . . . Gifts came pouring in from all sides . . . great revenue, and tribute in endless flow. . . . Then we embarked upon the sea in a ship and my heart was trembling with fear. But the old man was like a father to me and showed me great love and compassion. He praised the Lord at the sea's shore and prayed to God, whose works are awe-inspiring. And when the noble lady, her eyes deep blue, not with eye-tint but with native charm, sat in our company, there was naught but song and cheer. . . . When we returned we were met by the lords of Edom, in the service of his exalted office.²⁴

Todros Halevi also comments on the decrees of Alfonso X, fixing prices and placing restrictions upon luxurious living. These laws, which were prompted by the country's economic needs and by the monarch's own religious and moral scruples, often missed their mark and caused discontent among his subjects. The coinage was also devaluated twice during Alfonso's reign, to the great dissatisfaction of both Jews and Christians. The Jews were directly involved in these experiments, either as the economic advisers or the victims of this legislation. Our poet satirizes the royal policy in a semi-jocular vein,

When the king commanded his subjects all
That every thing, whether large or small,
For half its worth be sold to all,