the children of Israel brought up with them from Egypt, they buried in Shechem."

The Samaritans live here in Palestine as Jews live in the kingdoms of Moslems and of Christians: as a minority people, sometimes tolerated, sometimes despised. The Jewish community considers the Samaritans heretics and ignores them. Long ago the Emperor Justinian decreed Samaritans to be not Jews but Christians, but the Christians don't treat them well either and from time to time even persecute them. When Palestine was under Mohammedan rule, the Samaritans looked to Moslems for protection . . . but around thirty years ago, in 1137, Moslems attacked Nablus and decimated its inhabitants.

What the Samaritans have in common with the Karaites and with the Mishawites in Cyprus is that they reject the Oral Law and have developed their own ways under the influence of the Christians and the Moslems among whom they live. But the Jewish communities which accepted the Oral Law and which obey the teachings of the rabbis were always subject to the same influences.

In Tudea, when I was growing up and where I heard more religious disputations than I could ever remember, there were three religious communities: a Moslem people, a Christian people, and a small proud Jewish people. Clear lines separated them. When in my youth I became aware of the Karaites, I thought of them as Jews with different traditions, and they were Jews. I never realized that their peculiar traditions had grown from the influence of Islam. I had no idea that the Christians are of two distinct branches, two always-wrangling factions. Nor could I have imagined a people like the Druze, who are neither Jewish nor Christian nor Moslem—yet take their prophets from all three.

The people who are more-or-less Jews! Karaites, Vlachi, Khazars, Kaphrossin, Samaritans. The closer I get to Jerusalem, the more of the Jews are heretics.

First Letter from Jerusalem

Four parasangs from Nablus is situated MOUNT GILBOA, which Christians call Monto Jelion. This is the site where Saul and his sons battled against the Philistines, and lost. The country is very barren hereabouts.

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Five parasangs further is the valley of AJALON, called by the Christians Val de Luna, because this is where the moon shone when Joshua caused the sun to stand still.

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One parasang to GRAN DAVID, formerly the large city of Gib'on. It contains no Jewish inhabitants. From here Jerusalem is just three parasangs distant—a half day's journey.

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JERUSALEM is small and strongly fortified by three walls, an ancient and beautiful fortress. "Beautiful in situation," says the psalm, "the joy of the whole earth!" Verily, for it contains a numerous population composed of Jacobites (Syrian Christians), Armenians, Greeks, Georgians, Franks, and in fact of peoples of all tongues. Two hundred Jews dwell in one corner of the city, under the Tower of David. This is the city of David, the hill city chosen by King David as his capital.

This is the city to which Ezra the scribe returned from Babylonian exile, with his Levites and priests, to teach Torah and to reestablish Jewish worship, customs, and morality. In so doing, he intensified the idea of Jerusalem as spiritual capital for the Jews, however dispersed they might be. The generations of the historian Josephus and the writers of Mishnah considered Jerusalem the center of the world. For a thousand years and more, Jews have offered this city homage in prayers and poems. Jews build their synagogues to face Jerusalem; yet today Jerusalem has no proper synagogue.

In Oria I copied a poem by R. Amittai ben Shefatia, written three centuries ago but sadly opposite now:
submitted to God in agreeing to sacrifice his son Isaac: “Moslem” means “submitted.” They believe it was here in Jerusalem that God tested Abraham’s devotion, specifically on the rock of Moriah (the mount where Solomon would build the Temple). They believe that, millennia later, it was from this rock of Moriah that Mohammed ascended into Heaven, he and his horse al-Burak being escorted by the angel Gabriel up a ladder of light; and that by this means Mohammed came into the presence of God, who instructed him as to the way his followers should worship Him. Some years after Mohammed’s death, the khalif Abd al-Malik had a huge temple built at Moriah, which temple the Moslems named the Dome of the Rock. Omar ben al-Khattab erected a large and handsome cupola over it and allowed nobody to introduce any image or painting into this place, set aside for prayers only. The Moslems venerate Jerusalem, but they do not consider it a sacred city as they do Mecca and Medina in Arabia. Moslems at prayer turn toward Mecca, as Jews turn toward Jerusalem. Moslems living at a distance do not yearn for Jerusalem, as Jews always did and do.

Jerusalem under the Moslems remained a small town, while the Jews in Exile looked toward Babylon for leadership. But Jerusalem was never far from the Jew’s mind and heart—do we not pray daily, “If I forget Thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning…” and many many Jews like me have wanted to see the Holy City for themselves.

In biblical times it was incumbent on Jews who lived in this land to visit Jerusalem at the three festival seasons each year and to celebrate the festivities at the Temple. Ever since, in remembrance of the Temple and of those days, Jews exhort: “Next year in Jerusalem!” Little distinction being made between the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish reverence, Jerusalem is often referred to as bet ha-Miqdash, Hebrew for “the Temple.” (Even the Arabs call the city al-Muqaddas, and, from the same root, al-Quds.)

Some Jews in every generation have come to Jerusalem to trace the routes of the celebrants of long ago and to worship at the Temple site. They come because of the holiness of the land, encouraged by dicta such as that of R. Johanan: “He who walks four cubits in Israel is assured of a place in the world to come.” Can you imagine setting foot in the Holy Land without visiting the Holy City? Still, the Torah’s prescription to go up to Jerusalem was a communal law having to do with the land, and as such it does not apply to Jews in the Exile.

Think of the similarity of the Hebrew word hagag (literally, a celebrant) and the Arabic word hajj (for one who makes a hajj, or visit to sanctuaries). Every Moslem, wherever he lives, is duty bound to make hajj to Mecca if he is able to do so; but a Jew living in the Exile has no obligation to visit Jerusalem, however able to do so he may be. In this matter we Jews are more like the Christians who visit Santiago or Rome or Jerusalem, not because their religion requires them to do so but because they have a reli-
gious urge or a simple wish to see the holy places. Maybe Christians and Moslems took their idea of pilgrimage (as they took so many ideas) from the Jews.

When Jerusalem was under Moslem rule, most of the Jewish visitors came from lands nearby, namely from Egypt, from Syria and the Grecian empire, from Persia. Their favorite month of sojourn was Tishri, including as it does Rosh ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, and Succot. Now that the Frankish rulers again allow Jews to reside here and to visit, Jews come from as far away as Russia. The great number of Christian Franks coming here to live and to visit has brought about numerous publications of itineraria, which tell sojourners about this land and direct them to its important religious sites. But we Jews had a few such books before the Franks; I’ve seen a Guide to Jerusalem written two hundred years ago.

All activities, and especially pleasant ones, have their detractors. I suppose. How many times, an route to Eretz Yisrael, was I told by good and pious men that to come here is no mitzvah, no religious duty?! I would think of Judah ha-Levi, who when planning his trip here must have heard similar cavils. Do you recollect the last chapter of his Book of Kuzari, where he has his hero, his Haver, tell the Khazar king of his intention to move to the Holy Land?

And “the king answers that a pure heart and strong desire can reach God from anywhere and warms of the perils of the journey.”

Our Haver replies; the Land of Israel is the Holy Land because here were given for all peoples the precepts by which to live. This land was chosen by our father Abraham, and this land was apportioned among the ten tribes. This land is “the inheritance of the Lord” and “the gate of Heaven.”

God promised that wherever we go, he would bring us back here to the Land of Israel. And we all would have brought back, except that the people did not wish to return—only a small number wished to do so; the rest preferred to stay with their fields and their chattels, albeit as vassals to strange lords.

R. Judah himself, as you know, decided to spend his last years in accord with the ancient precept to “reside in the land of Israel, even among a majority of idolaters, rather than outside of Israel, even among a majority of Jews.”

In truth, many of our rabbis who disparage these journeys aren’t so much against the visits to Palestine as they are against the common pilgrim custom of repairing to gravestones. The Karaites and Samaritans, indeed, prohibit worship at tombs. Even in our tradition it’s common to visit the graves of our ancestors and our scholars, some rabbis condemn it. The passage in

Torah about the burial of Moses in the land of Moab, that “nobody knows the place of his burial”—they take it to mean that Jews should not make a shrine of any burial place.

Yet not only in Spain but in several places along the road I traveled, one sees rabbis’ graves attended by a number of worshipers, communing (I presume) with the departed rabbi in hopes of being inspired by his knowledge or sanctity. Here, Franks mark many graves of our forefathers distinctively, with a small dome (Hebrew: kippah) or with a clump of trees. Naturally all Jews go to pray at these tombs. Even if they are fewer in number than the Christians, one sees Jews at tombs everywhere; at those of Elijah at Hafsa, of Joseph at Nabius, of Rachel at Bethlehem, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their wives at Hebron; and many others. Even the large place of worship called Sepulcher and containing the sepulcher of that man (as the Talmudists designated Jisho the Nazarene) is visited by all pilgrims.

On seeing Jerusalem for the first time, a Jew recites; “Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire and all our pleasant things are laid waste.” Then he rends his garments as a sign of mourning. He grieves for a holy site razed not once but three times. How much do Jews today reflect on the Temple which the Romans destroyed, and how much on the synagogue with hundreds of Jews inside which the Franks burned with fire?

Of course the Jewish pilgrim visits the Temple site first. Next, in common practice, he makes a tour of the city’s gates, praying for forgiveness and for mercy, for the return of the Temple to the Jews and of the Jews to the Holy Land. Jerusalem is furnished with four gates, called gate of Abraham, of David, of Zion, and of Jehoshaphat. The latter stands opposite the Holy Temple, which is occupied at present by the rebuilt Dome of the Rock, a building called Templo Dominio by the Franks. In front of it you see the western wall, one of the walls which formed the Holy Holies of the ancient Temple, it is called gate of Mercy and all Jews resort thither to say their prayers near the wall of the court yard. How it aggravates Jews’ grief at the long-ago loss of the Temple to see on its site another edifice—so conspicuous, so magnificent—built by Moslems and now used by Christians.

At Jerusalem you also see the stables that were erected by Solomon and which formed part of his house. Immense stones have been employed in this fabric, which we see as a series of caves running from what used to be the Jewish quarter (now it is the Syrian quarter) past the site of the Temple and extending to the southeast.

You see to this day the vestiges of the canal near which the sacrificial were
slaughtered in ancient times, and all Jews inscribe their names upon an adja-
cent wall.

If you leave the city by the gate of Jehoshaphat, you may see the pillar
erected on Absalom's place and the sepulcher of King Usia, and the great
spring of the Shiloach which runs into the brook Kidron. Upon this spring
you see a large building erected in the times of our forefathers. On the western
slope of the valley is the spring called Gihon, where Solomon was anointed
king; the Gihon is the main source of water for the city. Very little water is
found at Jerusalem. The inhabitants generally drink rain-water, which they
collect in their houses, in cisterns. Villages near Jerusalem have springs,
but the Holy City itself, being at the top of a hill, has none. Water is nearly
drained from the city by sewers that the Romans built.

From the valley of Jehoshaphat the traveler immediately ascends the Mount
of Olives, as this valley only intervenes between the city and the mount. After
the ruins of the Temple, the Mount of Olives is the most important site at
Jerusalem. King Solomon built upon this mount. The prophet Zechariah is
buried at its foot, in large and ancient burial grounds. Christians consider
the mount holy, believing it to be the site of the arrest and crucifixion of
Jisho the Nazarene; the Franks recently renovated an octagon-shaped
church which the Byzantines built here long ago. After Byzantine rule of
Jerusalem came the Arabs, Moslems who banned Jews from the Temple
site, whereupon the Jews built a place of worship here on the mount. The
total Jewish community would ascend the Mount of Olives on the seventh
day of Succot. Hoshana Rabba, for on that day the chief rabbi would an-
nounce the dates of the festivals for the year to come, and he would harangue
against the Karaites and their calendar, and sometimes fights would break
out between the two groups.

From the mount there is a clear view of the Dead Sea, called in ancient
times Lake Asphaltites, with slimy shores due to the bitumenlike salt stone
that washes up from under the water. Two parasangs from the sea stands
the salt pillar into which Lot's wife was metamorphosed, and although the
sheep continually lick it, the pillar grows again and retains its original state.
You also have a panorama of the whole valley of the Dead Sea and of the brook
of Shittim, even as far as Mount N'bo.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat and the Mount of Olives are to the east of the
city. If you go to the southwest, Mount Zion is also near Jerusalem, and upon
it stands no building except a place of worship of the Nazarenes. There also
are to be found three Jewish cemeteries, where formerly the dead were buried.
Some of the sepulchers had stones with inscriptions upon them, but the Chris-
tians destroy these monuments and use the stones in building their houses. In
earlier times Mount Zion was located within the city walls, but in the last
century a new wall was built which left Mount Zion outside.

Across the wall from Mount Zion, not far from it but inside the wall, in
the southwest part of the city, stands the eight-sided Tower of David. About
ten yards of the base of this building are very ancient, having been constructed
by our ancestors. The remaining part was added by the Mohammedans and
the city contains no building stronger than the Tower of David, the final re-
doubt of the Moslems at the Franks' conquest. Now the Franks use it as
their administrative center, for military garrison, customs offices, and food
stores. The king's palace adjoins the tower, and nearby are the dwellings
of Jerusalem's few Jews.
Second Letter from Jerusalem

Jerusalem is surrounded by high mountains, and on Mount Zion are the sepulchers of the House of David and of those kings who reigned after him. In consequence of the following circumstances, however, this place is hardly to be recognized at present.

Fifteen years ago, one of the walls of the place of worship on Mount Zion fell down, which the patriarch ordered the priest to repair. He commanded him to take stones from the original wall of Zion and to employ them for that purpose. About twenty journey men were hired at stated wages, who broke stones from the very foundations of the walls of Zion.

Two of these laborers, who were intimate friends, one day were taking their ease together, and then after a friendly meal returned to their work. The overseer questioned them about their tardiness, but they answered that they would still perform their day's work, and would employ thereupon the time during which their fellow laborers were at meals.

They then continued to break out stones and happened to meet with one which formed the mouth of a cavern. They agreed with one another to enter the cave and to search for treasure, in pursuit of which they proceeded onward until they reached a large hall, supported by pillars of marble, encrusted with gold and silver, and before which stood a table with a golden scepter and crown. This was the sepulcher of David, King of Israel, to the left of which they saw that of Solomon in a similar state and likewise the sepulchers of all kings of Jehuda, who were buried there.

They further saw locked trunk, the contents of which nobody knew, and desired to enter the hall; but a blast of wind like a storm issued forth from the mouth of the cavern, strong enough to throw them down, almost faceless, on the ground. There they lay until evening, when another wind rushed forth, from which they heard a voice, like that of a human being, calling aloud: "Get up and go forth from this place."

The men came out in great haste and full of fear proceeded to the patriarch and reported what had happened to them. This ecclesiastic summoned into his presence R. Abraham al-Constantinini, a pious ascetic, one of the mourners of the downfall of Jerusalem, and caused the two laborers to repeat what they had previously reported. Rabbi Abraham thereupon informed the patriarch that they had discovered the sepulchers of the House of David and of the kings of Jehuda.

The following morning the laborers were sent for again; but they were found stretched on their beds and still full of fear; they declared that they would not attempt to go again to the cave, as it was not God's will to reveal it to any one. The patriarch ordered the place walled up, so as to hide it effectively from every one until the present day.

The above-mentioned R. Abraham told me all this. He is R. Abraham ha-Hasid al-Constantinini al-Parush, the Parushim being a small group of men living closely among themselves, hardly talking to anyone outside the group nor even to each other, but devoting almost every hour of their lives to the study of Torah. R. Abraham spends time with me and with other visitors to Jerusalem in hopes of persuading us to remain here and follow his way of life. He himself came here as a young man, but others of the Parushim are sons of men who came here from the south of France, moved by their grief for the destroyed Temple; they came in the wake of Christians from France settling in the kingdom of Jerusalem. These Parushim have a particular method of studying Torah: they look not only at the verses and words of Scripture, but at the individual letters. By considering each letter's numerical value, they seek a text's deeper meaning. Thus they determine the way they shall pray, and endeavor to speed the coming of the Messiah.

The Parushim are few, while the Holy City's Karaites are numerous, their ancestors having come from Persia long ago. Like the Parushim, these Karaites devote themselves to mourning for the Temple and to praying for the arrival on earth of the Kingdom of Heaven. And now they mourn for our brethren massacred here in the time of our grandathers—as do we all.

You might suppose that in Jerusalem the Karaites' grief would subdue their asperity, but here too they taunt and criticize the Rabbanites: having rejected the long rabbinic tradition, they continually argue against its worth. Although they denounce the teachings of the rabbis their scholars study them, it seems, in search of some comment or phrase which they can mock. They even ridicule the integral prayer of the Palestinian Rabbanites' Yom Kippur services, the Koi Nidre, calling it dishonest to annul vows.1

Jerusalem contains more Karaites than Rabbanites. This has been the situation for many generations, at one time the Karaites outnumbering the Rabbanites even more than they do now. The particular piety of Karaites stirred them to leave their Babylonian home (then the center of rabbinic Judaism) for the Jewishly provincial Palestine, where they would be free to devote themselves entirely to their prayers. Here Jews were living decently. The local Rabbanites did not give all their time to study; they worked, in dyeing and tanning, and a few of them in banking. As Karaites came to lead the Jewish community and speak on its behalf to the Mosiem sovereigns,

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1Letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used for writing numbers. See letter from Lucca, p. 84, above.
the Rabbanites encouraged more followers of the rabbinic tradition to come here to study and to settle. They moved the Palestine Academy (Yeshiva Eretz Yisrael) from Tiberias to Jerusalem, and for a long time the rosh yeshiva at Jerusalem was called the Gaon of Tiberias.

Around the beginning of the last century, Jerusalem again knew warfare, battles being fought incessantly over a large region by the Fatimids and Seljuks and Bedouin Tayys and such peoples. Earlier Jews had been humiliated to see the site of the Temple being used for non-Jewish rituals; now Jews had to suffer additionally while Gentiles were desecrating the Holy Land. As the years passed and the warfare continued, Jerusalem's Jews became poorer and poorer and had to appeal increasingly to communities abroad for sustenance; and many Jews left the city.\footnote{2}

The Byzantines came here about a hundred years ago to help their co-religionists; they strengthened the fortifications of the city's Christian quarter. At the same time, a new Jewish quarter was created, in what is now the Syrian quarter, in the northeast of the city. (Although the Franks razed it and turned it into the Syrian quarter, this area of the city is still called the Juverie.) The Seljuk Turks seized Jerusalem in 1072, and five years later the Palestine Academy moved to Tyre. By then, Jerusalem's Jewish population had decreased significantly, to hardly more than a few dyers and their families.

During hundreds of years, from the time that the Byzantines ruled Jerusalem, Christians have come here on pilgrimage. When the Seljuk Turks took over the city, they continually harried Christian pilgrims and even killed them. The Christians of the Eastern church feared Turkish invasion of their own soil and asked aid from the West in preventing it; whereas the Western church concerned itself only with securing free passage to Jerusalem for Western pilgrims. The Church in the West preached its holy war to oust the Seljuk Turks. While the Franks were gathering their forces on the Palestine coast in summer 1098, the Seljuk Turks were conquered and driven out of Jerusalem... by the Fatimids, who in their previous long rule of the Holy Land had never molested Christian (or Jewish) travelers. The Fatimid king begged the Franks to spare Jerusalem, promising freedom of worship and free access for pilgrims. But the advantageous change of sovereignty did not deter the Franks.\footnote{3}

Early in 1099, at the end of the short, cold winter, the people of Jerusalem prepared for a long siege. They brought into the city all the animals from the surrounding area and they organized continuing supplies of food and water. They poisoned the water sources outside the city, leaving the pool of Siloam from which to obtain drinking water.\footnote{4} Their governor, Mukhtar ad-Daula, expelled the city's Christians as potential saboteurs. He also, in his position of commander of Jerusalem's garrisons, took stock of the munitions and found them adequate. He had sent to Egypt for military support, to supplement his own soldiers, whom he knew to be loyal to him; the Egyptian soldiers were on their way.

The Franks arrived at the beginning of June and besieged the city for six weeks. They finally won it by bombarding two parts of the wall—in the north and in the southwest—vulnerable because, since the land outside the walls there is high, the terrain does not slope steeply downward as from the rest of the walls.\footnote{7} In the southwest, near Mount Zion, the forces from the south of France fought under Raymond of Saint Gilles. Geoffrey de Bouillon led men from the north of France and from Flanders against the wall in the north and northeast, where the Fatimids' forces included many Jews because the Jewish quarter lay just behind this wall. The Franks fought furiously in their compulsion to liberate the Holy City from the Moslem infidels. For the Mohammedans, on the other hand, it was not a holy war—it wasn't as though non-Moslems were attacking Mecca! The Moslem forces faltered. Geoffrey de Bouillon, the first of the Franks to succeed in scaling the wall, later became the first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Inflamed with their conquest, the Franks rampaged through Jerusalem, intent on destroying the venerable city they had vowed to rescue. Without restraint they sliced down Jews and Moslems. They pushed numerous Jews into synagogues, which they then set on fire. They took a small number of Jews as prisoners, of whom the few lucky ones were sold as slaves along the Italian coasts, most of these slaves redeemed soon afterward by the local Jewish communities. (After many months of subjugating the Holy Land, it would not have served the Franks to take many prisoners to sell as slaves, for following any major battle, when the victor sells slaves, the price of these drops in consequence of the rise in the number being sold.) The Franks kept some of their Jewish and Moslem captives busy in Jerusalem for several months, clearing the streets of the maimed and bloodied corpses. From these stinking streets only a few very fortunate Jews managed to flee, carrying their tales of horror to Ascalon, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Moslem lands.\footnote{6}

As Jerusalem under the Fatimids had contained mostly Moslems and Jews, the Franks soon realized themselves to be rulers of a new kingdom without inhabitants. One of their first decrees banned any Moslem or Jew from entering the city. Directly they brought in tribes of Arab Christians from across the Jordan and settled them in the heretofore-Jewish quarter in the northeast part of the city. Only Christians were to dwell in the Franks' Kingdom of Jerusalem, which they would administer in the French manner. Just a year after his grand conquest, Geoffrey de Bouillon was fatally wounded by an arrow; it was his brother who was crowned King Baldwin of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, on the Christian eleventh day of November of the year 1100.

The Franks, with their armies and navies from many European lands,
went on to subdue the other towns of the Holy Land, extending the Kingdom of Jerusalem from the Great Sea east to the river Jordan and from Ascalon in the south to Beirut in the north and establishing other kingdoms further north as well. Everywhere they went they slaughtered Moslems and Jews; the Jewish communities were destroyed, their survivors dispersed. The story of the Jews in Palestine since then has been told by grieving individuals trudging from town to town inquiring about lost relatives.

Throughout, Christian pilgrims flocked from Europe to Jerusalem. Gradually the Franks devoted less of their effort to war and more to administration. Palestine's towns could live peacefully again, with their new populations of Eastern Christians and Syro-Malabar Christians, Western Christians who came as pilgrims and stayed, and the few Jews who were drifting back. Although most Jews would have preferred living under Moslem rather than Frankish sovereignty, the Christian towns (that is, those already won by the Franks) offered the greater security. But the Jews were still barred from living in Jerusalem.

The Franks' Jerusalem grew prosperous, thanks to its soldiers and administrators and the thousands upon thousands of pilgrims and the Church officials and the royal court. From the first the Franks encouraged local Eastern Christians and even Arabs to trade in the city. Jerusalem quickly organized itself for selling to the many men who would buy luxuries; but then it found it had few people to produce them. Not even the beautiful cloths so characteristic of the East were being made locally. Jews had traditionally been among the most skilled of dyers, and now they could live only in the kingdom's small towns, where they worked individually or in pairs. So the Franks finally granted the right of residence in Jerusalem to several families of Jewish dyers. The king sold the exclusive privilege of carrying on this trade in Jerusalem to the Jews, who rent the dyeing-house by the year.

So the Jews were once again permitted, albeit grudgingly, to come back into the City of David, the City of Peace, to dwell with adherents of the new religions. At least the Jews live here in peace, even if the Christian groups are always fighting among themselves. The native Christians, who naturally outnumber the ruling Franks, belong to Eastern (Byzantine) sects. The Franks keep trying to subject the native Christians to the same taxes they impose on the kingdom's non-Christians. And the Eastern Christians are particularly incensed that the Franks have taken over their big old churches for the Latin rite.

Disregarding the Christians' acrimony, I find it convenient to be once more in a land where the main language is Arabic. Arabic-speakers comprise not only native Christians, but descendants of the Frank conquerors as well; indeed, many of these have native mothers and grandmothers. Most of the soldiers in the royal army are sons of unions of Franks with native women.

The Franks rule by means of three main armies: the royal army and the armies of the Templars and the Hospitallers, Templars and Hospitallers being the names of religious orders of military men, existing only in the Holy Land, having been founded in the days of Moslem rule to protect Christian pilgrims. There are at Jerusalem two hospitals, which support four hundred knights and afford shelter to the sick; these are provided with everything they may want, both during life and in death. The second house is called Hospital of Salomon, being the palace originally built by King Solomon. This hospital also harbors and furnishes four hundred knights, who are ever ready to wage war, over and above those knights who arrive from the country of the Franks and other parts of Christendom. These generally have taken a vow upon themselves to stay a year or two and they remain until the period of their vow is expired. Although I expected to see many Germans here, there are in fact very few, considering that when the Germans were leaving their Rhine homeland to come here and fight the infidel, they exhibited such ardor.

The current king of Jerusalem is the second son of King Fulk, King Amaury. He devotes his resources to acquiring Egypt. The Frankish kings do not exercise lordship directly over each Jew; rather, Jews here are subject to their city lords. The Jews' position is much like that of dhimmis under the Moslems. Indeed, the tax imposed on Jews, as on all non-Franks in the kingdom, is the capitatio, which the Franks instituted as a direct replacement of the Fatimid jizya paid formerly by all non-Moslems. Jews may not own fiefs or city property, as they will not swear the Christian oaths required upon the purchase of such property.

Originally the Franks prohibited non-Christians from dressing in the Frankish style, as they wished to maintain a visual distinction between rulers and subject peoples, but by now most Franks wear burnous and turban like the natives. This scandalizes Christian pilgrims, perhaps especially because local clothing is so exquisite: always colorful and, for the rich, of expensive cloths, garments being trimmed even with silver and gold. The descendants of the Frank invaders live rather more luxuriously here than they could in Europe. Not only do they receive better medical care, here they have water channelled to their houses, and wood and porcelain and glass of intricate design and superior workmanship, and carpets and draperies of the best wool and the best artistry. And their jewelry.

For the most part the Franks neither farm nor exercise a craft. When unoccupied in military activities, they hunt, all live creatures from bears to birds, and they drink—one sees much drunkenness on the streets here. Their quieter pastimes are, however, like ours: gambling with dice and playing chess. To some of the Jewish boys here I've taught several verses of Abraham ibn Ezra's poem on chess, the one where he describes the moves of the game with phrases from the Bible.
It seems to have happened here as in Spain: the grandsons of aggressors are not aggressive; they live with wealth and pomp but they don't make trouble; they want only to enjoy the fruits of the conquests. Some knights demonstrate their scorn for Jews, but happily, so far, these feelings have not been written into laws—nor, since Jews have returned to reside in Jerusalem, in any violence. Notwithstanding the atrocities committed by the Franks at the start of their holy war, their massacres in Europe and in the Holy Land, since the Franks settled into the governance of their kingdom here they have not rampaged against the Jews.17

Jews worship freely if discreetly in Jerusalem, and observe the festivals in peace. The Jewish community has a ritual slaughterhouse in a separate section of the abattoir at the bazaar.18 The community has its own court, as anywhere else, for matters regarding the family or a contract between Jews, and the Franks accept the jurisdiction of the Jewish court in such cases. For suits between a Jew and a non-Jew, there is a court in the marketplace (Côté de la fonte), where each litigant swears on his own scripture, Jews naturally swearing on the Torah.19 All its juries are Christians.

Jerusalem has a multiplicity of institutions; it is again, after a thousand years, a capital city. Sadly, not of the Jews. Jerusalem thrives, while the position of Jerusalem’s Jews in the world’s Jewish community is now insignificant.

Letter from Askalon

Two parasangs from Jerusalem is BETHLEHEM of Jehuda. The country abounds with rivulets, wells, and springs of water. Twelve Jews, dyers by profession, live at Bethlehem.

Approaching from Jerusalem, within half a mile of Bethlehem, where several roads meet, stands the monument which points out the grave of Rachel, wife to Jacob, mother of Joseph and Benjamin. It lies "within the border of Benjamin," according to the first Book of Samuel.1 This monument has been constructed of eleven stones, equal to the number of children of Jacob, who laid them on their mother's tomb.2 It is covered by a cupola which rests upon four pillars; and every Jew who passes there inscribes his name on the stones of the monument, for Rachel is the Mother of the Nation, the matriarch of Israel.

Not only Israelites but Christians and Moslems too venerate Rachel and visit her tomb. The Franks say that here lie also the remains of David and Solomon.

From Bethlehem, six parasangs to HEBRON. The ancient city of that name was situated on the hill and lies in ruins at present, whereas the modern town stands in the valley with its trees of olives and figs and many other fruits, in the field of Makhpela. Our father Abraham bought the cave at the end of this field to use as a burial site.3 This is the place to which most pilgrims come after visiting Jerusalem; from ancient times Jews have come here to prostrate themselves and thus do honor to their forefathers.

Here is the large place of worship called St. Abraham, which during the time of the Mohammedans was a synagogue. It was built by King Solomon. The Gentiles have erected six sepulchers in this place, which they pretend to be those of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebekkah, and of Jacob and Leah: the pilgrims are told that they are the sepulchers of the fathers, and money is extorted from them.

But if any Jew come, who gives an additional fee to the keeper of the cave, an iron door is opened, which dates from the times of our forefathers who rest in peace, and with a burning candle in his hand the visitor descends into a first cave, which is empty, traverses a second in the same state, and at last reaches a third, which contains six sepulchers: that of Abraham, Isaac and
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A Medieval Mediterrancan Travelogue

Sandra Benjamin
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