

INFORMATION TO USERS

While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted. For example:

- Manuscript pages may have indistinct print. In such cases, the best available copy has been filmed.
- Manuscripts may not always be complete. In such cases, a note will indicate that it is not possible to obtain missing pages.
- Copyrighted material may have been removed from the manuscript. In such cases, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, and charts) are photographed by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each oversize page is also filmed as one exposure and is available, for an additional charge, as a standard 35mm slide or as a 17"x 23" black and white photographic print.

Most photographs reproduce acceptably on positive microfilm or microfiche but lack the clarity on xerographic copies made from the microfilm. For an additional charge, 35mm slides of 6"x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography.

8713745

Barugel, Albert

"EL SACRIFICIO DE ISAAC": AN INSIGHT INTO THE EVOLUTION OF A
JUDEO-SPANISH BIBLICAL BALLAD

City University of New York

Ph.D. 1987

University
Microfilms
International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1987

by

Barugel, Albert

All Rights Reserved

PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy.
Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark ✓.

1. Glossy photographs or pages _____
2. Colored illustrations, paper or print _____
3. Photographs with dark background ✓
4. Illustrations are poor copy _____
5. Pages with black marks, not original copy _____
6. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page _____
7. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages ✓
8. Print exceeds margin requirements _____
9. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine _____
10. Computer printout pages with indistinct print _____
11. Page(s) _____ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author.
12. Page(s) _____ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows.
13. Two pages numbered _____. Text follows.
14. Curling and wrinkled pages ✓
15. Dissertation contains pages with print at a slant, filmed as received ✓
16. Other _____

University
Microfilms
International

**EL SACRIFICIO DE ISAAC: AN INSIGHT INTO
THE EVOLUTION OF A JUDEO-SPANISH BIBLICAL BALLAD**

by

ALBERT BARUGEL

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Spanish in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.**

1987

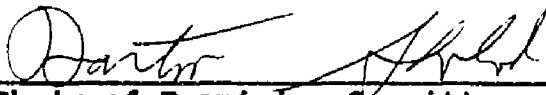
© 1987

ALBERT BARUGEL

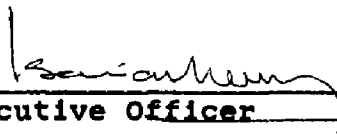
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Spanish in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/23/87
date


Chair of Examining Committee

4/23/87
date


Executive Officer

Professor Angela Dellepiane

Professor Isaias Lerner

Professor Barton Sholod

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my adviser, Professor Barton Sholod, who first stimulated my interest in my own Judeo-Spanish heritage and who has been a guiding force throughout my years of graduate studies. His patience, counsel and wisdom have helped to make this thesis a reality.

Special thanks are also due to Professor Angela Dellepiane and Professor Isaias Lerner for their invaluable suggestions and generous assistance.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents-in-law, Evelyn and Nathan S. Rosenfeld, who have relentlessly encouraged me to persevere in my studies, and to my dear parents, Alegría and Michael Barugel, who always expressed the highest faith in me and who sacrificed a great deal in order to make my education possible.

I have been supported in my work by the confidence and understanding of my dear wife, Marla. She has always taken a serious interest in my work and never lost an opportunity to provide me with important articles and helpful advice. I am grateful to her for her constant love and support.

I am also thankful to my beautiful seven-month-old son, Michael Solomon, who had to be very patient during those many instances when Dad became completely absorbed in his work. His birth brought great joy to our lives and lent a special meaning to the subject of this dissertation.

CONTENTS

v

CHAPTER I. Biblical Ballads in the <u>Romancero</u>	1
A. The Sephardic tradition	1
B. Peninsular biblical ballads	20
C. Spain and Morocco: cultural ties since the Expulsion	26
D. The ballad of the Sacrifice of Isaac	40
CHAPTER II. Midrashic Motifs in <u>El sacrificio de Isaac</u>	56
A. The post-biblical tradition: Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash	56
B. Midrashic motifs in the Moroccan versions	65
C. Midrashic motifs in the Peninsular versions	97
D. <u>Meam Loez</u> : Midrash in the Sephardic tradition	119
CHAPTER III. Narrative Structure: a synchronic analysis	140
A. Overview of folk ballad theories	140
B. Comparative study of <u>El sacrificio de Isaac</u>	147
CHAPTER IV. Evolution of Ballad Style: a Diachronic Study	190
A. Characteristics of the Spanish ballad	190
B. The evolution of <u>El sacrificio de Isaac</u>	195
CHAPTER V. Socio-Historical Dimensions of the <u>Akedah</u> Ballads: Final Reflections	265
A. <u>El sacrificio de Isaac</u> within its social context	265
B. A Jewish <u>Romancero</u> in 15th century Spain?	276
C. <u>Akedah</u> symbolism in the <u>Romancero</u>	288
CHAPTER VI. The Spanish-Jewish Dialect: Linguistic Analysis	313
A. Clarification of terms	313
B. Phonetics	317
C. Hakitía: the Judeo-Spanish dialect of Morocco	321
D. Morphology	324
E. Annotated glossary	328
ILLUSTRATIONS	339
BIBLIOGRAPHY	345

MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Sephardic centers of North Africa (map)	28
Isaac saved by the hand of God, Spanish Manuscript, 12th century	339
The sacrifice of Isaac, Hispano-Moresque Haggadah	340
Isaac saved by the angel, The Golden Haggadah	341
The sacrifice of Isaac, Alba Bible illustration	342
Isaac carrying the firewood, Sarajevo Haggadah	343
Isaac on the altar, Sarajevo Haggadah	344

CHAPTER I

BIBLICAL BALLADS IN THE ROMANCERO

A. THE SEPHARDIC TRADITION

The existence of a Judeo-Spanish Romancero has long been established. We know that the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 and, very likely, even those who left the Peninsula years earlier as a result of popular uprisings against their communities, contributed enormously to the preservation of an oral poetic tradition that is regarded by many Hispanists to be one of the most authentically Spanish literary genres.¹

Romances were widely diffused in Spain in the 14th and 15th centuries. Ramón Menéndez Pidal pioneered the research which focused on the transition or gradual shift in popularity from the epic to the lyric form in Spanish oral tradition. One result of his monumental work in the field of the Romancero was the eventual acceptance of the theory which suggested that the ballad tradition had its roots in the ultimate disintegration of the cantares de gesta.² But Menéndez Pidal's contributions went beyond theorizing. He collected thousands upon thousands of ballad texts in his lifetime and was the first to develop a classification system for the Romancero. His interest in Sephardic ballads

was enthusiastic, to say the least, for they seemed to represent for him a living chain of tradition that connected past with present, medieval with modern:

Todo el empeño que se ponga en salvar del olvido la tradición sefardí será poco. Por el mayor aislamiento en que esta tradición vivió, y por el arraigo que le presta el carácter peculiar de ese pueblo, retiene preciosos rasgos arcaicos, perdidos hace mucho en la tradición peninsular, e innova variantes muy estimables.³

Thus, the opportunity to recover a portion of Spain's lost literary legacy presented itself. Ironically, those who were relied upon to fill in the gaps, those who became the living symbols of the old romance tradition, were Jews who for centuries lived in relative isolation, the descendants of an entire generation of Spaniards forced into exile.

For at least three centuries following the Expulsion, the Sephardim maintained little contact with Spain. There were, nonetheless, occasional circumstances that allowed for sporadic cultural exchanges, mostly from the Peninsula to the exiled Jewish communities:

El contacto de los judíos desterrados con el medio español no se rompió totalmente en 1492; la emigración de judíos españoles prosiguió en los siglos siguientes, aportando a las colonias desterradas nuevas influencias españolas, reforzadas también con el paso de viajeros o cautivos cristianos, de manera que el romancero judeo-español, aunque en general representa una tradición de las más antiguas, ilustra la continuidad de la creación poética en el romancero español desde la Edad Media hasta la época clásica.⁴

In 16th century Europe, the plight of Spanish Jews, especially those who decided to settle within the confines

of the Turkish Empire, became well documented. In Spain, many looked on with awe as the exiled Jews quickly prospered in their new surroundings without having to nor wanting to give up their native Spanish language and customs. Alvar cites from the correspondence between an emissary and the Spanish court:

Fr. Prudencio de Sandoval, cronista del Emperador dijo: "Salonic, ciudad rica de trato, toda casi de judíos echados de España, donde dicen que se habla tan bien la lengua castellana como en Valladolid" (Historia Carlos V, XXI, 2)...⁵

Salonika quickly became the new center of Spanish Jewry. But by the 17th century, there were other important Sephardic communities flourishing rapidly throughout the Mediterranean and in Northern Europe. It seemed inevitable, however, that the sporadic communication that existed between Spain and the exiled Sephardim of the Eastern Mediterranean throughout the 16th century would soon begin to dissipate:

Las relaciones entre España y Levante fueron aflojándose y cesaron finalmente por completo, hasta el extremo que, en 1883, los folcloristas españoles "descubrían" el judeo-español...⁶

As for the Jewish communities of North Africa, cultural contact with the Peninsula was somehow maintained on a more consistent level. As proof of this, Menéndez Pidal points to the Moroccan ballad tradition, richer and much better preserved than the Oriental branch.⁷ Alvar not only insists that Spain always had closer cultural and political ties with Morocco than with the countries of the Levantine

region, but assures us that there is ample documentation that Peninsular ballads continued to arrive in Morocco as late as the 18th century...⁸ [See Section C of this chapter].

The Romantic era brought with it popular curiosity as well as scholarly interest in the language, literature and folk customs of the Sephardim. But it was not until the latter part of the 19th century that serious study of the Sephardic Romancero began to develop. Bénichou gives 1885 as the date of publication of the first Judeo-Spanish ballad.⁹ Before Menéndez Pidal published his Catálogo del romancero judío-español¹⁰ in 1906, only about 80 Sephardic ballads had been published¹¹, despite the continued popularity of thousands of romances among the Sephardim. Since then, of course, there have been numerous collections and studies published. [See Bibliography].

One of the first serious attempts to categorize the Sephardic Romancero was Menéndez Pidal's Catálogo, which we just mentioned. By the time of its publication, Menéndez Pidal had become familiar with approximately 250 distinct versions of various Judeo-Spanish ballads, 150 of which had been collected for him in Morocco by José Benoliel:

Gracias al señor Benoliel, la tradición marroquí aportó por primera vez al romancero español versiones modernas de un arcaísmo y perfección inapreciables.¹²

Of the 150 texts that Menéndez Pidal received from Benoliel, he considered 9 to be "biblical" in theme. He

included portions of these ballads in his Catálogo along with 4 others from the Eastern Sephardic branch under the heading of romances de asunto bíblico. In every case, Menéndez Pidal identifies the ballad with a title, given to it either by its collector or by tradition, and mentions where it was recorded. All of the texts from Tangier are from Benoliel's collection. The biblical ballads (mostly segments) included in the Catálogo are:

29 - El pecado original.	Tangier.
30 - Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham.	Andrinopolis, Sofia.
- Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham.	Tangier.
31 - Sacrificio de Isaac.	Tangier.
32 - Robo de Dina.	Salonika.
33 - Nacimiento de Moisés.	Tangier.
34 - Consagración de Moisés.	Tangier.
35 - Las tablas de la Ley.	Tangier.
36 - David y Goliat.	Tangier.
37 - Amnón y Tamar.	Tangier.
38 - David llora a Absalón.	Oriente.
39 - Juicio de Salomón.	Tangier.
40 - Tormenta calmada.	Salonika, Oriente.

These ballads, collected from both branches of the Sephardic tradition, soon became the standard with which other versions would be compared and the foundation to which other ballads with biblical motifs would be added.

Soon after Menéndez Pidal's pioneering work led to the first classification of the Judeo-Spanish ballads, he became aware that there were quite a few collectors among the Sephardim who were not known to Hispanists, principally because they recorded their texts in Hebrew characters. However, when one such collector, Yacob Abraham Yoná,¹³ had his work published between 1910 and 1913, an impressive

array of old ballads from Salonika suddenly became available to scholars of the Romancero. Yoná's collection contained three biblical ballads, one of which (El paso del Mar Rojo) was not accounted for in the Catálogo and, for some unknown reason, never became part of Menéndez Pidal's extensive collection.

At about the same time, Manrique de Lara began to visit the Sephardic communities of the Eastern Mediterranean, among them, Salonika, Constantinople, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, Sarajevo, Rhodes and Damascus, where he collected hundreds of versions of romances. In 1915 and 1916, Manrique de Lara turned his attention to the North African ballad tradition, gathering ballads and songs in various Moroccan cities: in Tangier and Tetuán and, in subsequent years (1919-1920), in Larache. Menéndez Pidal considers these two collections to form the single most important source of ballads for students of the Sephardic Romancero:

Por los extraordinarios aumentos que estas dos colecciones traen, el romancero sefardí deberá siempre su base principal a Manrique de Lara, pues una colección semejante de tan numerosas versiones coetáneas entre sí, y esparcidas por un area geográfica tan vasta, será siempre un valiosísimo elemento de crítica para el estudio de la tradición romancística...¹⁴

Among the many texts recorded by Manrique de Lara were included more than 20 ballads with biblical themes. These, as well as a handful of songs from the Eastern Sephardic tradition, eventually fell into the hands of Menéndez Pidal who, by 1920, had increased his private collection of

biblical songs and ballads from 13 to 27, with many variants for each. Of the 14 newly acquired texts, only one could technically be considered a romance (a Moroccan version of Consagración de Moisés, with assonance in o); the others were, by definition, canciones. They all became part of a file entitled Clásicos y Bíblicos:

BALLADS ADDED TO MENÉNDEZ PIDAL'S COLLECTION (1906-1920):

- La creación	Eastern
- Raquel nuestra madre	Moroccan
- Vocación de Moisés (2)*	Eastern
- Consagración de Moisés (o)	Moroccan
- Nacimiento de Samuel	Eastern
- Juró el rey David	Eastern
- Reconstrucción del Templo	Eastern
- Esther y Mardoqueo	Eastern
- Ester y Amán (2)*	Eastern
- El sitio de Jerusalén	Eastern
- Hana y las dos esclavas	Moroccan
- Los siete hijos de Hana	Eastern

(2)* : indicates two distinct versions of the same ballad

It is important to note that by 1920 only two of the 27 ballads mentioned thus far were found to exist in both the Moroccan and the Eastern Sephardic tradition: Las tablas de la ley (MP 35), which was recorded by Benoliel in Tangier in 1906, was discovered by Manrique de Lara in Sarajevo in 1911; and David llora a Absalón (MP 38), found in Smyrna in 1911, was also heard by Manrique de Lara in Tetuán in 1915. In both cases, however, there are notable differences between the Moroccan and Oriental traditions. There is little doubt among the critics that each branch of the

Judeo-Spanish Romancero evolved independently. Examples of textual similarities are very difficult to find, despite frequent thematic coincidences:

Dentro de lo judeo-español, sólo en parte vienen a coincidir la tradición levantina y la marroquí.¹⁵

In recent years Samuel G. Armistead has sought to document the contents of Menéndez Pidal's Judeo-Spanish ballad collection. Finally, in 1978, his relentless effort and that of his collaborators produced a 3-volume catalog-index entitled El romancero judeo-español en el archivo Menéndez Pidal¹⁶. This index is, in essence, a new classification of the Sephardic Romancero. It arranges the ballads according to 24 topical categories (A-X), such as ÉPICOS, MORISCOS, AMOR FIEL, INCESTO, etc. In identifying each ballad, it distinguishes between romance and canción estrófica; it provides the first and last verses of every variant in the collection and its place of origin, as well as a bibliography of the published texts. Under the heading of BÍBLICOS (category E), we find 25 of the 27 titles that Menéndez Pidal had in his collection in 1920. The other two ballads, Tormenta calmada and Los siete hijos de Hana, have been reclassified as romances religiosos (category U).

As indispensable as Menéndez Pidal's collection of biblical ballads may be to a student of the Romancero, it is not complete. There are at least 4 Judeo-Spanish ballads,

perhaps more, based on Scriptural narratives that are not mentioned at all by Armistead in his catalog-index.

The first of these ballads was discovered in a British Museum manuscript by Ignacio González Llubera in 1938 and subsequently published.¹⁷ It recounts with realistic detail the biblical episode of the Israelites' successful attempt to cross the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses. It is referred to in the manuscript as El paso del Mar Rojo.

Another biblical ballad not mentioned by Armistead in his catalog tells of Jacob's departure from Bersheba and his encounter with Rachel. Originally included in a 17th century play¹⁸, it was reprinted in 1940 by J. A. van Praag who prefaced it by saying:

Para remate se insertó un "Romance de la Salida de Yahacob de Bersabá" (p. 78-79). La historia de Jacob fue considerada materia adecuada para lectura en la fiesta de Purim...¹⁹

and in the next paragraph:

Que yo sepa el referido romance no ha sido incluido... en ninguna otra colección. Es por eso que me parece útil copiarlo, a pesar de su nulo valor artístico.²⁰

Edward Glaser would probably disagree on that last point. In an insightful article,²¹ he examines the reelaboration of this biblical tale within the literary tradition of 15th century Spain. We will henceforth refer to this ballad as Jacob y Rahel.

In 1952, Larrea Palacín published a 456-verse ballad entitled Ester y Asuero²² which he recorded in Tetuán,

Morocco. It differs greatly from the majority of biblical ballads in two respects: its irregular metrical structure and abnormal length. Based on theme and style, however, it is a biblical ballad and should be categorized as such.

Finally, in 1961, Moshe Attias published a version of El sacrificio de Isaac²³ which was recorded in Salonika. It is not related to the Moroccan ballad of the same name, although occasional similarities between the two traditions point to a common source. [See Chapter IV].

These 4 ballads, combined with the 27 found in the Menéndez Pidal collection, give us a more complete picture of the Judeo-Spanish biblical ballad repertoire. The table that follows provides all 31 titles and, except in the case of the 4 added ballads, their corresponding numbers in the Catálogo (MP) and in Armistead's Catalog-Index (ARM). It also identifies each text as either "song" or "ballad" and indicates its origin (E = Eastern Sephardic; M = Moroccan). We follow the usual procedure for the listing of ballads with biblical themes: in the chronological order of the corresponding episodes in the Scriptures.

THE BIBLICAL BALLADS OF THE SEPHARDIC TRADITION

NO.	TITLE	MP	ARM	SONG or BALLAD	BRANCH E/M
1.	La creación	--	E1	song	E
2.	El pecado original	29	E2	song	M
3.	El nacimiento de Abraham I	30	E3	song	E/M
4.	El nacimiento de Abraham II	30	E4	song	M
5.	El sacrificio de Isaac I	31	E5	ballad	M
6.	El sacrificio de Isaac II	--	--	ballad	E
7.	Jacob y Rahel	--	--	ballad	E
8.	Rahel nuestra madre	--	E6	song	E
9.	El robo de Dina	32	E7	ballad	E
10.	El nacimiento de Moisés	33	E8	song	M
11.	La vocación de Moisés I	--	E9	song	E
12.	La vocación de Moisés II	--	E10	song	E
13.	La consagración de Moisés I	34	E11	ballad	M
14.	La consag. de Moisés II	--	E12	ballad	M
15.	El paso del Mar Rojo	--	--	ballad	E
16.	Las tablas de la ley	35	E13	song	E/M
17.	El nacimiento de Samuel	--	E14	song	E
18.	David y Goliat	36	E15	ballad	M
19.	Juró el rey David	--	E16	song	E
20.	Tamar y Amnón	37	E17	ballad	M
21.	David llora a Absalón	38	E18	ballad	E/M
22.	El juicio de Salomón	39	E19	ballad	M
23.	La reconstrucción del Templo	--	E20	song	E
24.	Ester y Mardoqueo	--	E21	song	E
25.	Ester y Amán I	--	E22	song	E
26.	Ester y Amán II	--	E23	song	E
27.	Ester y Asuero	--	--	song	M
28.	El sitio de Jerusalén	--	E24	song	E
29.	Hana y las dos esclavas	--	E25	song	M
30.	La tormenta calmada	40	U1	ballad	E
31.	Los siete hijos de Hana	--	U4	ballad	E

The information provided on this list prompts us to make certain observations:

(1) There are, as it turns out, only 13 biblical ballads.

Eighteen of the texts are not romances in the technical sense of the term. They are classified by Armistead as canciones estróficas. Occasionally, we will refer to these

as "songs" to distinguish them from the true ballads. In most cases, however, no distinction will be made and the generic term "ballad" will be used for both.

(2) Of the 31 songs and ballads, 17 exist only in the Eastern Sephardic tradition, 11 are from the Moroccan tradition, and only 3 are found in both branches. In 1948, El nacimiento de Abraham I became the third ballad to coexist in both traditions when Diego Catalán recorded a version of it in Tetuán.

(3) There are as many as 7 ballads and songs on the story of Moses and the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt.

(4) Not one Sephardic ballad or song is known to exist on the story of Joseph, which is an important narrative in the Scriptures.

(5) Ballads 28, 29 and 30 should not really be classified as "biblical". El sitio de Jerusalén recounts the events of the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E.; The story of Hana y las dos esclavas does not seem to have a biblical source and La tormenta calmada is a song of religious faith (classified as such by Armistead) although the figure of the faithful shepherd reminds Attias of Moses:

El pastor fiel (calificativo ligado a la personalidad de Moisés) reza delante la tormenta al Dios de Israel para que lo salve y su ruego es atendido...²⁴

(6) Ballad 30 (Los siete hijos de Hana) is categorized by Armistead as a "religious song" probably because it is based on apocryphal writings (II Maccabees 7). However, since it

is often compared to the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac, we will consider it a "biblical" song. [See Chapter V].

It is important to note that because the thematic divisions established by collectors and classifiers of the Romancero are based on so many different criteria, they are not always clear-cut and often tend to overlap. The category romances bíblicos, for example, is not based on "theme" but rather on "source." Based on theme alone, a ballad such as Tamar y Amnón would easily qualify as a romance de incesto and probably should be treated as such despite its biblical origin.

In the decades following the investigations into the Judeo-Spanish ballad heritage by such pioneers as Danon, Galante, Benoliel, Manrique de Lara, Menéndez Pidal and others, there has been an impressive attempt to record and publish for posterity this dying oral tradition. Many of the Sephardic ballad collections that have been published in the last fifty years include a significant number of variants of biblical ballads and songs.²⁵ There has also been an ever-increasing interest in the oral tradition as perpetuated by Sephardic communities in the United States.²⁶

In the field of Romancero scholarship pertaining specifically to biblical ballads, there have been only a handful of noteworthy studies published. In 1968, Royce W. Miller included a literary and linguistic study of 19 biblical ballads in his doctoral thesis.²⁷ He later

published an article in which he examined the style and dominant themes of the Sephardic biblical ballad tradition.²⁸ Other scholars who have paid special attention to the analysis of biblical ballads are Manuel Alvar, who compared the Moroccan and Peninsular traditions of Tamar y Amnón;²⁹ Diego Catalán, who did the same with El sacrificio de Isaac I;³⁰ and Edward Glaser (Jacob y Rahel).³¹

The themes and motifs found in the Sephardic biblical ballads are as numerous and varied as the biblical episodes that inspired them: the Creation of the World (Genesis 1-2), the Original Sin (Genesis 3), the Birth of Abraham (Genesis 11), the Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22), Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 28-29), the Defilement of Dinah (Genesis 34), the Birth of Moses (Exodus 1-2), the Call and Consecration of Moses (Exodus 2-13); the Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the Giving of the Law (Exodus 19-20), the Birth of Samuel (I Samuel 1-2), David and Goliath (I Samuel 17-18), Tamar and Amnon (II Samuel 13), the Death of Absalom (II Samuel 18-19), the Judgment of Solomon (I Kings 3), the Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezekiel 40-48), the Story of Esther (Book of Esther), Rachel's Lamentation (Jeremiah 31), and the Seven Sons of Hannah (II Maccabees 7).

That is not to suggest that the biblical ballads are mere poetic reflections of Scriptural episodes. On the contrary, the majority of ballads have fallen under the heavy influence of popular lore and legend, some from the

time of composition, others through oral transmission. Consequently, the biblical narratives as told in the romances and canciones bear a very distinctive seal. One of the major influences comes from within Scripture itself. That is, very often biblical accounts from different parts of the Scriptures are confused within a particular ballad or, in some cases, intentionally connected to the main biblical narrative. Such is the case in El nacimiento de Abraham I, which is clearly influenced by passages from Exodus 1 (Order to slay all newborn sons) and from Daniel 3 (The Fiery Furnace); also, in most versions of El sacrificio de Isaac, where a connection is made between a false rumor of Isaac's death and the death of Sarah (Genesis 23); and in certain verses of El paso del Mar Rojo, which may have found inspiration in the Song of Solomon.

On the other hand, there are many scenes, situations, dialogues, and images contained in these biblical ballads that are not found in the Scriptures. Even if we assume that the passage of an orally transmitted ballad through time and space subjects it continuously to a vicious cycle of decay and re-creation, we still find ourselves looking for sources. Whether extra-biblical elements are present in the ballad from the time of its composition or whether we believe them to be a product of traditional evolution, we can be sure that those elements did not originate in a vacuum. Directly or indirectly, they are a reflection of a

society, a culture, a set of customs, and even perhaps a literary tradition. Royce Miller points out the didactic tendency of the biblical ballads, for example:

...these ballads bear a distinctive Sephardic stamp in addition to their distinctive language and their widespread diffusion among the Sephardim; they demonstrate the attitude toward life of the people who have sung them: condemnation of wrongdoing, the need to rectify wrongs, praise of steadfastness, stress on the faithfulness and power of God, and the reminder that we are continually in God's presence.³²

Curiously enough, this conservative moralistic dimension of the biblical ballads is in sharp contrast with a recurring tendency to go beyond the traditional Scriptural narrative. There is clearly a strong desire on the part of the Sephardim to take a biblical story and inject it with dramatic dialogue and colorful imagery, to give it life. In fact, a careful reading of the biblical ballads reveals a good number of key passages which do not have a biblical basis. These are just a few examples: Abraham is thrown into a fiery furnace by Nimrod; the sacrifice of Isaac is said to be Abraham's tenth test; a talebearer appears to tell Sarah that Isaac did in fact die on Mount Moriah; Moses is able to speak to his mother from the moment he is born and becomes a man in just twenty days; Moses divides the Red Sea into twelve paths; David's stones call out the names of God and the Patriarchs before the slaying of Goliath; Amnon ends up marrying Tamar in one ballad version; in another he is killed to avenge his sister's honor; David personally

informs each member of his family of the death of Absalom; Solomon orders not one but both children to be cut in half.

A natural question would be: if not from Scripture, where do these scenes come from? What sort of "poetic licence" would allow for the insertion of facts and details undocumented in the Bible? Certainly the tradition of the Romancero is itself an important source of influence: the repetition of certain epico-lyric formulas, the confusion of names and motifs with those of epic and classical ballads (Amnon is known as Tarquino in one version), etc. These influences, however, are for the most part stylistic or superficially thematic in nature. Since we are dealing with biblical ballads, the next logical step would be to consider the rabbinic literature (the Talmud and Midrash) as well as Jewish liturgical poetry (Piyyutim), and perhaps even the religious mystical writings (the Zohar). It would not be surprising to discover that many of the extra-biblical elements found in our ballads can be traced to those sources, as some critics have already discovered.³³ [See Chapter II].

Scholars of the Sephardic Romancero simply have not paid enough attention to the Jewish sources. It truly seems inconceivable to do a thorough study of a biblical oral tradition without considering the biblical exegesis recorded by Rabbis and Sages through the centuries, much of which has been popularized in the biblical legends known as Midrashim.

Many critics are quite aware of the influence of the midrashic tradition on the romances bíblicos but few have ventured to look into these legends for direct sources.

Finally, a word about some of the important themes and motifs. In addition to an unrelenting faith in God expressed in most ballads, there seems to be, as Miller observes,

...high value placed on a son, the one destined to continue the proud Sephardic tradition: the birth of a son (the ballads of Moses and Abraham), the son as the most prized possession (the ballads of Isaac), and the overwhelming grief at the loss of a son (the ballads of Absalom, Hannah, Rachel and many non-Biblical ballads).³⁴

Conversely, all of these ballads mentioned by Miller also place great importance on the mother. In a handful of ballads, however, it is the relationship between father and son that is the dominant theme (Abraham and Isaac, Amnon and his father, David and Absalom).

Inevitably, we also find certain ballads among those classified as "biblical" which contain various elements of other categories (as outlined by Armistead).³⁵ David y Goliat, for example, may be characterized by its epic tone; David llora a Absalón reminds one of an endecha (song of lament); Amnón y Tamar could be a romance de incesto (Armistead, category P); and El robo de Dina would easily fall under the classification of romances de raptos y forzadores (category O), were it not based on a biblical episode. These last two, along with some of the "Esther"

narratives are the only manifestations of the motif of sensuality in the Sephardic biblical ballads.

Let us now look to see which of these songs and ballads have left their mark in the Peninsular Romancero.

B. PENINSULAR BIBLICAL BALLADS

Menéndez y Pelayo was one of the first to observe the abundance of ballads with biblical themes in the Sephardic tradition. He also searched for Peninsular counterparts and found only one: the ballad of Amnón y Tamar.³⁶ Many years later, Menéndez Pidal established that there were 4 Judeo-Spanish biblical ballads with some connection to the Peninsular tradition:

...el de David y Goliat (Catálogo, num. 36) deriva de un pliego suelto reimpreso en la primera parte de la Silva de Zaragoza de 1550; el de Amnón y Tamar debió de pasar de la Península, donde es divulgadísimo, a Marruecos; lo mismo cabe decir del Sacrificio de Isaac, conocido en Burgos, León y Zamora como en Tánger y Tetuán. El romance de David que llora a Absalón (Catálogo, num. 38) deriva de un pliego reimpreso en el Cancionero de Amberes de 1550...³⁷

The first three of these ballads are not known to exist in the Eastern Sephardic tradition; the fourth has been found in both Judeo-Spanish branches.

Some years later, Armistead and Silverman rounded out the list of Peninsular counterparts by adding two ballads to the list:

El robo de Dina and El paso del Mar Rojo, from the Eastern tradition, can...be traced to archaic or modern Peninsular versions.³⁸

This left them with four biblical ballads unaccounted for:

Only La Consagración de Moisés (versions in a-o and o), El Juicio de Salomón, from Morocco, and Los siete hijos de Hana, from the East, seem to lack Peninsular ties.³⁹

The affirmation made by Armistead and Silverman that "only nine true romances current among the Sephardim take their subject matter from the Bible"⁴⁰ was modified years later by Armistead's own Catalog-Index, which lists 10 biblical ballads (if we include Los siete hijos de Hana) in addition to 17 strophic songs [See Section A of this chapter].

As we mentioned in the previous section, there are at least 4 biblical ballads missing from Menéndez Pidal's collection. Of these, three are true romances, two of which have Peninsular ties: El sacrificio de Isaac II shows some influence from a 16th century Peninsular ballad [See Chapter IV]; El paso del Mar Rojo, mentioned above by Armistead but not included in his Index, has been traced to versions known to the cristãos novos of Portugal⁴¹; Jacob y Rachel has no known Peninsular equivalent.

Agustín Durán's Romancero⁴² (1848-51) provides the text to 6 Peninsular ballads with Scriptural themes, four of which appear to be related to Sephardic ballads. These are:

- # 449 - David y Golias (98 verses)
- 452 - Amon y Tamar (28 verses)
- 453 - David y Absalon (38 verses)
- 454 - La presa de Jerusalem por Tito (50 verses)

Only the text of David y Absalon, however, appears to be vaguely related to a Judeo-Spanish version.

The most important clue to the existence of a body of biblical ballads in the Peninsula comes from a 16th century pliego suelto whose title begins with Nueve Romances...⁴³,

although it contains only eight texts. An incomplete copy of the manuscript, consisting of six of the eight ballads, found its way into the Salvá library. Many of these texts have been incorporated into the Silva de romances of 1550-1551.⁴⁴

As a result of research into a number of ballad texts found in old collections and manuscripts as well as on-the-field recording in various parts of Spain and Portugal, the following Judeo-Spanish biblical ballads have been linked in some way to the Peninsular tradition:

1. El sacrificio de Isaac I is related to the first of eight ballads listed in the 16th century Salvá manuscript (El I de Abraham). Modern Peninsular versions have been published by José María de Cossío⁴⁵ and Diego Catalán⁴⁶.

2. El sacrificio de Isaac II contains only a handful of reminiscences from the 16th century Peninsular text.

3. El robo de Dina. A 16th century version of this ballad was first published by P. Ontañón de Lope.⁴⁷ The text was reproduced by Armistead and Silverman as part of a study.⁴⁸

4. El paso del Mar Rojo is the only ballad of the "Moses" cycle to have been found in the Iberian Peninsula, not in Christian communities but among the Crypto-Jews of Portugal. Two Portuguese versions have been reproduced by Amílcar Paulo.⁴⁹

5. David Y Goliat is also derived from the 16th century loose manuscript (el V la muerte de Golias) which was later incorporated into the first part of the Silva de romances.⁵⁰ However, Bénichou does not see a connection with Durán's version:

No hay mucha relación entre este y otro romance de Sepúlveda más largo, detallado y erudito (Durán, 449) ... sus semejanzas sólo resultan del patrón bíblico común.⁵¹

6. Tamar y Amnón is not one of the ballads named in the 16th century manuscript. The only archaic text known is Durán's 17th century version, which Bénichou describes as:

artificiosa, pesada, tiene poco que ver con ésta...
Hubo de existir...un original común de las modernas,
judías y no judías.⁵²

Although there is no known original version of Tamar y Amnón, the ballad lives in the modern Peninsular tradition. It is popular in many parts of Spain and Portugal and has been published in several collections.⁵³ Manuel Alvar has studied it in depth.⁵⁴

7. David llora a Absalón is said to have evolved from the fourth ballad in the Salvá manuscript. The first verse ("Triste esta el rei David") has remained intact in the Eastern tradition. Two versions were reproduced in the Silva de romances.⁵⁵ The version in Durán⁵⁶ appears to establish a link between the older Peninsular text and the modern Sephardic versions.

8. El juicio de Salomón was probably based on one of the lost ballads from the 16th century Salvá manuscript (el VIII del rey Salomon), although this may be difficult to prove. Otherwise, the ballad is not known outside of the Moroccan tradition.

9. La tormenta calmada. According to Armistead and Silverman, the Sephardic versions of this ballad, often classified as a romance religioso, "exemplify the total metamorphosis and reinterpretation of an erudite ballad which has been absorbed into oral tradition."⁵⁷ There is a significant number of published Peninsular counterparts dating as far back as 1589.⁵⁸

Thus we have strong indications that at least 9 of the 13 true romances of the Sephardic tradition are, in one way or another, linked to the Peninsular Romancero. With the exception of El paso del Mar Rojo, which has been found not in Spain but in the Crypto-Jewish communities of Portugal, all of the Peninsular biblical ballads have been traced to archaic versions. Two ballads in particular have survived the test of time and into the twentieth century not only in the Judeo-Spanish but also in the Spanish Peninsular tradition. They are El sacrificio de Isaac and Tamar y Amnón.

As far as the other 18 ballads are concerned, those more appropriately classified as canciones [see chart in Section A of this chapter], the evidence indicates that they

may indeed be a product of post-Expulsion Sephardic culture with no direct ties to the Peninsula. In any case, it is difficult to determine which literary and cultural currents from the Peninsula continued to influence the Judeo-Spanish Romancero in exile. Just to give an example, the subject of El sitio de Jerusalén, which is not biblical, seems to have been popular in Spain ever since the early Middle Ages:

El relato, de acuerdo con fuentes latino-medievales, lo recoge la Primera Crónica General (ed. R. Menéndez Pidal, Madrid, 1955), I, Cap. 183, p. 135.⁵⁹

Another Peninsular version appears in Durán's collection; it is entitled La presa de Jerusalem por Tito (# 454).

In the section that follows, we will examine in more detail the historical circumstances that have contributed to the maintaining of certain cultural links between Spain and the exiled Sephardic community, particularly that of Morocco, since the time of the Expulsion, and the effect of those circumstances on the preservation and transmission of romances.

C. SPAIN AND MOROCCO: CULTURAL TIES SINCE THE EXPULSION

As previously mentioned, there is evidence that a certain degree of communication between the Iberian Peninsula and the exiled Judeo-Spanish communities continued to take place throughout most of the 16th century [See Section A]. During the next two centuries, however, both the Moroccan and the Eastern Mediterranean Sephardim experienced a kind of cultural isolation not only from Spain but from other European countries as well. The situation lent itself to a long period of cultural introversion, whereby the exiled Sephardim, within their new environment, looked to the past to reestablish their identity as Spaniards and as Jews. In the overwhelming number of cases, it meant a strong reaffirmation of their Spanish heritage. Thus, for at least two centuries, Spanish language and customs became petrified:

La tradición hispánica, en uno y otro caso, quedaba congelada en el medio hostil - o indiferente - en que le tocó vivir.⁶⁰

In the Eastern Mediterranean communities, the Spanish tradition became frozen indefinitely. For the Levantine region especially, the 17th century signaled the end of relations of any kind with the Peninsula. And although many archaic Spanish traditions have survived to this day, they have suffered significant deterioration under the influence of local cultures.

Morocco's geographical position always made it more susceptible to the continuation of Peninsular influences. The early colonization of certain coastal cities ensured that contact would be maintained at least through the 17th century:

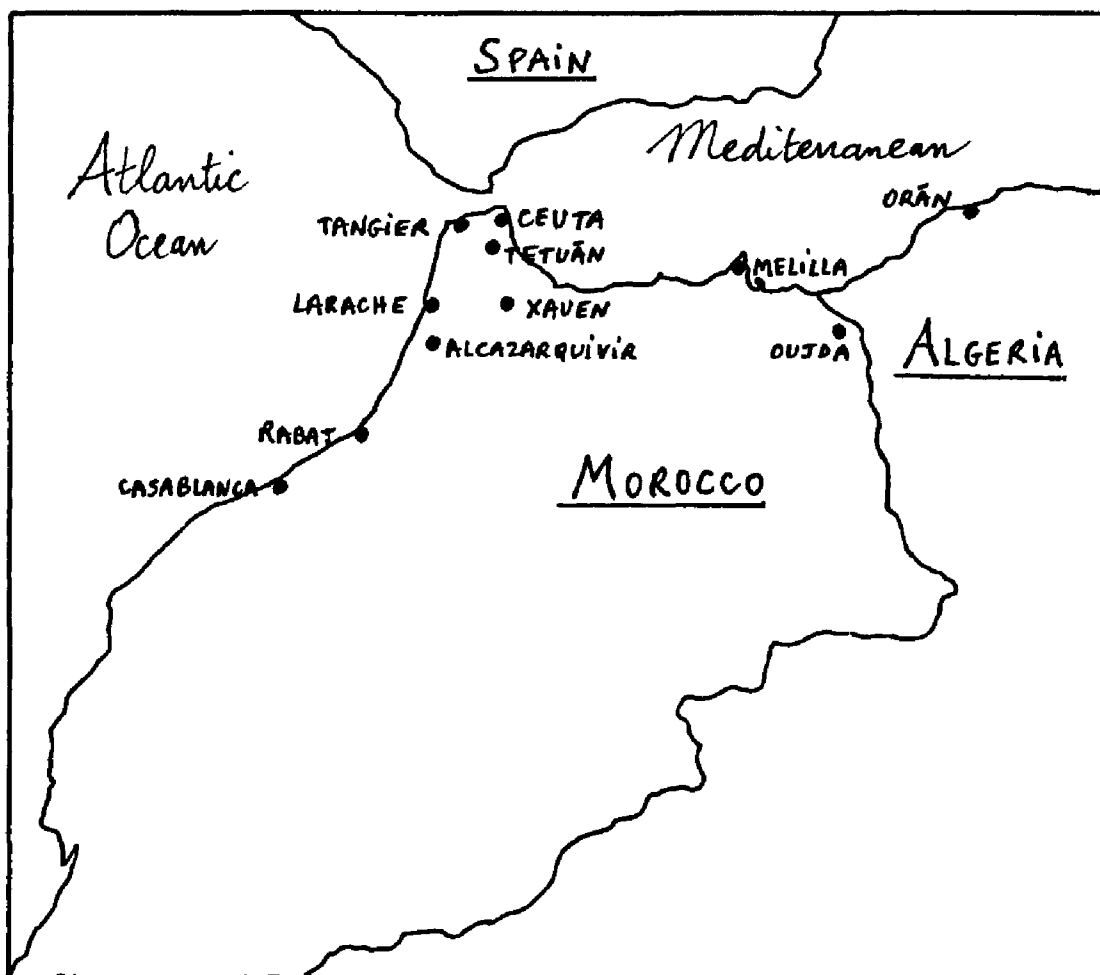
A la más activa comunicación con España ayudaban los presidios españoles de la costa: Melilla, poseída por España desde 1496; Ceuta, ocupada por los portugueses desde 1415, y luego por los españoles desde 1640; Larache, de España desde 1610 hasta 1689.⁶¹

Up until the mid-19th century, however, for more than two hundred years, the sporadic cultural exchanges that continued to take place between Spain and Morocco did not have a profound effect on the Judeo-Spanish way of life, despite the presence of Spanish colonies on Moroccan soil:

Se comprende el arcaísmo de la tradición judía: la comunicación, muy escasa e indirecta, no puede alterar un estado cultural establecido sólidamente. Es difícil creer que la llegada a Marruecos de gentes con un romance peninsular hiciera modificar un estado de tradición mantenida.⁶²

Paul Bénichou, Manuel Alvar and Manuel Ortega, among others, have examined in great depth the socio-historical factors that have contributed to the preservation of the romance tradition in Morocco. Bénichou's cronología⁶³ consists of three major periods. The first (1492-1600) is a period of very active communication with Spain: romances continue to circulate, certain events that occur in the 16th century are incorporated into Moroccan ballads, Peninsular erudite poetry continues to have an influence, etc. The

SEPHARDIC CENTERS OF NORTH AFRICA



second period (17th and 18th centuries) represents total isolation for the Eastern region; but for Morocco it is merely a period of diminished contact. The third phase (19th century) signals the European colonization of Morocco, bringing with it a revitalization of Spanish traditions.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the Jews were firmly established throughout Morocco. The largest Sephardic centers were in the cities of Tetuán, Tangier, Larache and Alcazarquivir. Alvar makes it clear that the long period of Morocco's relative isolation with respect to Spain ended in 1850 during the reign of Isabel II. General O'Donnell was apparently one of many Spanish officials to receive long letters from Moroccan Jews complaining of being ill-treated by their Moorish compatriots. Within ten years, the Spanish-Moroccan War (1859-1860) was fought and the colonization of North Africa began. To the Jewish communities of Morocco, the Spanish presence suddenly brought renewed hope:

La comunicación se hizo efectiva...con motivo de la presencia española, que vino a mejorar la situación de los judíos marroquíes... [Había] confianza hacia los nuevos vencedores.⁶⁴

But the war between Spain and Morocco did not have the same positive effects in every Jewish community. In Tetuán, where many of the bloodiest battles were fought, one of the more immediate results was the flight of thousands of Jews to other cities and into neighboring Algeria:

[La guerra hispano-marroquí] trajo de una parte, la huida de sefardíes de Tetuán a Orán y Tremecén; de

otra, la presencia activa y ya sin interrupción de gentes españolas en Marruecos.⁶⁵

Since the Spanish presence generally represented a modernizing influence, those Sephardim who fled from Tetuán and other cities at the outbreak of the war were, in the process, prolonging their isolation from Spain as well as the preservation of their archaic language and traditions. Such was the case of the Jewish community of Orán, which was largely made up of immigrants from Tetuán:

Conservaron la lengua española (no la árabe), una manera diferente de pronunciar el hebreo, costumbres y características peculiares, y el sentimiento de formar un grupo más noble que la generalidad de los judíos del país, quienes por su parte no dejaban de caricaturizarlos.⁶⁶

Within Morocco, it did not take long before improved systems of transportation and communication facilitated the displacement of large groups of people from city to city. Many Jews began to move away from large urban centers and settle in smaller towns. Sephardic communities began to grow in such cities as Ceuta, Melilla, Arcila and Xauen. In 1912, Morocco became a protectorate of France and Spain and remained so until 1956 when it was granted its independence. Although there are many other important details concerning the Spanish occupation of Morocco, what interests us most at this point is the effect that all of these events might have had on the Romancero tradition.

It is well known that the golden age of the Spanish Romancero coincided with one of the worst periods for

Iberian Jews. At the time of the Expulsion, romances had reached perhaps their greatest diffusion and popularity:

la tradición judeo-española, anterior, por lo menos en conjunto, a la expulsión de 1492, tiene sus fuentes en la época más auténticamente creadora de la historia del romancero.⁶⁷

Paradoxically, while the Peninsular tradition soon began to witness the gradual erosion of its own romances, the exiled Jews were able to preserve some of the oldest ballads known in Spain.

There has been great debate as to the regional origin of the Spanish Jews of Morocco and its ultimate importance in view of the subsequent influence of Andalusian culture. Paul Bénichou considers the region of origin to be a crucial factor, especially with regard to romances which date back to before the Expulsion. Although he admits that much of the Moroccan Romancero, and Sephardic culture in general, has been significantly affected by the traditions of southern Spain, he stresses that many of the older ballads can and should be traced to the different regions where Jews lived in the fifteenth century.⁶⁸ Menéndez Pidal, on the other hand, prefers to emphasize the re-vitalization of the Moroccan ballad tradition brought about by the import of modern Peninsular versions:

...los sefardíes marroquíes, si de antiguo poseen una tradición asociada a la de las regiones más arcaizantes de la Península (Noroste de León, Cataluña), a la vez reciben modernamente nuevo caudal de Andalucía y Levante.⁶⁹

He also finds little value in pinpointing areas of origin:

Geográficamente considerados, los dos grupos sefardíes, en conjunto, no son clasificables con relación a las regiones que hoy se delimitan en la Península, ni a las que quisiéramos suponer en el siglo XV, que totalmente desconocemos, porque desconocemos igualmente la procedencia de cada colonia, y es además presumible que en ellas se mezclaran judíos procedentes de diferentes comarcas peninsulares.⁷⁰

Manuel Alvar attempts to reconcile the two perspectives:

...hay una tradición primitiva - originaria en la región española de donde procedían estos judíos - modificada en Marruecos por la tradición andaluza - cuyo contacto puede admitirse como posterior a 1492. De este modo cabría explicar los arcaísmos de la tradición marroquí que la unen, en cierto modo, a la catalana y los neologismos que la vinculan a la meridional...⁷¹

There is little disagreement among historians, and literary critics for that matter, that the Spanish-Moroccan War of 1860, which led to the colonization of a large part of Morocco, was the turning point in the evolution of the Sephardic way of life in Morocco. Its effects on the Judeo-Spanish Romancero, however, is a question that has often been debated. Where some critics have pointed to the disintegration of archaic traditions caused by modern Peninsular influences, most agree that, in effect, one tradition served to complement and revive the other:

Para la tradición marroquí, la guerra de 1860 significó la vuelta de lo español al norte de Africa. Con ella migraron nuestros romances. Y la convivencia relativa, la protección, el viejo tronco común, acaso hayan permitido la persistencia de unos elementos que se habían empezado a borrar en el siglo XV, en el momento mismo de la creación romancesca.⁷²

And that is perhaps the most significant difference between the Sephardic ballad tradition of Morocco and that of the Eastern Mediterranean branch. Although the channels of communication between the Peninsula and the Judeo-Spanish centers of the Orient were never completely cut off, the latter did not experience Spanish colonization on any scale nor the mass importation of modern cultural elements that would allow for the revival or strengthening of Spanish traditions.

Alvar establishes three periods, as does Bénichou, for the study of the Romancero in Morocco. During the first period, which ends in 1492, Judeo-Spanish ballads have all the characteristics of the region in which they originate. In the second period, which begins after the Expulsion, the Jews of the various regions settle in new territories where regional peculiarities are made known; at this point, many of these regional differences are reconciled while others persist. The third and final period corresponds to the War of 1860, which leads to the influx of Andalusian elements into Morocco:

la guerra hispano-marroquí ... determina cambios sensibles en el emplazamiento de las comunidades sefardíes del norte de Africa; al mismo tiempo se producen aceptaciones masivas de elementos andaluces que adquieren con los años, un carácter más intenso en virtud de la proximidad geográfica y de las comunicaciones cada vez más rápidas y fáciles; al lado de estas circunstancias de índole militar o de tráfico, un aluvión de gentes andaluzas se establece en el Marruecos español.⁷³

As we mentioned earlier, the events that led to the Spanish colonization of Morocco produced two very different reactions within the Judeo-Spanish cultural sphere. While many Sephardic communities saw their traditions revitalized, others, such as Orán, reacted by regressing to more archaic forms perpetuated by the tradition of Tetuán. Manuel Alvar observed this lack of modernity as he examined Bénichou's romances (collected mostly in Orán):

...faltan bastantes elementos modernos y meridionales que yo documento en mis textos... no hay tratamientos fonéticos tan del sur como la aspiración de las consonantes finales, los plurales internos o algunos rasgos léxicos que se encuentran en Marruecos.⁷⁴

For many of the reasons just stated, be they cultural or socio-historical in nature, it has always been difficult to characterize the Sephardic ballad tradition of Morocco. Nonetheless, Bénichou has been able to summarize the major peculiarities of the Moroccan Romancero and break it all down into four series of general characteristics:⁷⁵

(1) It has a rich repertoire of ballads that have been forgotten in the Peninsular tradition; the Moroccan versions are usually better preserved than the Peninsular texts and often more complete than those of the 16th century press; the style is invariably more archaic than that of the modern Peninsular versions.

(2) It shares many of the characteristics of the modern tradition: shortened versions, artificial endings, lacunae, addition of stock formulas, contamination and confusion with

other ballads, etc. The most serious disintegration of its traditional (archaic) elements took place in this century.

(3) The process of re-creation has not changed. Today, as in the 15th and 16th centuries, there is a strong desire to preserve the substance of a ballad; this is done semi-consciously with invention, animation, dramatization, etc. The creative spirit of the Romancero has persisted, thus providing us with many interesting variants of one original text.

(4) Tradition has simplified some of the longer ballads while others have gained in length through the elaboration of particular thematic elements.

Bénichou is not the only critic who feels that the ideal way to proceed with the analysis of a particular ballad would be to start with the original text. Of course, this is not always possible.

Another aspect of the Moroccan Romancero which has come under scrutiny in the last few years deals with the presence and/or absence of traditional Christian elements in the Sephardic ballads of Peninsular origin. Bénichou, Alvar and Armistead and Silverman all agree that there has been an attempt to "de-Christianize" certain romances. According to Bénichou, this was a natural step:

Los judíos de España participaron desde los tiempos más antiguos ... en la difusión y transmisión de los poemas tradicionales de Castilla. Pero esos poemas, especialmente los romances, por estar impregnados de espíritu cristiano y sembrados de ideas y expresiones católicas

chocantes para los judíos, tuvieron que despojarse de algunas de ellas para poder incorporarse al patrimonio judeo-español.⁷⁶

He then goes on to explain exactly how this process worked and cites various examples.

Alvar finds that, despite the attempt to rid the Romancero of Christian elements, various formulas, phrases and beliefs associated with Christianity remain in certain Sephardic ballads known today. He concludes that those particular ballads were probably brought into Morocco at a much later date:

...la cristianización se conserva en aquellos casos cuya importación tardía mantiene el romance con la precisa manifestación peninsular...⁷⁷

Bénichou ultimately agrees with this opinion, as he accounts for the persistence of certain "objective" formulas despite the elimination of expressions of adherence to Christian beliefs:

...lo único que ha sido eliminado es lo que parecía implicar de parte del recitador una adhesión a las creencias o a la devoción cristiana; en cambio no estorbaba en ningún modo la alusión puramente objetiva a cosas y costumbres cristianas.⁷⁸

As Armistead and Silverman point out in their important article on de-Christianization, "the Judeo-Spanish ballads of both traditions still reflect the structure and values of the Medieval Spanish society in which they originated; a society where almost every aspect of reality - political, economic, communal, and individual - was conditioned by considerations of a religious nature."⁷⁹

Although it would be difficult, if not impossible, to list all of the collections of Moroccan ballads that are known to exist, it is important to be familiar with some of the major undertakings.⁸⁰ The following table provides the names of the major collectors and publishers of Sephardic ballads from the North African tradition as well as their geographical area of concentration:

ABBREVIATIONS USED: Al = Alcazarquivir O = Orán
 Ar = Arcila Ta = Tangier
 C = Casablanca Te = Tetuán
 L = Larache X = Xauen
 M = Melilla

[No. refers to the number of ballads collected, excluding variants.]

Year(s)	Collector	No.	Areas
1904-07	José Benoliel ⁸¹	155	Ta
1905-06	Eugenio Silvela ⁸²	55	Te
1915-16	M. Manrique de Lara ⁸³	800+	Al, L, Ta, Te
1919	Manuel Ortega ⁸⁴	22	Te, Ta
1922	Américo Castro ⁸⁵	59	L, Ta, Te, X
1923	M. J. Benardete ⁸⁶	17	Ta, Te
1929	Zarita Nahón ⁸⁷	66	Ta
1939-44	Paul Bénichou ⁸⁸	68	O, Te
1948	Diego Catalán ⁸⁹	32	Te
1948-51	J. Martínez Ruiz ⁹⁰	127	Al
1949-59	Manuel Alvar ⁹¹	250+	L, M, Te
1950-52	A. Larrea Palacín ⁹²	200+	Te
1962-63	Armistead, Silverman, Katz ⁹³	600+	Al, Ar, C, L, M, Ta, Te
1971-73	Oro A. Librowicz ⁹⁴	235	Ta, Te

This is by no means a complete list of collections and/or publications of the Moroccan ballads. There has been a great deal of important fieldwork in the last few decades which we have not mentioned either because its primary focus has not

been the North African tradition or because the number of ballads collected is not very significant by comparison. There are, for example, collections of ballads from Ceuta, Casablanca, Gibraltar and other North African traditions which have not been included in our list.⁹⁵ The work of musicologists, such as Isaac Levy⁹⁶ and, more recently, Israel J. Katz⁹⁷, among many others, must also be taken into consideration. Finally, there are certain collectors who simply have not made their fieldwork known to the academic community⁹⁸.

When we speak of the peculiarities of the Moroccan Romancero in relation to the ballad tradition of the Eastern Mediterranean, we must be aware of a number of key differences in terminology. First of all, the archaic Judeo-Spanish dialect spoken in Morocco for many centuries has been historically referred to by those who speak it, not as "Ladino" or "Judezmo", but as "Hakitía" [See Chapter VI]. Secondly, the ballads are not usually called romances, as they are in Spain (or romanzas, as in the Balkans) but cantares:

La palabra 'cantar' es la única empleada entre los judíos españoles de Marruecos residentes en Orán para designar los romances, término que ignoran.⁹⁹

Los romances son llamados 'cantares' por los judíos de Tetuán.¹⁰⁰

Most scholars of the Romancero have tried to make a clear distinction between true ballads (romances or cantares) and popular folksongs (canciones or cantos):

Existían otros cantos que servían para las bodas, los acontecimientos religiosos y la liturgia, y constituían fuera del romancero, un fondo tradicional importante.¹⁰¹

To those who have preserved the oral tradition and continue to recite these ballads in our days, however, the scholarly distinction is not always clear. Although in some cases the term cantar may be used to distinguish a true ballad from a folksong, in the majority of situations the distinction is not made at all.

D. THE BALLAD OF THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

As we concluded in Section B of this chapter, there seem to be only two Judeo-Spanish biblical ballads known in the modern Peninsular tradition: Tamar y Amnón and El sacrificio de Isaac. Although Tamar y Amnón is inspired in a Scriptural passage (II Samuel 13), the theme and subject matter clearly link it to the romances de incesto popular in the Sephardic and Peninsular branches. This biblical tale, which has been largely ignored in rabbinic writings, does not appear to be very popular in the Jewish tradition outside of the Moroccan Romancero. In Peninsular literature, however, it is the subject not only of a popular traditional ballad¹⁰² but also of a 17th century play¹⁰³ and a poem by García Lorca.¹⁰⁴

The ballad known as El sacrificio de Isaac is quite a different case. Unlike Tamar y Amnón, it is based on one of the central episodes in the Scriptures. The narrative of Abraham's willingness to carry out the sacrifice of his son as living proof of his faith in God, has not only been one of the most popular biblical tales of the Jewish tradition (often referred to as the Akedah) but also a story of deep symbolism:

The Akedah became in Jewish thought the supreme example of self-sacrifice in obedience to God's will and the symbol of Jewish martyrdom throughout the ages.¹⁰⁵

References to the Akedah and its meaning for Judaism abound in rabbinic literature [See Chapters II and VI]. But the episode has also had a marked influence on two other major religions:

In early Christian doctrine, the sacrifice of Isaac is used as a type for the sacrifice of Jesus ... In Islam, the Akedah is held up for admiration (Koran 37:97-111), but the more accepted opinion is that it was Ishmael, Abraham's other son and the progenitor of the Arabs, who was bound on the altar and that the whole episode took place before Isaac's birth.¹⁰⁶

The significance of the biblical tale in early Christianity may or may not explain the uninterrupted transmission and continued popularity of the ballad in the Peninsular Romancero. It does, however, point to the universality of the theme. In literature, in music, in art, in folklore and in religious thought the Akedah has inspired many great works.

In Spain, the theme of the sacrifice of Isaac appears to have been popular in literature and folklore ever since the early Middle Ages. Many of the Jewish poets of medieval Spain wrote their own piyyutim (liturgical poems) on the Akedah based not merely on the Scriptural account but also on extra-biblical sources such as the Talmud and the body of biblical legends known as "Midrash" [See Chapter II]. In Christian circles, the story came to represent one man's unremitting faith in God. In El libro de los exenplos, two stories are told to illustrate the axiom that, in this life, God is above all else (Exenplo no. 109: "Quien a Dios ama en

esta vida, por su amor todas las cosas olvida"). Both tales immediately call to mind the Akedah, although no names are mentioned. The first reads as follows:

Un buen ombre vino al abbat del monesterio del Siste queriendo tomar el habito de monje.

E dixole el abbat: -¿Tienes alguna cosa alla en el mundo?

E dixole: -Padre, tengo un fijo.

Dixole el abbat: -Sy monje quieres ser, ves e echa esse tu fijo en el rrio.

E el yendose para fazer lo que mandara el abbat, inbio un monje en pos del que non feziesse lo que mandara el abbat. E el teniendo el fijo para lançarlo en el rrio, dixo el monje: -¡Guarda, non lo fagas!

E el dixo: -El abbat me lo mando.

E el monje rrespondio: -Si estonçe assi te lo mando, agora manda que lo non fagas.

E el dexo el fijo e vinosse para el abbat, e fue monje santo.¹⁰⁷

In this tale, it is not God but the abbot himself who commands the father to kill his son, and it is a friar who intervenes. The didactic objective of this story has allowed God and the archangel of the biblical account to be transformed into an abbot and his friar. What is being tested is not merely the father's faith in God but his devotion to the principles of the Christian Church. The second story tells of a similar situation, but with an added twist:

E fue otro monje santo que por un fijo que dexava en el mundo estava triste en el monesterio.

E dixole el abbat: -Ve e trahelo contigo.

E fue e traxolo. El abbat tomolo en los braços e besolo e dixo al monje: -¿Amaslo?

E dixo: -Padre, si amo.

E otra vez le dixo abbat: -¿Amaslo de todo coraçon?

E dixo: -Padre, mucho lo amo.

E dixo el abbat: -Tomalo e echalo en el forno que esta ardiendo. E sin otra deliberacion luego lo fizo, e el forno asi fue rresfriado que non fizo daño al niño.¹⁰⁸

There are other examples that point to an interest on the part of Spanish artists and writers in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. A manifestation of this in Golden Age literature is a 16th century play entitled Auto del sacrificio de Abraham. In fact, 26 of the 96 religious plays listed in the Codex at the Biblioteca Nacional are inspired in the Hebrew Scriptures, as Frederick Lehner has noted:

...two of these plays treat Adam, one treats Cain and Abel, three deal with Abraham, four with Jacob, two with Joseph and three with Moses, the lawgiver...one-fourth of the entire corpus was taken from the Hebrew Bible, which proves how useful the plots seemed to be for dramatists, and how well they lent themselves to the special treatment of playwrights.¹⁰⁹

In the first half of the 16th century, Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, who may have been a converso, wrote several farsas dealing with many of the same biblical heroes encountered in the romances, among them a Farsa de Abraham and a Farsa de Isaac.¹¹⁰ In art, there are numerous drawings and illuminations depicting the Akedah found in medieval Spanish manuscripts; in the Alba Bible, although Hebrew Bible illustrations are not common; and in many Judeo-Spanish Haggadot (stories of the Exodus from Egypt).

It is clear that we are dealing with a biblical episode that is quite popular in Western culture and that has come to have a distinct symbolic importance for each of the three great religions of medieval Spain. There is also strong evidence that the romance tradition dealing with the story of Abraham and Isaac had its beginnings in 15th century

Spain, at a time when Jews and Christians continued to live on the same soil and share in the same culture.

The subject of our dissertation is the treatment of this well-known biblical passage (Genesis 22) in the ballad traditions of Spain, Portugal and the Judeo-Spanish communities in exile. The wide diffusion in modern times of El sacrificio de Isaac in the Peninsular and Sephardic branches of the Romancero will require a comparative analysis of both traditions [see Chapter III]. The existence of more archaic versions (16th and 17th century) and the recent discovery of a Portuguese Crypto-Jewish text linked to the older Peninsular ballad will also allow us to study the evolution of El sacrificio de Isaac through its five centuries of existence [see Chapter IV].

However, before we engage in synchronic and diachronic analyses of the many versions and variants of this popular ballad, it is imperative to pinpoint and study its sources. The common classification of El sacrificio de Isaac as "biblical" merely tells us that it is based on a passage from Scripture. Even a superficial reading of the ballad would reveal the presence of many narrative elements not at all mentioned nor implied in the biblical account. Although some critics have alluded to the influence of extra-biblical sources, concrete examples have been scarce. As we shall clearly see in the next chapter, many of the scenes, situations and dialogues that have become such an integral

part of the romance throughout the generations are, in fact, directly inspired in the biblical legends of Jewish folk tradition commonly known as "Midrash." As one would assume, midrashic elements abound in the Sephardic versions. Curiously, however, many of those elements also appear in the Peninsular versions, old and modern.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹ Ramón Menéndez Pidal is in the forefront of those who consider the romance tradition to be the "lifeblood" of Spanish literature:

El Romancero,... por su tradicionalismo, por la cantidad de vida histórica que representa y por la multitud de reflejos estéticos y morales, es quinta-esencia de características españolas... podemos repetir con verdad que España es el país del Romancero. (Flor nueva de romances viejos, p. 46).

² Menéndez Pidal's theory on the origin of romances appears in many of his works. A thorough explanation may be found in his Romancero Hispánico. Teoría e Historia, 2 vols (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953). Menéndez Pidal was not the first to trace the oral poetic tradition of Spain from cantares de gesta to ballads. The theories of Milá y Fontanals (De la poesía heroica-popular castellana, Barcelona, 1874) and Menéndez y Pelayo (Tratado de los romances viejos, vols. VI and VII of Antología de poetas líricos castellanos, Santander, 1944) represented the first serious challenge to the Romantic notion that long epic poems were nothing more than a compilation of shorter ballads dealing with a particular character or theme.

³ Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Romancero Hispánico (hispano-portugués, americano y sefardí), vol. II (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953), p. 333.

⁴ Paul Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos (Madrid: Castalia, 1968), p. 10.

⁵ Manuel Alvar López, Poesía tradicional de los judíos españoles (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1966), p. X.

⁶ Alvar, Poesía tradicional, pp. X-XI.

⁷ Menéndez Pidal, "Catálogo del romancero judío-español" in Los romances de América y otros estudios (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1941), p. 135.

⁸ Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XI.

⁹ Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 10. Bénichou is no doubt referring to 10 ballads from Salonika published by Menéndez y Pelayo in Antología de poetas líricos castellanos, vol. IX, pp. 395-402. However, there were other less known publications of Sephardic ballads; for example, Haim Bidjarano included a handful of ballads in an

article entitled "Los judíos españoles de Oriente, lengua y literatura popular" in Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza, IX (1885), pp. 23-27. Bidjarano transcribed the text phonetically in an effort to reflect the Judaeo-Spanish pronunciation.

¹⁰ Menéndez Pidal first published his celebrated Catálogo del romancero judío-español in Cultura Española, (nov. 1906 - feb. 1907). It was reprinted in 1928 (El Romancero, teorías e investigaciones, pp. 101-183) and in 1941 (Los Romances de América y otros estudios, pp. 128-199).

¹¹ There were at least three important collections of Sephardic ballads published before 1906: ABRAHAM DANON published 45 ballads with French translations in "Recueil des romances judéo-espagnoles chantées en Turquie", Revue des Etudes Juives, XXXII (1896), pp. 102-123, 263-275, XXXIII (1896), 122-139, 255-268; ABRAHAM GALANTE compiled 14 ballads recorded in Turkey in "Quatorze romances judéo-espagnoles", Revue Hispanique, X (1903), pp. 594-606; and LEO WIENER used phonetic symbols to transcribe 28 songs and ballads of the Eastern Sephardic tradition in "Songs of the Spanish Jews in the Balkan Peninsula", Modern Philology, I (1903-04), pp. 205-216, 259-274. Danon's collection contains one biblical ballad (later to be identified by Menéndez Pidal as Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham); Galante includes a romance which tells of the death of Absalom (known as David llora a Absalón in the Catálogo); Wiener's collection includes 5 biblical songs: two variants of the Abraham ballad (IV, XIX), two songs about Moses (II, XXIII), and one version of Rahel, nuestra madre.

¹² Menéndez Pidal, Romancero Hispánico, II, p. 330.

¹³ YACOB ABRAHAM YONÁ published Güerta de romansos importantes (Salonika, 1910), followed by Brošura de romansas importantes (Salonika, 1913). Menéndez Pidal qualified the ballads contained in Yoná's collection as: ...de los más viejos, que pueden competir en rareza y arcaísmo con los que recogía el Cancionero de Amberes al mediar el siglo XVI. (Romancero hispánico, p. 331). More recently, Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman have edited a volume of Yoná's ballad collection, entitled The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacov Abraham Yoná (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971). Each ballad is followed by a synopsis in English and a detailed study.

¹⁴ Menéndez Pidal, Romancero Hispánico, II, p. 332.

- 15 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. IX.
- 16 Samuel G. Armistead, with the collaboration of Selma Margaretten, Paloma Montero and Ana Valenciano, El Romancero judeo-español en el Archivo Menéndez Pidal (Catálogo-índice de romances y canciones) (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1978).
- 17 Ignacio González Llubera, "Three Jewish Spanish Ballads in Ms. British Museum Add. 26967", Medium Aevum VII (1938), pp. 26-28.
- 18 Ishak de Abraham Cohen de Lara (ed.), Comedia famosa de Aman y Mordochay (Leyden: Cohen de Lara, 1699), pp. 78-79.
- 19 J. A. van Praag, "Dos comedias sefarditas", Neophilologus, XXV (1940), p. 23.
- 20 Van Praag, p. 23.
- 21 Edward Glaser, "Un patriarca bíblico en el Romancero," Sefarad 16 (1956), pp. 113-123.
- 22 Arcadio de Larrea Palacín, Romances de Tetuán (Madrid: C. S. I. C., Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1952), pp. 173-183 (ballad CVII, text 217).
- 23 Moshe Attias, Romancero sefaradí (Jerusalem: Instituto Ben Zewi, Universidad Hebrea, 1961), ballad 128.
- 24 Attias, Romancero sefaradí, pp. 316-315.
- 25 Soon after the publication of Menéndez Pidal's Catálogo, Rodolfo Gil brought out his Romancero judeo-español (Madrid: Imprenta Alemana Fuencarral, 1911) which contained 3 biblical ballads; José Benoliel published newly recorded versions of 12 biblical ballads from the Moroccan tradition in "Dialecto judeo-hispano marroquí o hakitía", Boletín de la Real Academia Española XIV (1927), pp. 361-369; Larrea Palacín's combined collection (Romances de Tetuán and Canciones rituales hispano-judías) contains at least 14 songs and ballads with biblical themes; from the Eastern Sephardic tradition Michael Molho collected and published 4 versions of Nacimiento de Abraham I along with the text of three other biblical ballads in Literatura sefardita de Oriente (Madrid: C. S. I. C., 1960); Moshe Attias includes in his Romancero sefaradí 20 biblical ballads and songs which he recorded in Israel from Salonikan exiles and from his own recollections; José Martínez Ruiz collected biblical ballads in Alcazarquivir and published

them with a linguistic commentary in "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional," Archivum XIII (1963), pp. 118-139; Isaac Levy provides the text and music to 9 biblical songs in his Antología de liturgia judeo-española. 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1965); Manuel Alvar furnishes 18 biblical ballad texts in Poesía tradicional de los judíos españoles (Mexico: Porrúa, 1966), pp. 28-38; Paul Bénichou's Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos (Madrid: Castalia, 1968) contains 3 biblical ballads from Morocco. These are the collections which contain the largest number of biblical ballads and songs. There are literally dozens of other collections that have not been mentioned, some of which may contain important original versions of certain biblical ballads. Just to give an example, an article published by Armistead and Silverman entitled "Hispanic Balladry Among the Jews of the West Coast" in Western Folklore 19 (1960) contains only one biblical ballad, which happened to be the first recording of El paso del Mar Rojo in the United States.

26 There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of ballads recorded, mostly in the last decade, among the Sephardim living in the United States, in cities like New York, Seattle, Los Angeles and Atlanta. Two collections in particular contain a good number of biblical ballads. These are: Armistead and Silverman's Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York (from the Benardete collection) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) and Rina Benmayor's Romances judeo-españoles de Oriente (Madrid: Gredos, 1979) which contains 3 biblical ballads recorded in Los Angeles and Seattle.

27 Royce W. Miller. "A Linguistic and Literary Study of the Sephardic Romancero: Historical, Moorish, Carolingian, Biblical and Classical Ballads." 2 vols. (St. Louis: George Washington University, 1967).

28 Royce W. Miller, "The Biblical Ballads of the Sephardic Jews", Hispanic Review 37 (1969), pp. 352-361.

29 Manuel Alvar, "Amnón y Tamar en el romancero marroquí", Vox Romanica, XV (1956), pp. 241-258.

30 Diego Catalán, "El sacrificio de Isaac: Ejemplo de recreación colectiva", Por campos del Romancero (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), pp. 56-75.

31 Edward Glaser, "Un patriarca bíblico..."

32 Miller, "Biblical Ballads", p. 352.

33 Royce W. Miller affirms that "the reference in 'Sacrifice of Isaac' to the ten tests... comes from the Haggadic tradition..." ("Biblical Ballads", p. 354); Catalán refers to various scenes in the same ballad when he says "una serie de motivos y escenas basadas en el relato bíblico y en la tradición talmúdica..." (Por Campos, p. 72); González Llubera explains that "the division of the Red Sea into twelve paths is mentioned in 'Tanhuma, Besallah, sect. Wayehi.'" ("Three Jewish Spanish Ballads", p.27).

34 Miller, "Biblical Ballads", p. 358.

35 Armistead, "El Romancero judeo-español en el archivo Menéndez Pidal", p. 32.

36 Menéndez y Pelayo, Antología de poetas líricos castellanos, vol. X (Madrid: Perlado, Paez y Ca., 1913), p. 197 n.

37 Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, p. 337.

38 Armistead and Silverman, "Christian Elements and De-Christianization in the Sephardic Romancero" in Collected Studies in Honour of Américo Castro's Eightieth Year (Oxford: Lincombe Lodge Research Library, 1965), p. 24.

39 Armistead, "Christian Elements", p. 24, n. 11.

40 Armistead, "Christian Elements", p. 24.

41 See Armistead and Silverman, "Hispanic Balladry among the Sephardic Jews of the West Coast," Western Folklore, XIX (1960), pp. 229-244: No. 3.

42 Agustín Durán, Romancero general, vol. XVI of "Biblioteca de Autores Españoles" (Madrid: Imprenta de Rivadeneyra, 1848-51), ballads # 449-454.

43 See Catalán, Por campos del Romancero, p. 64, n.20 and p. 73, n. 31, 32. The full title of the 16th century manuscript, as given by Catalán, contains the names of nine ballads: "Nueve Romances. El I de Abraham. El II del rey Saul. El III del rey Daud. El IIII del rey Daud. El V de la muerte de Golias. El VI de la aleuosia que hizo Jacob a Esau. El VII de Bersabe. El VIII del rey Salomon. El IX del Nacimiento (viñetita de madera representativa del sacrificio de Isaac), s. l. ni a. [hacia 1535]. 4. let. got."

- 44 Rodríguez-Moñino, A., Silva de romances (Zaragoza, 1550-1551) (Zaragoza: Publicaciones de la Cátedra Zaragoza, 1970).
- 45 J. M. de Cossío and T. Maza Solano, Romancero popular de La Montaña, vol. 1 (Santander: Talleres tipográficos de la Librería moderna, 1933-34), pp. 23-26, no. 1-3.
- 46 Catalán, Por campos del romancero, pp. 57-64.
- 47 P. Ontañón de Lope, "Veintisiete romances del siglo XVI", Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, XV (1961), pp. 180-192, ballad # 15 ("A caça salia Dina, / la hija del gran Jacob").
- 48 Armistead and Silverman, The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yoná, pp. 120-121, ballad no. 8.
- 49 Amílcar Paulo, Romanceiro criptojudáico: Subsídios para o estudo do folclore marrano (Bragança: Escola Tipográfica, 1969), pp. 10, 18.
- 50 Rodríguez-Moñino, Silva de romances (1550-51), pp. 123-124 ("Ese gran rey de Israel / que Saul por nombre haúa"). See also Rodríguez-Moñino, Diccionario bibliográfico de pliegos sueltos poéticos (Madrid: Castalia, 1970), no. 951.
- 51 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 111.
- 52 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 114.
- 53 For published modern Peninsular versions of Tamar y Amnón see: J. M. de Cossío, Romancero popular de La Montaña, no. 4-7; J. Amades, Folklore de Catalunya (Barcelona: Editorial Selecta, 1951), no. 3264; J. Leite de Vasconcellos, Romanceiro português (Coimbra: Por ordem da Universidade, 1958-60), nos. 515-516, 1014; Diego Catalán et al., La flor de la marañuela: Romancero general de las Islas Canarias (Madrid: Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1969), no. 23.
- 54 Manuel Alvar, El Romancero: Tradicionalidad y pervivencia (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1970), pp. 163-245. Also, "Amnón y Tamar en el romancero marroquí", Vox Romanica, XV (1956), pp. 241-258.
- 55 Rodríguez-Moñino, Silva de romances, pp. 126-127; Also in Diccionario de pliegos, no. 951.
- 56 Durán, Romancero General, no. 453.

- 57 Armistead, Yoná, p. 138.
- 58 The earliest Peninsular version of La tormenta calmada appears in Pedro de Moncayo's Flor de varios romances nuevos y canciones (Huesca, 1589), fol. 121 r-v. A 1593 version is reproduced in the Romancero general de 1600 (no. 193) and in Durán's Romancero general (no. 1525).
- 59 Armistead, El romancero judeo-español en el Archivo Menéndez Pidal, I, p. 224.
- 60 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. IX.
- 61 Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, II, p. 338.
- 62 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XIII.
- 63 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, pp. 283-284.
- 64 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XII.
- 65 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XIX.
- 66 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 12.
- 67 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 10.
- 68 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, pp. 285-286.
- 69 Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, II, pp. 338-339.
- 70 Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, II, p. 339.
- 71 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XV.
- 72 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XVI.
- 73 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, pp. XIX-XX.
- 74 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XIX.
- 75 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, pp. 281-282.
- 76 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 287.
- 77 Alvar, Poesía tradicional, p. XVI.
- 78 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 288.
- 79 Armistead and Silverman, "Christian Elements", p. 34.

80 Armistead and Silverman list and discuss the major collections of Moroccan ballads in their introduction (pp. 15-22) to Romances judeo-españoles de Tánger (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1977).

81 Most of José Benoliel's collection of 155 ballads became part of Menéndez Pidal's Catálogo. See Armistead's Catálogo-Índice, encuestas 4-8, 10-11.

82 These 55 unpublished ballads have become part of Menéndez Pidal's private collection; see S. G. Armistead et al., El Romancero judeo-español en el Archivo Menéndez Pidal (Catálogo-Índice de romances y canciones), 3 vols. (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1978), "Índice de encuestas", encuesta 17.

83 See Armistead's Catálogo-Índice, encuestas 175-189, 196-206.

84 Manuel Ortega, Los hebreos en Marruecos, 1st ed. (Madrid: Editorial Hispano Africana, 1919), pp. 233-261. Most of the ballads contained in this volume were originally collected and musically transcribed by Antonio Bustelo.

85 According to Armistead and Silverman (Romances judeo-españoles de Tánger, p. 16), Américo Castro visited Morocco in the winter of 1922 and collected 59 Sephardic ballads, mostly from Tetuán, which have never been published.

86 M.J. Benardete, "Los romances judeo-españoles en Nueva York" (Nueva York: Columbia University, 1923). As part of his Master's thesis, M. J. Benardete collected a number of Sephardic ballads in New York, 13 of which are of North African origin.

87 The ballads collected by Zarita Nahón in Tangier in 1929 have been edited and published by Armistead and Silverman in Romances judeo-españoles de Tánger (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1977).

88 Many of Paul Bénichou's ballads from Tetuán and Orán were collected in Buenos Aires. There were first published in "Romances judeo-españoles de Marruecos", Revista de Filología Hispánica, IV (1944), pp. 36-76, 105-138, 255-279, 313-381; they reappeared in Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos, 2nd. ed. (Madrid: Castalia, 1968).

89 See Armistead's Catálogo-Índice, encuestas 265-268.

90 José Martínez Ruiz, "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional (Alcazarquivir)", Archivum, XIII (1963), pp. 79-215.

91 It is difficult to specify the exact number of ballads collected by Manuel Alvar in his ten years of fieldwork in Morocco. Most of them have been published but are scattered throughout his many works [See Bibliography]. His anthology entitled Poesía tradicional de los judíos españoles (México: Porrúa, 1966) contains 257 ballads.

92 Arcadio de Larrea Palacín, Romances de Tetuán, 2 vols. and Canciones rituales hispano-judías (Madrid: C. S. I. C., Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1952 and 1954).

93 In 1962-63, Samuel G. Armistead, Joseph H. Silverman and Israel J. Katz visited all the Judaeo-Spanish communities in Morocco and collected hundreds of ballads. Israel J. Katz provides some information about this fieldwork in Bulletin of the International Folk Music Council (London), no. XXIII (April 1963), "Newsletter, No. 7", p. 15.

94 Oro Anahory Librowicz, "Florilegio de romances sefardíes de la diáspora," doctoral dissertation (New York: Columbia University, 1974).

95 See Armistead and Silverman's introduction to Romances judeo-españoles de Tánger (pp.15-25) for a more complete account of Moroccan ballad collections.

96 Isaac Levy, Chants judéo-espagnols (London: World Sephardi Federation, 1959). Levy's collection contains at least 9 Moroccan ballads with musical transcription.

97 Israel J. Katz, "Judeo-Spanish Traditional Ballads from Jerusalem," doctoral thesis, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1967).

98 One such collector is Tomás García Figueras, who apparently visited the Jewish communities of Alcazarquivir, Larache, Arcila, Tangier, Tetuán and Xauen in 1936 and recorded a number of ballads. The only text known, however, is a version of El sacrificio de Isaac collected in Larache and published in Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa, I (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954), pp. 697-700. As mentioned earlier, Américo Castro also collected but never published more than 50 Moroccan ballads [See note 83].

99 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 13.

- 100 Larrea Palacín, Romances de Tetuán, I, p. 25.
- 101 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 13.
- 102 For a comparison of the Sephardic and Peninsular traditions of Tamar y Amnón, see Manuel Alvar, El Romancero: Tradicionalidad y Pervicencia (Barcelona: Planeta, 1970), pp. 163-245.
- 103 Tirso de Molina, La venganza de Tamar. See Manuel Alvar, "Amnón y Tamar en el romancero marroquí", Vox Romanica, XV (1956), pp. 256-257.
- 104 Federico García Lorca, Thamar y Amnón (no. 18 in Romancero Gitano).
- 105 Encyclopedia Judaica, "Akedah", p. 480.
- 106 Encyclopedia Judaica, "Akedah", p. 481.
- 107 John Esten Keller, ed. El libro de los exenplos (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1961), p. 100.
- 108 Keller, El libro de los exenplos, pp. 100-101.
- 109 Frederick Lehner, "The Influence of the Bible on European Literature." In Louis Finkelstein, ed., The Jews, vol. III (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 412.
- 110 Diego Sánchez also wrote farsas dealing with Moses, King Solomon, King David, Amnon and Thamar, all important characters in the Sephardic biblical ballads. The complete texts of these farsas may be found in Frida Weber de Kurlat's collection entitled Recopilación en metro (Sevilla, 1554) (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1968).

CHAPTER II

MIDRASHIC MOTIFS IN EL SACRIFICIO DE ISAAC

A. THE POST-BIBLICAL TRADITION: MISHNAH, TALMUD AND MIDRASH

Scholars of biblical narrative style generally agree that one of the most salient characteristics of the Hebrew Scriptures is its tendency to condense, to understate, to imply rather than to explain, thereby leaving a great deal to the imagination:

Biblical narrative is notable for its extreme economy. Rarely does it present more than the bare minimum about a physical setting, character, or speech. Almost nothing is known about the physical features of a character... Rarely do more than two characters converse in a biblical scene at once. Rarely does the narrator interject his own commentary on the action. And most important, rarely are a character's thoughts or motives explained.¹

The biblical passage which tells of father Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22) is considered to be, as Joel Rosenberg puts it, "one of the most poignant examples of this understated style."² In effect, although Abraham's motive, namely his desire to prove his faith in God, is clearly implied, neither his nor Isaac's inner thoughts and feelings are ever revealed. Abraham's only words to Isaac is the well-known response, "God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt-offering" (Genesis 22:8). This laconic style, so typical of the Scriptures, often

breeds ambiguity and leads inevitably to multiple interpretations of the same text:

Abraham here is a model of tact. Not only does he conceal his own inner torment about the impending sacrifice, but he manages to leave his answer ambiguous enough to anticipate either of two outcomes: God "will provide Himself the lamb," namely, "my son," or God "will provide himself the lamb" from some other source, as indeed turns out to be the case.³

Thus, the interpretation of Scripture became a central preoccupation of rabbis very early on. Until the second century C.E., commentaries of the biblical text were handed down faithfully by the leaders of one generation to the next. This body of biblical exegesis transmitted orally over a period of many centuries became known as the "Oral Torah." When the task of compiling and organizing this vast collection of rabbinic teachings was completed, at the beginning of the third century, the resulting "recapitulation" of the Oral Torah became popularly known as the Mishnah. The importance of this document within the Jewish literary tradition cannot be overstated:

The Mishnah is the core document of the Talmudic tradition. Composed in very terse language and arranged topic by topic over a wide range of subjects, the Mishnah looks much like a code of Jewish law... Full of unresolved legal disputes and liberally sprinkled with nonlegal materials (stories, interpretations of Scripture, and so on), the Mishnah probably represents an early attempt to reduce the Oral Torah to an official compilation, to prepare some authoritative statement of the minimal amount of learning a disciple had to acquire for admittance to advanced rank in the rabbinic movement. The Mishnah is thus the earliest teaching-text, the oldest curriculum of Jewish learning in the world today.⁴

The contents of the Mishnah traditionally fall into two categories: "Halachah" refers to the sections dealing with the legal principles and codes as interpreted by Rabbis over many generations; "Aggadah" refers to the stories and allegories woven into the "halachic" discussions. Both in terms of textual length and eventual impact on the Jewish way of life, the halachic material by far supersedes the aggadic. Within a generation of its appearance, the Mishnah itself had become the subject of intensive study:

The first generation applied itself chiefly to clarifying passages of the Mishnah that seemed obscure, but this work was soon accomplished, and rabbinic attention moved on to other concerns: extracting general principles of action from the particular rules that the Mishnah supplies, or expanding the collection of recorded precedents and actual applications of Mishnah-law in functioning rabbinic courts.⁵

This subsequent interpretation of the Mishnah, which was undertaken between the second and seventh centuries of the present era, was referred to in most circles as the Guemara (meaning "study" in Aramaic). The Guemara together with the Mishnah comprise what we know today as the Talmud.

Through the centuries, the Talmud was regarded by Jews to be their unique authoritative guide, their most reliable point of reference with regard to both secular and religious matters. Whereas the Hebrew Scriptures had become the foundation for other religions, the Talmud was indeed their own. In medieval Spain, Jewish philosophers from Maimonides to Joseph Caro expressed great interest in and worked toward

the codification of the great mass of Jewish law and practice as contained in the Talmud. The Christian population, on the other hand, soon began to regard the Talmud as a threat to their identity:

Desde el siglo XIII los cristianos españoles consideraron que el Talmud era una obra peligrosa, que contenía además injurias contra su propia religión; para ellos se trataba de un libro desconocido escrito en una lengua indescifrable.⁶

The heavy emphasis of the talmudic tractates on "Halachah" (legal precepts) would lead one to suspect that the Talmud would have little to say about the inner thoughts, feelings, motives, etc. of biblical heroes. In large measure, this is true. Indeed, the popularization of Aggadot (plural of "Aggadah") antedates the Talmud:

After the great religious revival under Ezra during the mid-fifth century B.C. when the Pentateuch was canonized, religious practice required that the Torah be read publicly every Sabbath, Monday, and Thursday. In order to make biblical story more meaningful to the listeners and to fill the obvious gaps in the biblical narrative, the expounders of the Torah developed aggadic explanations.⁷

There is no doubt that many of these early commentaries of the biblical text found their way into the Mishnah. On the other hand, much of it was left untouched by the talmudists. In time a large body of extra-biblical, non-talmudic oral literature began to develop among the Jewish masses. Its foundation was Scripture, although it borrowed freely from local folk tradition, perhaps in an effort to appeal to the younger generation of Jews:

As the Jews were conquered and reconquered by successive foreign lords, as they were alternately driven and persecuted, and as Jewish youth was wooed by successively more seductive cultures, there was greater and greater need for folk heroes and glorifying myths. "Aggadah" provided them; it became a form of emotional and spiritual support for the distressed Jews. So every sabbath and holiday the preachers wove wonderful stories and allegories and mystical meanings for the people.⁸

This oral literary tradition came to be known as "Midrash." It was an important development in Jewish culture, for it served to "illustrate" the Bible, to make it come to life. Although its original purpose was to instill a greater feeling of ethnic identity and "national" pride among certain segments of the Jewish population, it eventually formed a body of literature worthy in and of itself. The eclectic nature of the stories known as "Midrashim" were, in many ways, a reflection of Jewish life in the Diaspora.

In the broad sense of the term, "Midrash" has come to mean "investigation" and "interpretation" of Scripture:

MIDRASH..., the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature constituting an anthology and compilation of homilies, consisting of both biblical exegesis and sermons delivered in public as well as "aggadot" or "halakhot" and forming a running aggadic commentary on specific books of the Bible.⁹

In a narrower sense, however, the term has been used to distinguish the stories, parables and allegories that have evolved through the centuries in various Jewish folk traditions from those specifically interwoven within the halachic material in the Talmud. We shall, henceforth, refer

to the former as "Midrash" ("Midrashim," pl.) and to the latter as "Aggadah" ("Aggadot," pl.).

It is common to divide the entire body of Midrashim into four historical periods. The Early Period (400 to 640 C.E.) is commonly known as the Golden Age of Midrash. Genesis Rabbah, considered to be the classic exegetical Midrash, was composed during this period. During the Middle Period (640 to 1000 C.E.), a large number of "narrative" Midrashim were composed, among them the well-known Pirke de Rebbe Eliezer. The Late Period (1000-1200 C.E.) shows a sharp decline in the number of midrashic compositions. Sefer ha-Yashar, also known as The Book of Jasher, was composed during this time. In the final period (1200-1550), original works give way to midrashic anthologies, hence its name "Period of Yalkutim (anthologies)."

The three collections of Midrashim mentioned in the preceding paragraph are of great interest to students of the Book of Genesis. Furthermore, they comprise the primary source for the stories and legends surrounding the biblical account of the Sacrifice of Isaac. The specific influences of these Midrashim on the romance tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac will be alluded to in the next two sections of this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

It is important to stress that the "aggadic" or "narrative" Midrashim that have come to influence some of the Spanish and Sephardic biblical ballads did not originate

in nor are contained in the Talmud. Many critics have made loose references to the term "talmudic" with regard to certain elements in these biblical ballads, perhaps not being fully aware that there is a midrashic tradition which forms a very separate and distinct literary branch. Raphael Patai lists seven "genres of Jewish literature that are, among other things, repositories of legends."¹⁰ These are:

- (1) the Bible
- (2) Apocrypha
- (3) the Talmud
- (4) Midrash
- (5) Kabbala
- (6) Folklore
- (7) Hasidism

The overwhelming majority of extra-biblical motifs found in the ballad tradition of El Sacrificio de Isaac are based not on the Talmud nor on apocryphal writings but on the Midrash. Occasionally, we may also find kabbalistic elements and a trace of local folklore. But Midrash itself implies a multiplicity of ancient and modern influences borrowed from various folk traditions through the centuries:

Midrashim did not spring full-blown from the minds of inventive sages, no matter how fertile. Story ideas were taken from folk tales of all peoples and embellished with legendary material from all the myth-creating nations. Rabbi Akiba and his disciple Rabbi Meir, both great aggadists, were acquainted with Aesop's fables...¹¹

Aesop's fables was but one of many extra-biblical sources that eventually crept into midrashic literature. What would have been considered taboo within the context of the Scriptures became legitimate material for the Midrash. One

of the most striking examples is the appearance of Satan and other demonic figures:

The Bible is remarkably free of demonology... Yet only a few centuries later, the aggadists were filling their stories with the Prince of Darkness, anthropomorphic celestial bodies, and gigantic sea beasts. These could only have been taken over from Persian and Indian mythology.¹²

The Sephardic versions of El Sacrificio de Isaac introduce a character known as the mecatreg, a Satan-like figure who spreads a false rumor about Isaac's fate which ultimately leads to Sarah's death.

Unlike the Midrash, the talmudic references to the biblical account of the Sacrifice of Isaac do not attempt to explain the motives and reactions, thoughts and feelings of either of the two biblical heroes. Most of the allusions in the Talmud to this episode deal with halachic principles regarding the symbolism of the ram's horn and the rules for the blowing of the shofar. It is mainly in midrashic sources that we find the folk motifs observed in the Spanish and Sephardic Romanceros.

In the next two sections of this chapter, we shall endeavor to point out the midrashic sources found in both the Moroccan and the Peninsular ballad traditions of El Sacrificio de Isaac. In the fourth and final section, we shall demonstrate how many of the midrashic motifs surrounding the story of Abraham and Isaac found their way into the folk literature of the Sephardim, specifically in

the Meam Loez, and how these may have influenced and even been influenced by the ballad tradition. It is important to keep in mind that, unlike the Talmud and much like the Spanish Romancero, Midrash is a type of literature that has continued to evolve through time and space:

By its nature - the explanation of wonders and hidden things through illustrative stories and allegories - and because of its purpose - teaching legal and ethical values through homilies - the creation of midrashic material did not stop at any particular point in history. There was no canon of Midrashim to be closed. There was no rule that Midrashim had to be told in a particular language. Nor did they have to be composed by prophets - though ascription to a great sage was a help. So Midrashim continued to be created into the modern era.¹³

B. MIDRASHIC MOTIFS IN THE MOROCCAN VERSIONS

The ballad of El sacrificio de Isaac has the distinction of being one of only two biblical ballads also found in the modern Peninsular tradition. As in most cases, the Sephardic versions tend to follow more closely the biblical story. In fact, as we will see, some of the ballad verses have been directly borrowed from the best-known sections of the biblical text. But a close look at these ballads will also reveal more than just an indirect influence of the body of biblical legends known as "Midrash" (See section A of this chapter).

Because some versions of this ballad continue to be recited in parts of Northern Spain, it is more than likely that it was composed before the Expulsion. Diego Catalán has traced it back to the fifteenth century:

Las versiones tradicionales remontan a un romance consonantado, de carácter juglaresco, compuesto probablemente a fines del siglo XV.¹⁴

This biblical tale was undoubtedly as important to the Jews living in medieval Spain as it is today. The story of the sacrifice of Isaac was and still is customarily incorporated into the Jewish religious service throughout the year. It is read and discussed in the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the Hebrew calendar, and as one of the weekly Torah readings (which usually falls in early

December). Portions of the account are also recited on a regular basis in weekday morning services.

Since Menéndez Pidal included it in his Catálogo,¹⁵ numerous collections have been made of various versions of this ballad. According to Armistead and Silverman's latest records, however, not more than 12 Moroccan versions have been published¹⁶. We should note here that the ballad does not exist in the Eastern Sephardic tradition of the Balkans or the Middle East.

In order to trace more accurately the sources of the ballad, I have chosen 9 of the 12 published versions. A comparative study of these nine variants should shed some light not only on the strong influence of Midrash, but also on the evolution of the ballad on different levels (linguistic, narrative, thematic). The versions in question have all been recorded in the twentieth century. One of the ballads was collected by Prof. Benardete in New York. All the others were collected in Morocco, one as early as 1915. The dates of publication range from 1927 to 1966. The length of the ballads range from 38 to 110 lines. Generally speaking, the longer the ballad, the older it is and/or the older the informant. This clearly points to the rapid disintegration of this oral tradition in the last five decades. For quick reference, each of the nine versions will be referred to by the abbreviation of the collector's last name. The ballads

are listed in order of their length, beginning with the longest recorded version and ending with the shortest:

- ML = Version collected by MANRIQUE DE LARA in Tangier in 1915 (Informant: Hanna Bennaïm, 70 years old). Published by Diego Catalán in Por campos del Romancero, Madrid, 1970, pp. 70-71.
- Bn = Version collected by José BENOLIEL before 1927 in Tangier and published in "Dialecto judeo-español marroquí o hakitía" in Boletín de la Real Academia Española, XIV (1927), pp. 365-66 (Ballad # 6).
- GF = Version recorded in Larache and published by Tomás GARCÍA FIGUERAS in Homenaje a Millás Vallicrosa, I, Barcelona, 1954, pp. 697-700.
- MR2= The second of two versions collected by José MARTÍNEZ RUIZ in Alcazarquivir before 1963 (Informant: 70 year old woman) and published in "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional" in Archivum, XIII (1963), pp. 133-134 (Ballad # XLII - Version B). Manuel Alvar collected and published the same version in Poesía tradicional de los judíos españoles, Mexico, 1966, pp. 30-31 (# 34).
- LP = Version collected by Arcadio de LARREA PALACÍN in Tetuán in 1952 and published in Romances de Tetuán, I, Madrid, 1952, pp. 123-125 (Text # 42).
- Be = Tetuán version collected by Mair José BENARDETE in New York in the 1920s and published by Armistead and Silverman in Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York, Berkeley, 1982, pp. 29-30 (Ballad # 11).
- MR1= The first of two versions collected by José MARTÍNEZ RUIZ in Alcazarquivir before 1963 and published in "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional" in Archivum, XIII (1963), pp. 132-133 (Ballad # XLII - Version A).
- Ca = Version collected by Diego CATALÁN in Tetuán in 1948 (Informant: señorita Mary Cohen) and published in Por Campos del Romancero, Madrid, 1970, p. 69.
- AL = Version collected by Manuel ALVAR LÓPEZ in Tetuán in 1966 and published in Poesía tradicional de los judíos españoles, Mexico, 1966, p. 31 (Ballad # 34a).

There are many ways to proceed with a comparative analysis of this type. One way is to start with the longest, most complete version of the ballad and attempt to show its evolution through the years (deterioration of certain verses, changes in language and style, omission and addition of key narrative elements, etc). Another would be to start with the shortest ballad and attempt to reconstruct it to its original form by looking for the "missing links" in the longer, earlier versions. For a thorough analysis, both methods can prove to be extremely useful and both will be considered. A good place to begin would be with the version collected by Diego Catalán in 1948 which falls somewhere between the older and the more recently recorded ballads. It happens to be very similar to the version I used to hear in Morocco as a young child. Consisting of 46 verses, a careful reading reveals some obvious gaps, both in terms of content and form. The dotted lines indicate where the most obvious gaps seem to occur. At this point, we should note that no attempt has been made to standardize either the spelling or the various phonetic symbols used in different ballad versions. All ballad texts will be reproduced as published.

1.	Al Dio* del cielo Abraham	
2.	al Dio del cielo Isaac horrado*	
		
		
3.	para cumplirle las diez	WORDS FOLLOWED
4.	fuerte cosa le ha mandado.	BY AN ASTERISK
5.	-Dame a tu hijo, Abraham,	ARE EXPLAINED
6.	dame a tu hijo Isaac horrado*,	IN THE GLOSSARY

7. le pondré por sacrificio
8. en el monte aseñalado.-
9. De alma y de corazón
10. el sí le había otorgado.
11. Abraham como era grande,
12. hombre grande y sin pecado,
.....
13. Isaac, como era el pequeño,
14. de leña viene cargado;
15. al pie de una çalça verde
16. allí le habían descargado.
.....
17. -Padre, ya truje* la leña,
18. pero el barbej* no veo atado.
19. -Tú sos el barbej*, Isaac,
20. Quel del Dio me era mandado.
21. -Si del Dio te era mandado,
22. no salgáis de su mandato;
23. padre, atéime los pies,
24. [.....]
25. que con el verbor* de la sangre
26. no vos haga algún daño;
27. padre, tapame los ojos,
28. no vos mire mal mirado.-
29. Con el tual* de la leña
30. pies y manos le había atado,
31. con una cinta morada
32. los ojos le había tapado.
.....
33. Subió los ojos al cielo
34. y escuchó una voz que decía:
35. -Abraham, Abraham,
36. no mates a Isaac horrado*,
37. porque el Dio de los cielos
38. ya vos tiene bien prebado.-
39. Allí le aljadró* el Mecatrej*
40. y a Sarah fue a contarle.
.....
41. Ya salen el hijo y el padre
42. descalzos y encapi[ll]ados*;
.....
43. con las cien libras de oro
44. la mortaja había comprado,
45. en el campo de Jebró
46. allí la habían enterrado.

WORDS FOLLOWED
BY AN ASTERISK
ARE EXPLAINED
IN THE GLOSSARY

As we read the first four verses, our first question is: who is ordering whom? "Al Dio del cielo Abraham" seems to make God not the subject but the indirect object of "ha mandado." As we look to the other versions, it is quite evident that those first two verses are a variation of:

El Dios del cielo a Abraham,
el Dios a Isaac honrado... (GF: 1-2)

When we come to the third verse, our next question might be: What does "cumplirle las diez" refer to? If it refers to Abraham's ten tests, there seems to be a missing logical element somewhere between the first and third verses. Benoliel's second verse fills in the gap:

El Dió del cielo a Abraham
Muchas veces le ha probado;
Para cumplirle las diez... (Bn: 1-3)

Manrique de Lara's 1915 version is even more specific:

Al Dio del cielo Abraham,
al Dio del cielo Isphac horrado.
A nuestro padre Abraham
nueve veces le ha probado,
para cumplirle las diez... (ML: 1-5)

In this particular case, however, the first pair of verses seems superfluous. It has simply become a type of "invocation" of God in the presence of Abraham and Isaac, its function being to get the attention of the listener before the story begins. The narrative technically begins with the third verse.

In one of the versions published by Martínez Ruiz, the reference to "las diez (pruebas)" has been changed to:

para cumplirse los tres
fuerte cosa le ha mandado. (MR2: 3-4)

"Los tres," preceded by the reflexive "cumplirse," no doubt refers to Abraham, Isaac and Sarah. The verse seems to imply that the mission to sacrifice Isaac will, in the end, benefit all three, for each, in one way or another, is asked to fulfill a task that will make him/her "complete" in the eyes of God. The cooperation of mother, father and son is crucial for this test of faith to be successful.

It is important to note that the biblical text never makes any mention of "ten tests" in connection with the life of Abraham. This concept originated in the talmudic and midrashic traditions:

...the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: "I tried you in nine tests and you passed them. Now, pass this test lest they say, those earlier ones had no importance."¹⁷

The Sephardic tradition seems to have perpetuated this theme. In the Me'am Loez, the commentary to the story of the sacrifice of Isaac is introduced by the following statement:

I antes de empesar el deklaró de esta părăśāh debés de saber kuántas vezes le prebó el Šy.t a Abraham 'Āḇīnū, ...verés kual mente son 10 prebas...¹⁸

It then goes on to explain each of the ten tests in great detail [see Section D of this chapter]. As we detect the presence of extra-biblical elements early on in the ballad, we must begin to consider sources other than the biblical text, specifically the Talmud and the biblical Midrashim.

In the next section of the ballad, God speaks to Abraham and orders him to go to a designated mountain and sacrifice his son. The repetition in verses 5 and 6 is very reminiscent of the biblical text:

-Dame a tu hijo, Abraham,
dame a tu hijo Isaac horrado... (Ca: 5-6)

Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest,
even Isaac... (Genesis 22:2)

Toma agora a tu fijo a tu vno que amaste a Yishac...
(Ferrara Bible)

We immediately note two important differences as we go from biblical text to ballad: (1) "Take thy son" becomes "Give me your son" in every version of the ballad, (2) Isaac is given the epithet "el honrado" and will go on to become an active participant by helping heroically to fulfill his father's difficult duty. In the Scriptures, Isaac is merely portrayed as a passive victim.

With reference to Isaac as the hero, Louis Ginzberg makes the following observation:

In the Akedah legends two currents are to be distinguished; according to one, Abraham is the hero, while in the other Isaac is glorified.¹⁹

and later:

In the oldest reference to the Akedah in the liturgy (Zikronot in the Musaf [Additional Service] for New Year) it is Isaac to whom credit is given, whereas medieval paitanim in their Akedahs sing Abraham's praises.²⁰

We now reach a point where we must ask ourselves some pertinent questions: (1) Why these discrepancies as we go

from the biblical source to the ballad? (2) To what degree should one consider the biblical legends (Midrashim) and the liturgical text as sources for the ballad? (3) What liberties did the original composer take to make the story more "dramatic" or more interesting to his audience? (4) How many of those "discrepancies" in the ballad are due to the multiple versions or interpretations of the biblical story? and (5) How many are due simply to "memory lapses" on the part of the singers over the generations? We hope to arrive at some answers as we continue to examine the ballad text carefully.

In the next two verses, after asking for Isaac ("dame tu hijo"), God continues to take charge of the situation:

le pondré por sacrificio
en el monte aseñalado... (Ca: 7-8)

Only one version adheres to the biblical text by phrasing the action-to-be in the second person:

"Le pondrás por sacrificio
"En el monte aseñalado." (Bn: 7-8)

And offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of
the mountains which I will tell thee of.
(Genesis 22:2)

Interestingly, the Alvar version speaks of a joint effort:

le haremos el sacrificio
en el monte aseñalado. (AL: 7-8)

In this particular case, the midrashic interpretations seem to reinforce the scriptural text:

Abraham: "And where shall I go?"
God: "To the land I will show thee, and offer Isaac

there for a burnt offering."²¹

We must therefore assume that these changes were made either at the time of composition or, through the centuries, by the recreative process of the oral tradition. It is quite likely that both played an important role in wanting to portray a God who is to be feared and obeyed, but not a distant God. In the romance, as in the midrashic tradition, God commands but does not back away immediately. He seems interested in reactions and is even willing to get directly involved. In this episode of the ballad, by speaking in the first person ("lo pondré" / "le haremos"), God seems to be saying to Abraham: "If you so wish, I will come down to you and help you carry out this difficult task."

For his part, Abraham does not hesitate to accept the God-given command:

De alma y de corazón
el sí le había otorgado. (Ca: 9-10)

Again, compared to the biblical text which makes no attempt to describe Abraham's emotional state at any point during the story, the originality of the ballad essentially lies in its attempt to infuse the tale with some degree of subjectivity. The use of key phrases such as "de alma y de corazón" serve to increase the dramatic tension as it shows Abraham's emotional commitment to God.

Something very interesting occurs in one version of the ballad. After God has given Abraham his command, Abraham returns to his wife Sarah with the same proposition:

"Dame a tu hijo, Abraham,
a tu hijo Isaac el horrado,
le haremos el sacrificio
en el monte aseñalado.

.....

"Dame a tu hijo, Sara,
a tu hijo Isaac el horrado,
le haremos el sacrificio
en el monte aseñalado.

(AL: 5-8, 11-14)

The same Alvar version continues with Abraham asking his wife for her blessing:

Échanos la bendición
que nos vamos para el campo."
La bendición que le echa,
que venga vivo y sano.

(AL: 15-18)

That is the only other reference made to Sarah in the Alvar version. The consecutive repetition of the same verses and the perfunctory reference to Sarah leads us to suppose that these eight verses may very well be a remnant of an entire passage devoted to Sarah. Although the biblical text ignores Sarah, the Midrash makes it a point to explain how she felt before Isaac was taken from her. It turns out, as we examine earlier versions of the ballad, that there was indeed a section devoted to Sarah precisely at this point in the story. It ranges from just 4 verses in Martínez Ruiz (first version) to 22 verses in Benoliel. In the Catalán version, this passage is missing completely. In García Figueras, it

begins with Abraham's farewell to Sarah and is followed by her blessings:

"Queda en buena hora, Sara,
que nos vamos para el campo;
échanos la bendición
porque seamos tornados."
La bendición que les diera
que vuelvan sanos y salvos. (GF: 11-16)

The two older versions add the following verses:

Con gueburá*, mis señores,
con gueburá seáis tornados. (ML: 19-20;
Bn: 17-18)

Interestingly, the Hebrew word gevurah meaning "might, strength" is best known in Jewish mysticism as one of the ten spheres of kabbalistic doctrine. According to the Zohar, Gevurah (Power) and Gedullah (Greatness), also known respectively as Hesed (Love) and Din (Judgment), represent "the right and left arms of God, two sides of divine personality: free-flowing love and strict judgment, grace and limitation."²² Coincidentally, Abraham and Isaac are considered by the Kabbalists to be the embodiment of Gedullah and Gevurah.

But Sarah's involvement does not stop at this point. In five of the nine versions, she proceeds to follow husband and son a great distance and, as she does, she begs Abraham to take good care of Isaac:

Ya se salía Sará
Una legua y más andando:
"Paraile mientes* a Isaac
"Que es mi hijo arregalado
"Paraile mientes* del sol
"Porque aun es chico y muchacho;

"Paraile mientes* del agua,
 "Porque no está acostumbrado;
 ("Paraile mientes*, Abraham,
 "Yo le confío en tus manos.
 "Que él es mi vida y mi bien,
 "Mi consuelo y mi regalo.")²³ (Bn: 19-30)

Since the Scriptures make no mention of Sarah at this point, we must go to the rabbinic literature to find any similarities. We immediately notice a clear parallel:

And Sarah went out with them, and she accompanied them upon the road to see them off...²⁴

But there is no mention of what distance she travelled to accompany them. However, what the Midrash and the biblical text clearly state is that, upon leaving Sarah, father and son travelled a few miles accompanied by two young servants, stopped at about a mile's distance of Mount Moriah, then proceeded up the mountain without the servants:

And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son... (Genesis 22:3)

And Abraham said unto his young men: 'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder... (Genesis 22:5)

According to a widespread Haggadah they [the young men] remained at a mile's distance from the holy mountain.²⁵

Not one of the ballad versions mentions the young men, which leads one to think that, in an attempt to condense the narrative, Sarah has taken the place of the servants, and it is she who accompanies them to the foot of Mount Moriah:

Tras de ellos salió Sara,
 legua y media y más andando: (GF: 17-18)

We see another parallel in a well-known Midrash with regard to the attention paid to Sarah and her closeness to Isaac. Abraham's first concern after he is given the command is what to tell Sarah:

And Abraham said to himself, "How shall I separate my son Isaac from Sarah his mother?"²⁶

In another Midrash, Abraham goes so far as to worry about Sarah's will to live:

Abraham said: "What shall I do?... If I do not reveal it to her and take him away from her, when she sees that he is gone she will kill herself."²⁷

As we read further in the Midrash, we encounter the same concerned, protective mother whom we see portrayed in the ballad. The connection is evident:

...and she said to Abraham: "O my lord, I pray thee, take heed of thy son, and place thine eyes over him, for I have no other son nor daughter but him. O neglect him not. If he be hungry, give him bread, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; do not let him go on foot, neither let him sit in the sun, neither let him go by himself on the road, neither turn him from whatever he may desire, but do unto him as he may say to thee."²⁸

To this emotional plea, Abraham's only answer is:

"My daughter, let us pray to the Lord our God that He may do good with us."²⁹

And in the ballad:

-Sara, yo le pararé mientes*
Y del Dió sea parado. (Bn: 31-32)

We now come to the central part of the story, the attempt by Abraham to carry out the sacrifice of his son. For obvious reasons, this section is the most intact as we compare the

different versions. However, one does not have to look very far to notice missing verses. In Catalán's version, for example, a syntactical error leads us to look to other ballads for more information:

Abraham, como era grande,
hombre grande y sin pecado,
Isaac, como era el pequeño,
de leña viene cargado;
al pie de una çalça verde
allí le habían descargado. (Ca: 11-16)

A main clause is obviously needed to go with the subject "Abraham." Therefore, "hombre grande y sin pecado" must either be replaced or followed by another verse. In two of the older versions, the second verse is much more logical:

Abraham como era grande,
va despacio y fatigado,
Ishaac, como era pequeño,... (ML: 31-33)

Benoliel reconstructs the passage without replacing any verses:

Abraham, como era grande,
Hombre grande y sin pecado,
(Fuerzas al Dió iba pidiendo
Para cumplir lo ordenado).
Isaac, como era muchacho
de la leña iba cargado. (Bn: 33-38)

As to the exact location of where the sacrifice is to take place, it is not described either in the biblical text or in midrashic literature:

And they came to the place which God had told him of...
(Genesis 22:9)

...and they went on and came together to that place
that the Lord had spoken of.³⁰

The ballad, however, provides us with a specific hint that Abraham and Isaac have finally arrived at their destination by mentioning a very symbolic landmark in the story:

Al pie de una çalça verde
Allí le habían descargado. (Ca: 15-16)

At this point, in every version of the ballad, Isaac makes the all-important observation:

-Padre, ya truje* la leña,
pero el barbej* no veo atado. (Ca: 17-18)

In only two cases is it phrased, as in the Scriptures, in the form of a question:

¿Dónde está el bárber*, mi padre,
que yo no lo veo amarrado? (LP: 21-22)

"¿A dó el barbé*, mi padre,
que no le veo yo atado?" (AL: 21-22)

And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father and said: 'My father... 'Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? (Genesis 22:7)

And so it is in the Midrash. It is quite possible that the question "¿Dónde está el bárber...?" was not part of the original version of the ballad, but was borrowed at one point directly from the biblical text to replace a forgotten verse. Benoliel's version makes a similar attempt to imitate the scriptural passage by adding two introductory verses before Isaac addresses his father:

(Levantara Ishak sus ojos,
Y a su padre ansí ha hablado):
"La leña truxí*, mi padre,
y el barbej* no veo atado." (Bn: 41-44)

Whereas in the biblical text Abraham's reply to Isaac is somewhat vague:

And Abraham said: 'God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.' (Genesis 22:8)

the Midrash is much more direct:

And Abraham answered Isaac, saying, "The Lord hath chosen thee, my son, for a perfect burnt offering."³¹

Once again, the ballad mirrors the Midrash rather than the Scriptures:

-Tú sos el barbej*, Isaac,
quel del Dio me era mandado. (Ca: 19-20)

In fact, the passage that immediately follows in the ballad is known only in the midrashic tradition. It refers to Isaac's unconditional acceptance of his fate and his eagerness to help his father carry out the sacrifice. It ranges from 12 verses (ML, Bn) to just 4 verses (LP, Be). In five of the nine versions, this section begins with Isaac heroically advising his father not to violate God's order:

-Si del Dio te era mandado,
no salgáis de su mandato; (Ca: 21-22)

In Benollei's version, Isaac takes the responsibility upon himself:

"Si el Dió lo mandó, mi padre,
"No saldré de su mandato. (Bn: 47-48)

This is more in line with the Midrash:

And Isaac said unto his father, "I will do all that the Lord hath spoken to thee with joy and cheerfulness of heart."³²

In the other three versions (LP, Be, AL), those two verses have been completely left out.

The next four verses have been preserved only in the two earliest versions:

"No se me da por mi muerte
 "Aunque muero mallogrado,
 "Se me da por la mi madre
 "Que me tiene arregalado. (Bn: 49-52; ML: 43-46)

Once again, great concern is expressed for Sarah, a mother who is about to lose her son. Isaac fears more for her than for his own death. The source is unquestionably midrashic:

...Isaac spoke: "As soon as thou hast slaughtered me, and hast separated thyself from me, and returnest to Sarah my mother, and she asketh thee, Where is my son Isaac? what wilt thou answer her...?33

"Father, do not inform my mother when she stands over the pit, or when she stands on the roof, lest she throw herself down and die."34

This concern for Sarah, which would become a central motif in the Sephardic tradition [see section D of this chapter], was stressed by Moses Arragel in his 15th century Alba Bible commentaries:

Dixo al padre: Señor, non fagas esto saber a mi madre estando en lugar peligroso asy como en boca de algun pozo o de algun texado. (Alba Bible, p. 132)

It is important to note that Arragel perpetuates only certain aspects of the Midrash related to the story of Isaac, many of which coincide with the ballad tradition.

The last part of Isaac's compliance with the God-given ordinance is a series of practical instructions he gives to his father, as he is being placed on the altar, to insure

the success of the sacrifice. In the Catalán version, this passage seems to have deteriorated somewhat:

padre, atéime los pies,
que con el verbor* de la sangre
no vos haga algún daño;
padre, tapame los ojos,
no vos mire mal mirado.- (Ca: 23-28)

For a more complete text, we turn to Benoliel:

"Padre, ateisme los pies,
"Padre, ateisme las manos,
"Padre, tapeisme los ojos
"Porque no os vea mal airado*;
"Con el fervor de la muerte
"No haga yo algún pecado." (Bn: 53-58)

The certain sin ("algún pecado") refers to any wrong move made by either Abraham or Isaac before the slaughter takes place that might render the sacrifice unacceptable to God. The same details of the binding of Isaac contained in the ballad are found in the Midrash:

When he came to slaughter him, Isaac said unto him:
"Father, bind my hands and feet, for the soul is unruly, and when I see the knife I may tremble, and the sacrifice will become unfit."35

"Father, make haste, bare thine arm, and bind my hands and feet securely... When I behold the slaughtering knife in thy hand, I may perchance begin to tremble at the sight and push against thee, for the desire unto life is bold. Also I may do myself an injury and make myself unfit to be sacrificed..."36

and in Moses Arragel's commentary in the Alba Bible:

Dixo Ysach: Señor, atame bien pies e manos porque non rrefuse la muerte; estonce atara a Ysaque su padre e tomo Abraham el cuchillo para degollar a su fijo.
(Alba Bible, p. 132)

Once again, the ballad captures the essence of the Midrash.

One detail, however, should not be overlooked. Isaac's

request that he be blindfolded ("Padre, tapeisme los ojos / porque no os vea mal airado") is repeated in every version of the ballad but never mentioned in midrashic literature. The only instance in the Midrash where Abraham appears to be openly upset or "agitated" ("mal airado") is just before he raises his knife, as he looks at Isaac on the sacrificial altar:

...and tears were rolling down from the eyes of Abraham upon Isaac, and from Isaac down upon the wood, so that it was submerged in tears...³⁷

Did Isaac ask to be blindfolded because he did not want to see his father cry? Were those verses in the original composition of the ballad or were they added later? There is no doubt that Isaac is portrayed throughout the ballad as a caring and concerned son. It certainly would not be out of character for Isaac to be sensitive to his father's reaction and ask to be blindfolded. Again, it is very likely that those verses were an attempt by the original composer to interpret and condense the midrashic episode.

The next four verses show Abraham making the final preparations as he complies with Isaac's instructions:

Con el tual* de la leña
pies y manos le había atado,
con una cinta morada
los ojos le había tapado. (Ca: 29-32)

With the exception of the Benardete version, where this passage is missing altogether, the last two verses ("con una cinta morada / los ojos le había tapado.") survives in every

other ballad. As we have established, the Midrash never implies that Isaac was blindfolded, let alone mentions the color of the blindfold. At this point, it is natural to consider other possible sources. Perhaps the "cinta morada" is a symbol of mourning in the Sephardic tradition; perhaps the episode has been borrowed from other popular ballads.

Now we have finally reached the climactic point of the ballad: Abraham is about to strike. Oddly enough, this important passage is totally missing in the Catalán version and has been reduced from four to two lines in four other versions (LP, Be, MR1, AL). In the one recorded by Manrique de Lara, we read:

Alçó Abraham su puñal
con su braço arremangado,
tate*, que ya le dio el golpe,
tate*, que no se lo ha dado; (ML: 57-60)

The first two verses of this passage seem to be nothing more than a contraction of the biblical text, with the addition of the word "arremangado." And, as is usually the case, we find the missing element in the Midrash:

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the
knife to slay his son. (Genesis 22:10)

After he had...bound Isaac on the altar, upon the wood,
Abraham braced his arms, rolled up his garments...³⁸

The last two verses serve as a literary device to heighten the dramatic tension of the narrative. The repetition of "tate" and the antithesis ("ya le dio el golpe, / no se lo ha dado;") is meant to increase the level of suspense and is

a technique very commonly utilized in ballads. But there is also the possibility that this apparent contradiction is a kind of "poetic summary" of the varying midrashic interpretations of the incident. Ginzberg points out that in some Midrashim Abraham does strike his son with the knife, but the weeping angels attempt to save him:

The tears of the angels fell upon the knife, so that it could not cut Isaac's throat, but from terror his soul escaped from him.³⁹

And in the next paragraph:

...Isaac...returned to life, revived by the heavenly voice admonishing Abraham not to slaughter his son.⁴⁰

In yet another version, Satan knocks the knife out of Abraham's hand⁴¹. Here it is assumed that Abraham tries again. This seems to be the version preferred by Moses Arragel:

Quando torno, falloso syn cuchiello Abraham. Dixo Abram: paresçe que este moço non es bastante de ser fecho del tan grande sacreficio e virtuoso como este. Quiso lo afogar; ouo le de dezir el angel: nin le fagas cosa alguna. (Alba Bible, p. 131)

The number of differing interpretations and commentaries in midrashic literature based on the precise moment when Abraham is about to strike Isaac is so great that one is apt to ask literally: "Did he or did he not strike his son with the knife?" ("¿Le dio el golpe o no se lo ha dado?").

The next six verses, referring to the intervention by the archangel, shows no particular midrashic influence; it is basically a paraphrase of the biblical narrative:

Subió los ojos al cielo
 y escuchó una voz que decía:
 -Abraham, Abraham,
 no mates a Isaac horrado*,
 porque el Dío de los cielos
 ya vos tiene bien prebado.- (Ca: 33-38)

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of
 heaven, and said: 'Abraham, Abraham ... Lay not thy
 hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto
 him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man...
 (Genesis 22:11-12)

The first verse ("Subió los ojos al cielo") is unique to the
 Catalán version and may have been borrowed from the next
 passage in the Scriptures:

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld
 behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns.
 (Genesis 22:13)

All other versions begin with "Salió una voz de los cielos."

What do the midrashic sources indicate here?

Interestingly enough, many of the details related in the
 Midrash with regard to this episode (the weeping angels,
 Isaac's temporary death and resurrection, the sacrifice of
 the ram, and the ensuing dialogue between God and Abraham)
 have all been left out of the ballad. The rest of the
 biblical narrative (about half of Chapter 22 in Genesis) has
 been ignored as well. In fact, the Alvar version of the
 ballad ends at the point where Abraham is interrupted by the
 heavenly voice:

"Tate, tate*, tú, Abraham,
 no mates a Isaac el horrado*,
 porque el Dió de los sielos
 ya te tiene bien probado. (AL: 35-38)

It is not uncommon for ballads to end at a climactic point in the story. It is quite possible that the informant of this particular version was not familiar with or could not remember the rest of the text. But it is just as likely that, somewhere along the line, a singer or a generation of singers cut the ballad short at this point. In other words, they may have reinterpreted the ballad, feeling that the turning point had been reached, that there was nothing more to be said about Abraham or Isaac that would not be anti-climactic.

Thus it is that in the other versions the focus will shift to Sarah once again. In the Scriptures, she is not mentioned at all in connection with the story of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22). Sarah appears at the beginning of Chapter 23, when we are informed of her death:

the life of Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years... And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba - the same is Hebron - in the land of Canaan... (Genesis 23:1-2)

We are given the age and place of her death, but no explanation as to how and why she died so suddenly. This is where the rabbinic literature, due to the proximity of this chapter to the account of the sacrifice, made the connection and created the idea that false rumors about Isaac's fate were the direct cause of Sarah's death. This was a popular interpretation among the rabbis of medieval Spain, as Moses Arragel explains:

Rraby Salamon dize que muriera Sarra de pasmo que le dixiera el Satan que auian degollado a Ysaque, e que vino Abraham de Bersabe a llorar a Sarra.

(Alba Bible, p. 132)

Again, the ballad is dependent upon the Midrash. An "evil" messenger prematurely breaks the news to Sarah:

Allí le aljadró* el Mecatrej*
y a Sarah fue a contarle. (Ca: 39-40)

The next two verses in the Catalán version are:

Ya salen el hijo y el padre
descalzos y encapillados*; (Ca: 41-42)

The ballad ends precipitously with the burial of Sarah. Once more we must look to the other versions for missing verses. Except for the Alvar version, which ends with "...el Dió de los sielos / ya te tiene bien probado" and the Catalán text just mentioned, every other version proceeds to explain how a tragic message delivered to Sarah causes her death:

Allí se alhadró* un mecatreh*
que a Saráh lo fue a contallo:
-Si supieras tú, Saráh,
lo que por ti hoy ha pasado,
Umá* Abraham, tu marido,
te mató a Ishaac horrado.-
Como esso oyera Sarah,
muerta cayó en un desmayo. (ML: 67-74)

Benoliel offers the only significant variant:

Allí se alhadró* un malaj*
Que a Sara fuera a contarle:
"Si viéredes, tú Sará,
"Lo que por ti hoy ha pasado,
"Que el buen Abraham, tu esposo,
"Te mató a Ishak l'honrado."
Como eso oyera Sará
Cayó al suelo en un desmayo. (Bn: 73-80)

We notice two major differences between Benoliel's version and all the others: (1) It is not an ordinary messenger ("mecatreh") who delivers the message, but an angel ("malaj"); (2) Sarah faints but does not die when she hears of her son's death. Benoliel manages to reconstruct the rest of the episode at this point, enough to be able to give us this alternate explanation of the cause of Sarah's death:

("Si el Dió ansí se lo mandó
 "Que se cumpla su mandado."
 -"No te desmayes, Sará,
 "Que tu hijo es vivo y sano;
 "Que el Dió no dexó a Abraham
 "Que matara a Ishak l'honrado;
 "Y si se lo encomendó
 "Fué solo para probarlo."
 Como eso oyera Sará,
 Que su hijo es vivo y sano,
 Suspiro dió de alegría
 Y el alma perdiera al darlo.) (Bn: 81-92)

As we can see, the angel suddenly contradicts himself by declaring that Isaac is alive and well, only to see Sarah die of joy. This seemingly contrived series of events has its roots in midrashic literature:

While Abraham was engaged in the sacrifice, Satan went to Sarah, and appeared to her in the figure of an old man, ... and said to her: "Dost thou not know all that Abraham has done unto thine only son this day? He took Isaac, and built an altar, slaughtered him, and brought him up as a sacrifice ... Sarah lifted up her voice, and cried bitterly, saying: "O my son, Isaac, my son, O that I had this day died instead of thee! ... But I console myself, it being the word of God, and thou didst perform the command of thy God... And Sarah laid her head upon the bosom of one of her handmaids, and she became as still as stone.⁴²

If we read no further, we assume that Sarah dies at this point in the Midrash. However, in the next paragraph:

She rose up afterward and went about making inquiries concerning her son,... And, behold, Satan came to Sarah in the shape of an old man, and said to her, "I spoke falsely unto thee, for Abraham did not kill his son, and he is not dead," and when she heard the word, her joy was so exceedingly violent that her soul went out through joy.⁴³

Midrashic sources offer several other interpretations which may explain the variations in the ballad. In at least two cases, the messenger is Isaac himself, whereby Sarah dies of joy. In another, the messenger is Sammael, the evil angel, and Sarah dies of grief immediately upon hearing the news. The evil angel of the Midrash is, no doubt, the "malaj" (Hebr. "angel") of the Benoliel version. Satan is never mentioned by name in the ballad; he is apparently the "mecatrej" of the other versions. This word (Hebr. mecatreg: "one who incites or accuses") is very often used in the Talmud in connection with Satan's evildoings. For the origin of the word "mecatreh," see the glossary in chapter VI.

In the next series of verses, the diabolical messenger or evil angel goes back to Abraham to inform him of his wife's death. Again, this part of the ballad has been left out of the Catalán version:

Allí se alhadró* el mesmo él
A Abraham se fue a contallo:
-Si supieras tú, Abraham,
lo que por ti hoy ha passado,
Umá* Saráh, tu mujer,
muerta cayó en un desmayo.- (ML: 75-80)

This differs from the midrashic explanations, where Abraham and Isaac find out for themselves:

When Abraham with Isaac returned to Beer-sheba, they sought for Sarah and could not find her, and when they made inquiries concerning her, they were told that she had gone as far as Hebron, and when they found that she was dead, they cried bitterly over her...44

The repetitious nature of the message delivered to Abraham in the ballad and the fact that it has no midrashic foundation leads us to believe that it was simply added on at one point for emphasis or as a necessary passage of transition between Sarah's death and burial which concludes the ballad.

Father and son leave for Hebron to find Sarah and bury her. The Catalán version, which never mentions Sarah's death, ends with the following verses:

Ya salen el hijo y el padre
descalzos y encapi[ll]ados*;
con las cien libras de oro
la mortaja había comprado,
en el campo de Jebró
allí la habían enterrado. (Ca: 41-48)

The Benoliel version is more complete, as it refers to the cave and the grave purchased by Abraham for Sarah's burial, both mentioned in the Midrash and in the biblical text:

Ya se van el padre e hijo
Descalzos y encapillados*,
Allí fueron a Hebrón
Donde una cueva han mercado.
Por los cien pesos de oro
La fuesa la habían mercado.
Por los cien pesos de plata
La mortaja le han comprado.
Ya enterran a la saddika*
Ya a su casa son tornados... (Bn: 99-108)

...Abraham wished to acquire the Cave of Machpelah ... he acquired the field from Ephron, in whose possession it lay ... when Abraham insisted upon paying for it,

Ephron said: "My lord, hearken unto me. A piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver...? Abraham understood his words, and when he came to pay for the field, he weighed out the sum agreed upon them in the best of current coin ... and the field of Ephron,...and the cave which was therein, were made sure unto Abraham... The burial of Sarah then took place, amid great magnificence and the sympathy of all.⁴⁵

...Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, ... four hundred shekels of silver... So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah,...and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession ... And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre - the same is Hebron - in the land of Canaan... (Genesis 23:16-19)

This concluding passage seems to have undergone more changes than any other section of the ballad. In the Larrea Palacín version, "descalzos" becomes "escasos;" in Martínez Ruiz (version one), "mortaja" becomes "vestido;" the García Figueras version is the only one to mention the field ("el terreno le han comprado") but refers to the burial site as "la montaña de Hebrón;" in Manrique de Lara and Benoliel, the word "mercado" is used rather than "comprado" and the shroud is bought for "cien pesos de plata," not "cien libras de oro."

The purchase of the shroud ("la mortaja [el vestido] le han comprado"), which survives in seven versions of the ballad, seems to have no midrashic or biblical basis. Neither does the verse "descalzos y encapillados." And how did four hundred silver pieces paid for the gravesite become "cien pesos de plata" or "cien pesos de oro" in the ballad?

In the next section of this chapter, we will look more closely at some of these stock phrases which, according to many ballad theorists, are the essence of the creative and recreative nature of oral poetry.

In every version, the appearance of the word "enterran" or "enterrado" is a clear indication that the ballad has ended or is about to end:

y en el monte de Jebrón,
ahí l'habían enterrado. (MR1: 47-48)

y en la montaña de Hebrón
con amor la han enterrado. (GF: 77-78)

Ya enterran a la saddika*
Y a su casa son tornados. (Bn: 107-108)

Four versions (GF, LP, MR1, Ca) end precisely at this point. The other four versions (the Alvar text does not recount the death of Sarah) go on for another two to four verses, and each offers an interesting and unique conclusion. Our oldest text, collected by Manrique de Lara ends with:

al lado de nuestras madres
allí la habían echado.
Ya viene el padre y el hijo
y en Abel* se habían sentado. (ML: 89-92)

The Midrashim mention that Sarah's grave was not far from where Eve was buried. However, "al lado de nuestras madres" refers to the subsequent burial of other Jewish matriarchs within the same cave. "En Abel" is an adaptation of the Hebrew avel meaning "mourning" (See the chapter on Language).

The Benoliel version concludes with the following verses:

Llorando el padre y el hijo,
Sin poder ser consolados. (Bn: 109-110)

Here, there is a midrashic connection:

Abraham and Isaac...cried bitterly over her... And
Abraham and all his servants wept and mourned over
her a great and heavy mourning...⁴⁶

Benardete's version, collected in New York, ends with two
poorly remembered verses:

Lo que había de morir Isaac,
murió la su madre. (Be: 53-54)

This ending brings to mind a passage from an unknown Midrash
which hyperbolizes the importance of motherhood. The impli-
cation is that Sarah became a "real" woman only when her son
was born. Isaac's death, therefore, would coincide with her
last day on earth since her role as a mother would have been
completed:

Sarah really lived only thirty-seven years - from the
birth of Isaac to her death - for the years she spent
as a barren woman cannot be regarded as life.⁴⁷

Finally, the second version published by Martínez Ruiz has
the most original ending:

El mes no había pasado
Isaac s'había casado. (MR2: 67-68)

Upon first glance, one assumes that this is simply another
of those stock ballad endings. However, in the Scriptures,
one and a half chapters after the account of Sarah's death,
we are somewhat surprised to see Sarah's name mentioned in
connection with Rebecca, Isaac's wife-to-be:

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent,
and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved
her. And Isaac was comforted by his mother.
(Genesis 22:67)

The psychological element is clear: "Rebekah filled the gap caused in Isaac's life by the death of his mother."⁴⁸ The Talmud and the Midrashim have also placed a great deal of importance on the woman's ultimate responsibility for the continuity of tradition:

The Rabbis explain that on the death of Sarah the blessings which had attended the household of the Patriarch, and the pious customs which distinguished it, came to an end; but when Rebekah was brought to the tent, they were restored. 'The Sabbath lamp once more illumined the home of the Patriarch,' and Rebekah continued as well all the other religious rites which Sarah had initiated.⁴⁹

Based on these findings, it would seem more appropriate to refer to El sacrificio de Isaac as a "midrashic" rather than a "biblical" ballad. Although the use of certain well-known biblical verses is prevalent in the Sephardic ballad tradition, much of the narrative material has been directly inspired in the Midrash. In the next section, we shall see that the Peninsular versions of this ballad also show traces of midrashic influence and that, contrary to the view held by certain critics ("refundición judaica de un romance cristiano," says Diego Catalán), the original composition was probably more in line with the Jewish than the Christian tradition.

C. MIDRASHIC MOTIFS IN THE PENINSULAR VERSIONS

The Sephardic ballad known as El sacrificio de Isaac has a Peninsular counterpart with its own set of variants. It has been heard in many parts of northern Spain since the beginning of this century. The oldest recorded text is an unpublished version collected by Tomás Navarro in 1910 in Villarino de Manzanas (Zamora) and contained in the Menéndez Pidal collection.⁵⁰ The most recent published recording seems to be a 1951 version collected by Diego Catalán in Herrerueta (Palencia).⁵¹ In all, there are eight known Peninsular versions of the ballad, four of which have been published. Unlike the Sephardic versions, the Peninsular ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac varies greatly from one region to the next; geographical differences will have to be taken into account, since they play an important role in assessing questions about origin, evolution, re-creation, etc. Consequently, each of the Peninsular variants will be referred to, not by the name of its collector, but by the name of the town, city or region where it was heard and recorded:

- Tudanca: Version collected in TUDANCA, SANTANDER and published in 1933 by José María de Cossío and T. Maza Solano in Romancero Popular de la Montaña.
- Salceda: Version collected in SALCEDA (Polaciones), SANTANDER and published in 1933 by J.M. de Cossío and T. M. Solano in Romancero Popular de la Montaña.

- Puente-Pumar:** Version collected in PUENTE-PUMAR (Polaciones), SANTANDER and published in 1933 in Romancero Popular de la Montaña.
- Herreruela:** Version collected by Diego Catalán in 1951 (recited by Encarnación Cenera, a native of HERRERUELA, PALENCIA) and published in 1970 in Por campos del Romancero.
- San Martín:** Unpublished version collected by M. Martínez Burgos in SAN MARTÍN DE HUMADA, BURGOS found in the Ramón Menéndez Pidal collection.
- Valdeteja:** Unpublished version collected by J. Sela in 1918 (recited by Irene García, 40 years old, a native of VALDETEJA, LEÓN). It is found in the Menéndez Pidal collection.
- Villamanín:** Unpublished version collected by J. Sela in 1918 (recited by 25-year old Jesusa Fernández Díez) in VILLAMANÍN (Rodiezmo), LEÓN. It is included in the Menéndez Pidal collection.
- Villarino:** Unpublished version collected by T. Navarro in 1910 from a woman who learned the ballad as a child in VILLARINO DE MANZANAS (Sanabria) ZAMORA. It is also included in the Menéndez Pidal collection.

The first three texts (Tudanca, Salceda and Puente-Pumar) will be referred to as the Santander versions. These will often be grouped together with the next two ballads (Herreruela and San Martín de Humada) and designated as the Castilian versions, in contrast to the final three ballads (Valdeteja, Villamanín and Villarino) which belong to the tradition of the León/Zamora region.

The Santander versions begin with the verses:

En un lugar junto a Burgos
que se llama Villarcayo, (Salceda, Puente-Pumar)

From that point on, the protagonists are introduced in all eight versions. While Isaac is never referred to by name, the name of the father has undergone interesting changes. Only two of the versions have kept the patriarch's biblical name:

Abrahán tenía un hijo
muy querido y estimado, (Villarino)

Un hijo tenía Abrán,
un hijo solo tenía, (Herreruela)

The three Santander versions do not mention his name at all:

Un padre tenía un hijo
muy querido y estimado, (Tudanca)

tiene un caballero un hijo
muy querido y estimado, (Salceda)

allí tiene un padre un hijo,
un hijo muy estimado, (Puente-Pumar)

The other three versions (one from Burgos, two from León) show a significant deterioration of the hero's name:

Arabán tenía un hijo
muy querido y estimado, (San Martín)

Pedro Adán tenía un niño
muy querido y muy amado, (Valdeteja)

Adán tenía un hijo
muy querido y estimado (Villamanín)

Catalán explains these changes as linguistic variations:

"Arabán" parece basado en una pronunciación con doble a. "Pedro Adán" ... lleva, en cambio, a reconstruir un posible "Padre Abrán."⁵²

As we examine the first few verses of the Peninsular ballads and compare them to the introductory verses of the Sephardic versions, we immediately notice two striking differences:

(1) the names of the characters have undergone dramatic changes and will vary from ballad to ballad, and (2) there will be anachronisms ("En un lugar junto a Burgos...") as the story is modernized and localized in a "contemporary" setting. Even so, as one looks for parallels with the biblical story, one is rather startled to learn, as we read in the Castilian versions, that the son's favorite dish is a delicacy from the New World:

que no comía gallinas
ni tampoco bacalao,
que comía pavos de Indias
que cuestan dos mil ducados. (Puente-Pumar)

This emphasis on bestowing luxuries and riches upon the son brings us back to the rabbinic sources:

[Many midrashic tales] introduce the Akedah with a description of Isaac's virtues on account of which he was very dear to his father...⁵³

Most of the biblical legends surrounding the childhood of Isaac underline the fact that he was the epitome of the "enfant gâté." In the Zohar, great emphasis is placed on the feasts prepared by Abraham on the occasion of Isaac's birthday.⁵⁴ It seems that there was nothing that his father would not do to make him happy. The Palencia version, which makes no mention of "pavos de Indias," seems to be more in line with the spirit of the Midrash as it goes on to outline how Abraham spoiled his beloved son:

le traía bien vestido,
le traía bien calzado,
de los regalos del mundo
le traía regalado. (Herreruela)

We see an interesting parallel in the apocryphal Book of Jasher. In this case, it is the overprotective mother who spoils her child:

Sarah selected a very fine and beautiful garment ... and she dressed Isaac her son therewith, and she put a turban upon his head, and she enclosed a precious stone in the top of the turban, and she gave him provision for the road...⁵⁵

Although, at this point, it would seem premature to try to establish a direct connection between these verses and midrashic literature, one cannot rule out the possibility that certain themes of midrashic origin that expounded on the biblical story of Isaac became popular enough through the centuries to become "clichés" in the biblical folk literature of medieval Spain. The attention paid to Isaac by his parents from the moment he was born seems to be one such cliché. As early as the first century C.E., such influential Jewish historians as Philo of Alexandria and Josephus spared no detail in describing Isaac's exceptional character and his close relationship to his father. Philo, whose writings had a far-reaching influence in Christian literature, states:

The wife of the Sage bore to him in full wedlock his only and dearly-cherished son, a child of great bodily beauty and excellence of soul. For already he was showing a perfection of virtues beyond his years, so that his father, moved not merely by a feeling of natural affection but also by such deliberate judgment as a censor of character might make, cherished for him a great tenderness.⁵⁶

As we continue with the ballad text, we begin to see that some versions have deviated more than others from the biblical account. With regard to the divine order to sacrifice the son, one can make a very neat geographical division. The León ballads are more faithful to the Scriptures than the Castilian versions:

y Dios, por lograr su intento,
dice que ha de ser quemado. (Valdeteja)

y Dios, por darle un disgusto,
mando que fuese quemado. (Villamanín)

Dios, por saber su entención,
dice que ha de ser quemado. (Villarino)

And He said: Take now thy son ... and offer him there
for a burnt-offering... (Genesis 22:2)

It is interesting how each version presents a different reason for God's action: "por lograr su intento," "por darle un disgusto" and "por saber su entención." This attempt to explain certain "unexplainable" actions is much more typical of rabbinic literature than it is of the Scriptures. In Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, a collection of Midrashim dating back to the eighth century, we read:

He tried Abraham each time in order to know his heart, whether he would be able to persevere and keep all the commandments...⁵⁷

Moses Arragel's commentary in the Alba Bible offers an alternative translation of the verb tentar which may help to explain the origin of "por darle un disgusto" in the Villamanín version:

Otros dizem que este vocablo a que nos rromançamos:
 Dios quiso tentar [a Abraham], que segund su equiuo-
 caçion que quiere decir: Dios quiso fazer mal sabor
 a Abraham. (Alba Bible, p. 130)

Of course, one must always keep in mind that "substitution" and "re-creation" are part of the natural order of the evolution of romances. It is extremely important, while keeping one eye on possible direct influences (literary, religious, cultural), to keep the other on the ongoing process of "poetic re-elaboration" which takes place within a social framework and which gives each ballad version its seal of originality.

In the Palencia/Burgos versions, God gives the command to slay, rather than to burn the son:

Estando un día por la tarde
 de reposo merendando,
 oyó una voz que decía
 estas palabras hablando:
 -Este tu hijo, Abrán,
 ha de morir degollado. (Herreruela)

-Arabán, ese tu hijo
 tiene que ser degollado. (San Martín)

In the Scriptures, God's request to Abraham to sacrifice his son is not phrased in such violent terms. In fact, it is not until that climactic moment when Abraham is about to strike Isaac that the word "slay" is first used. We are suddenly made aware of the reality of the situation:

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the
 knife to slay his son. (Genesis 22:10)

The Palencia/Burgos ballads, in an effort to intensify the situation, quicken the pace of the story and anticipate this

scene with the early introduction of the climactic verb "degollar" which, by the way, is the word used in old Spanish versions of the biblical text:⁵⁸

Tendio Abraham su mano e tomo el cuchiello para
degollar su fiyo. (Alba Bible)

Y tendio Abrahã a su mano y tomo el cuchillo para
degollar a su hijo. (Ferrara Bible)

The weapon that Abraham intends to use to kill his son ("el cuchillo") is referred to in all five Castilian versions, but the Palencia version, in particular, seems to dwell on it more than the others:

Ha cogido los cuchillos
y a afilarlos ha marchado,
a la orillita de un río,
a la orillita de un lago;
después que los afiló
a su querido ha llamado:
-Ven acá, tu, hijo mío,
ven acá, tu, hijo amado. (Herreruela)

We finally come to the Santander versions, where no mention is made of the knife or knives (not yet at least), where the divine order to kill the son is never pronounced, and where it is not the father but a servant who calls in the son:

Un día que era domingo
fue a jugar con los muchachos.
Su padre mandó a buscarle
por el señor secretario. (Tudanca)

In this case, unlike the Palencia/Burgos versions, a central biblical motif (God's command to Abraham) has been replaced with a scene that typifies the "bourgeois" context of the Santander ballads. According to Catalán, this transposition

ultimately weakens rather than intensifies the dramatic progress of the scene:

La ruptura con la tradición no es, en este caso, generadora de motivos nuevos poéticamente valiosos; bien al contrario, conduce a una lamentable degradación del romance.⁵⁹

However, if we are to make an objective comparison between different ballads, we must strive to accept a certain degree of variance within each tradition before considering such changes signs of decadence. In fact, the ensuing fast-paced dialogue between father and son succeeds in recaptivating the interest of the listener:

-¿Qué me quiere, padre mío,
qué me quiere, padre amado?
-Que tenemos que ir los dos
al monte de los anublados.
-Si tenemos que ir los dos
vamos luego caminando. (Salceda)

This conversation between father and son before the journey to Mount Moriah has neither biblical nor midrashic roots. In the Scriptures, there is only narration at this point; in the Midrash, Abraham addresses his wife Sarah before departing, but not Isaac; and of the nine Sephardic versions studied, Abraham speaks to Isaac only once:

-Vamos conmigo Isaac,
que del cielo es mandado.- (Benardete)

Not a word is heard from Isaac at this point, and the journey begins on the following morning. The Peninsular versions, on the other hand, seem quite anxious to define the character of the son, to give him a strong identity. We

already know that he eats "pavos de Indias," receives all kinds of expensive gifts and has a servant ("el señor secretario"). In his dialogues with his father, he also proves to be an assertive young man. In one of the Santander versions, we even detect a wry sense of humor in his response as he sets the conditions to his father. Abraham speaks first:

-Vámonos los dos al monte,
monte de los anublados.

-Si me lo dice de burlas,
vámonos a merendar;
si me lo dice de veras,
vámonos a caminar.

(Puente-Pumar)

Through many centuries, the midrashic tradition has stressed the importance of Isaac, born to Sarah by a miracle when she was in her nineties, to become one of the most cherished of the Jewish patriarchs. Evidently, this image of Isaac left its mark in medieval folk literature [see Chap. I, part D]. However, as we have seen, the son portrayed in the first half of the Peninsular romances has taken on many qualities that might be associated with those of Spanish upper class society. The quiet, humble hero of the Sephardic versions has been transformed into a very talkative, playful and somewhat spoiled young man who seems to fit perfectly the definition of the "señorito."⁶⁰ His importance, in this case, lies not in his heritage (son of Abraham, first of the Patriarchs) or eventual responsibility to his people, but rather in the simple fact that he is a father's pet son and

belongs to a well-to-do family from Burgos. This is the kind of transformation that enables a particular romance to exist in a variety of settings and continue to be popular as social conditions change in a given culture.

As we continue with the text of the ballad, we will easily notice, from this point on, a stronger influence of biblical and rabbinic sources. As the journey begins to the top of the mountain, the Leonese versions closely follow the biblical text:

Coge el hacha tras del cinto
y a su hijo de la mano;
Adán cortaba la leña,
su hijo la iba atropando.
Después de atropadita,
se sentaron de cansados. (Villamanín)

And Abraham cleaved the wood for the burnt-offering,...
and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand
the fire and the knife; and they went both of them
together. (Genesis 22:3,6)

E corto Abraham la leña que tenia para la olocastia e
pusola sobre Ysach, su fijo, e tomo en su mano el fuego
e el cuchillo e fueronse anbos de consumo. (Alba Bible)

The Castilian ballads seem to break away from the Scriptural account, especially in the Santander versions where the focus continues to be on the son. The long journey is taking its toll and the young man is growing impatient:

En el medio del camino
el niño iba cansado,
ajincado de rodillas
gracias a Dios iba dando.
-Mucho tarda, padre mío,
mucho tarda, padre amado,
mucho tarda en llegar
al monte de los anublados. (Tudanca)

It is indeed difficult to imagine Isaac utter such a complaint in any of the Sephardic versions. The son of the Peninsular tradition is by no means disrespectful of his father ("padre mío,"... "padre amado"); he is simply more curious, more inquisitive, and demands more attention. When he addresses his father, as he does quite often, he expects to be acknowledged. Thus it is not at all surprising to hear the father retort immediately with a statement to reassure his child:

-Ya está cerca, hijo mío,
detrás de aquellos collados. (Puente-Pumar)

The dialogue continues to hold our interest as the persisting son follows with the most challenging question yet:

-¿Pa qué quiere usted mi padre,
cuchillo tan afilado? (San Martín)

The father's reply is just as direct:

-Pa matarte a ti, hijo mío,
que nuestro Dios lo ha mandado. (San Martín)

-Para quitarte la vida,
que ha sido de Dios mandado. (Tudanca)

-Para tí son, hijo mío,
que has de morir degollado,
el rey del cielo lo manda,
se cumplirá su mandado. (Herreruela)

All of the Castilian versions follow the same pattern: the son inquires about the knife, the father bluntly reveals the purpose of the mission, then announces that God's decree must be carried out. This episode has a different twist in

the Leonese versions, where the knife is not mentioned, and the concerned father speaks first as he notices a strange look on his son's face:

Mira el hijo para el padre
con unos ojos quebrados.
-¿Tú qué me miras, mi hijo,
qué me miras, mi regalo? (Valdeteja)

This very moving scene acquires a tone of serenity, of quiet resignation as the son contemplates the sacrificial fire:

-Miro, padre, aquella lumbre
cómo se va alborotando,
¿quién será el manso cordero
que en ella se verá asado?
-Tú has de ser, el mi hijo,
tú has de ser, el mi regalo. (Valdeteja)

In another of the León versions, the tragic pathos reaches even greater heights as Isaac stares at the firewood and sees himself being consumed:

-¿Qué estás haciendo, hijo mío,
qué estás tú considerando?
-Estoy mirando la leña
cómo se va desbastando,
así me hi d'esbastar yo
como un corderito manso. (Villarino)

As we have seen, there is clearly a marked difference in style between the fast-moving, often abrupt rhythm of the Castilian ballads and the more poetic, contemplative tone of the León versions. But how do these stylistic differences compare with the biblical and midrashic accounts? The straightforward style of the Castilian ballads seems to reflect the son's personality. Isaac does not quite project the image of naiveté, of sheer innocence that is set forth

in the Scriptures. It suffices to compare the line of questioning:

¿pa qué son estos cuchillos
de acero, tan afilados? (Herreruela)

Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for
a burnt-offering? (Genesis 22:7)

In the Scriptures, Abraham avoids confrontation with a vague answer:

God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering,
my son. (Genesis 22:8)

No more words are exchanged until the heavenly voice interrupts the sacrifice. Rabbinic literature has, of course, tried to fill in the gaps. Although the knife is never a subject of conversation in the midrashic accounts, and the sacrificial lamb has been left out of the Castilian versions, the dialogue in all of the Peninsular ballads seems to capture the essence of this episode as told in the Midrash. That is to say that, as opposed to Abraham's evasiveness in the Scriptures, Isaac's provocative question leads to a very direct reply:

My son! Thou art the lamb for the burnt-offering...⁶¹

Beyond these similarities, the reference made in the León versions to the sacrificial flame calls to mind the "pillar of fire," an oft-recurring symbol in midrashic literature:

On the third day of his journey, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place at a distance, which God had told him. He noticed upon the mountain a pillar of fire reaching from the earth to heaven, and a heavy cloud in which the glory of God was seen. Abraham said to Isaac, "My son, dost thou see on that mountain which we

perceive at a distance that which I see upon it?" And Isaac answered... "I see, and, lo, a pillar of fire and a cloud, and the glory of the Lord is seen upon the cloud." Abraham knew then that Isaac was accepted before the Lord for an offering.⁶²

The "heavy cloud" upon the mountain is also a very important symbol of the Shechinah (God's presence) in rabbinic and kabbalistic literature. It is mentioned in quite a few midrashim and seems to explain the epithet "el monte de los anublados" used earlier in the Santander ballads to refer to Mount Moriah. Moses Arragel refers to it in his commentaries:

Paresce que cognosçio el lugar en que estaua vna nuue en somo del ... Dixo Abraham a Ysach: dí fijo ves tu lo que yo veo? Rrespuso Ysaque: Señor, yo veo vn monte bien feroso a marauilla e vna nuue que le cubre.
(Alba Bible, p. 131)

The next passage, dealing with Isaac's reaction when he discovers that he is about to be sacrificed, not only borrows its material from the Midrash but also concurs with all of the Sephardic ballad versions studied. This is where the biblical legends, and consequently the Romancero, transformed the victimized Isaac of the Scriptures into a real hero, a martyr rather than a victim, an eager and willing participant in the preparation for his own death, all due to his unbending faith in God:

-Si lo mandó el mi Dios, padre,
lo haré con mucho agrado. (Villamanín)

Isaac urges his father to act immediately and gives him the necessary instructions:

-Dese prisa, padre mío,
 cúmplase luego el mandado;
 los brazos ma atará atrás
 con un cordón encarnado;
 los ojos me ha de vendar
 para no verle airado.

(Puente-Pumar)

It is interesting to see that the "cinta morada / morado pañolito" of the Judeo-Spanish texts reappears here as "un cordón encarnado." This item, which apparently has no biblical or midrashic basis, is mentioned only in the Santander ballads ("cordón colorado" in the Tudanca version; "listón encarnado" in Salceda), its ultimate purpose being not to cover the eyes as in the Sephardic ballad, but to tie the hands together. The Palencia version first paraphrases from the biblical text, then follows up with a Midrash-like explanation condensed into one verse:

-Áteme de pies y manos,
 pa que muera sosegado,

(Herreruela)

...e ato pies y manos a Ysach, su fiijo,...

(Alba Bible, Genesis 22:9)

...bind me securely and then place me upon the altar
 lest I should turn and move, and break loose from the
 force of the knife upon my flesh and thereby profane
 the burnt offering... (Sefer HaYashar 23.61)

The emphasis on the details of the binding probably has its roots in the importance given in rabbinic literature to strict conformity to a set of rules regarding sacrifices.⁶³ Hence the entire biblical episode is known, not as "The Sacrifice," but rather as "The Binding" (Akedah, in Hebrew). Interestingly enough, there is one narrative element shared by every ballad version studied (Sephardic as well as

Peninsular), which seems to have no biblical, talmudic or midrashic foundation: the blindfolding of Isaac. In the Castilian versions, the son's reason for this request is identical to that of the Sephardic ballads; that is, he does not want to see his father upset:

los ojos me tapará
para no verle airado. (Salceda)

y póngame un paño a los ojos
porque no le mire airado.- (Herrruela)

-Padre, si me ha de matar,
me ha de tapar con un paño,
para que yo no le vea
ni le mire con mal grado. (San Martín)

As mentioned in the chapter on the Sephardic versions, the Midrash tradition repeatedly portrays an Abraham who breaks down in tears as he is about to strike his son. This may explain Isaac's wish to have his eyes covered. But there may be other explanations. For example, a passage from a very old Midrash strongly suggests to us that the blindfold may have been introduced as a symbol of Isaac's eventual blindness:

...when our father Abraham bound his son Isaac, the ministering angels wept, ...tears dropped from their eyes into his, and left their mark upon them, and so when he became old his eyes dimmed...⁶⁴

One of the Leonese versions is very much in line with the episode as told in The Book of Jasher. Isaac is afraid to lose control over his emotions and is equally concerned about his physical self-restraint:

-Venza, padre, los mis ojos
que ellos no vayan llorando,
venza, padre, los mis brazos,
que ellos no vayan braceando. (Valdeteja)

This is perfectly reflected in the Midrash:

...and Abraham's tears gushed down upon Isaac his son, and Isaac wept bitterly, and he said to his father, hasten thou, O my father, and do with me the will of the Lord our God as he has commanded thee.⁶⁵

...bind me securely ... lest I should turn and move, and break loose from the force of the knife...⁶⁶

In the Zamora ballad, we see a much clearer parallel with the familiar Sephardic verses "padre, ateisme los pies, / padre, ateisme las manos." But the first two verses in the following passage which refer to "cutting off the tongue" are unique to this Peninsular version, and were probably inspired in a Midrash:

-Padre, cortáime la lengua,
por si vos ofendo en algo,
padre, atáime las manos,
porque no vaiga braciando,
padre, atáime los pies,
pa que no vaiga enredando. (Villarino)

The Midrash states:

Isaac said to his father Abraham: O my father! Bind for me my two hands, and my two feet, so that I do not curse thee; for instance, a word may issue from the mouth because of the violence and dread of death, and I shall be found to have slighted...⁶⁷

Whereas no mention is made of Sarah in the Castilian ballads, the Leonese versions proceed with six verses devoted to her. Isaac is deeply concerned about how his mother will react to the terrible news that her son is dead:

Y a la triste de mi madre
 no se lo diga en un año,
 si le pregunta por mí,
 dígale que estoy con amo,
 si le pregunta que a donde,
 cerca del Monte Calvario. (Villamanín)

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this passage is loosely based on a Midrash, although it appears that, in this particular case, two different episodes may have fused into one. When Isaac first leaves home, Sarah is told the following by her husband:

...tomorrow I will go and bring him to Shem and Eber his son, and there he will learn the ways of the Lord, for they will teach him to know the Lord, and to know the way of serving the Lord his God.⁶⁸

This may have prompted the verses "si le pregunta por mí / dígale que estoy con amo." In the midrashic sources, just before the binding takes place, Isaac repeatedly warns his father about when, where and how to break the tragic news to his mother:

"Father, do not inform my mother when she stands over the pit, or when she stands on the roof, lest she throw herself down and die."⁶⁹

But there is no implication whatsoever that Abraham should wait more than one year ("a la triste de mi madre / no se lo diga en un año"). Some of the legends which speak of Isaac's temporary death, however, state that Abraham returned home alone because "Isaac was carried to Paradise by angels, and there he sojourned for three years."⁷⁰ The Valdeteja variant of this verse ("no se lo diga en isti año")

reinforces the possibility that the ballad is referring to this three-year waiting period.⁷¹

The allusion to "el Monte Calvario" in the Leonese versions signals the introduction of Christian motifs in other Peninsular ballads as well. In the Santander versions, it is not God or an angel who intercedes, but the Virgin Mary who appears in the flesh:

Estando en estas palabras
viene la Virgen del Rosario.
-Detente, padre, detente,
no mates a tu hijo amado:
si tú has ganado la gloria,
también tu hijo la ha ganado;
tu hijo por ser humilde,
tú por cumplir mi mandado. (Salceda)

In the other two Santander ballads, the last two verses show a slight variance:

tu hijo por ser obediente,
tú por cumplir mi mandado. (Puente-Pumar)

tú por obedecerme a mí
y él por cumplir tu mandado. (Tudanca)

Except for the substitution of Mary for the archangel, this last passage is basically founded on the biblical text:

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said: ... 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.
(Genesis 22:11,12)

The Palencia version does not mention Mary or any other interceder, for that matter. Instead, it introduces the forbidding order with the following narrative verse borrowed from the Scriptures:

Ya tenía todo hecho
y el cuchillo levantado: (Herreruela)

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the
knife to slay his son. (Genesis 22:10)

The concluding verses of this ballad are unique, as they contain the only reference made in the entire body of "Akedah" ballads to the sacrificial "ram caught in the thicket" mentioned, of course, in the Scriptures:

-Detente, Abrán, detente,
mira un cordero enzarzado,
ya tienes a Dios contento
y a tu corazón pagado. (Herreruela)

Finally, it is one of the Leonese versions which gives us the most original ending. The son speaks:

-Voy a pedirles perdón
por el tiempo que me han criado
y a la mi madre querida
por la leche que me ha dado.
¡Válgame nuestra Señora,
válgame el señor Santiago! (Valdeteja)

Isaac seems to be expressing gratitude by way of forgiveness: forgiveness for having caused his mother so much pain and anguish. The last two verses are nothing more than a formula, a stock ending that was appended at some point in time in the transmission of the ballad.

It is important to stop and take a closer look at something that we have taken for granted until now, i.e., the fact that there are quite a few traces of midrashic literature present in the Peninsular ballads, some of which are not even alluded to in the Sephardic versions. Here are a few examples:

Peninsular Ballad versesMidrashic equivalent

1. le traía bien vestido le traía bien calzado... (Herreruela)	"Sarah selected a very fine garment... and she dressed Isaac her son...and she put a turban upon his head..."
2. Dios por darle un disgusto, mandó que fuese quemado. (Villamanín)	"Dios quiso tentar...quiere decir: Dios quiso fazer mal sabor a Abraham."
3. Miro, padre, aquella lumbre cómo se va alborotando... (Valdeteja)	"He noticed on the mountain a pillar of fire reaching from the earth to heaven."
4. ¿Quién será el manso cordero que en ella se verá asado? -Tú has de ser, el mi hijo, (Valdeteja)	"My son! Thou art the lamb for the burnt-offering..."
5. "monte de los anublados" (Santander); "el cierzo posado" (Herreruela)	the cloud as a symbol of the <u>Shechinah</u> (God's presence)
6. -Dese prisa, padre mío, cúmplase luego el mandado; (Puente-Pumar)	"hasten thou, O my father, and do with me the will of the Lord our God as he has commanded thee."
7. -Padre, cortáime la lengua, por si vos ofendo en algo, padre, atáime las manos... (Villarino)	"O my father! Bind for me my two hands, and my two feet, so that I do not curse thee..."
8. Y a la triste de mi madre no se lo diga en un año... (Villamanín)	"Father, do not inform my mother..."

Beyond these specific parallels between the Peninsular ballads and the midrashic tradition, there is also a tendency in both genres to transform the victimized and passive Isaac of the Scriptures into an active and willing participant and to elevate him to hero status. The implications of this significant midrashic influence in the Peninsular Romancero will be discussed in Chapter V, section C.

D. MEAM LOEZ: MIDRASH IN THE SEPHARDIC TRADITION

The 18th century signaled the first major attempt among Sephardic scholars to bring together the rabbinic literature perpetuated by the Talmud and by the midrashic tradition in an effort to popularize its teachings. This monumental task was initiated by Jacob ben Meir Kullî in Constantinople in 1730 when he published the first volume (Book of Genesis) of what became known as the Meam Loez. Pascual Recuero summarizes the importance of this work:

El Me'am Lo'ez debe considerarse ciertamente como una obra divulgadora de los ricos tesoros de la exégesis rabínica contenidos en los inmensos e innumerables comentarios de los preclaros maestros del judaísmo medieval.⁷²

It is difficult to determine whether or not our romance could have influenced the story of the binding of Isaac as told in the Meam Loez or vice-versa. What cannot be denied is that the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac and the Akedah episode contained in the Meam Loez coincide in one important regard: they both complement the well-known biblical account with details borrowed from extra-biblical sources. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the majority of midrashic elements that have been incorporated into the ballads, Peninsular as well as Sephardic, appear in the Meam Loez. In some cases, one can even point to lexical similarities.

In order to facilitate the reading of the various passages selected from this work, Hebrew words and idioms will be translated into modern Spanish. These translations, given in brackets, are generally those provided by Gonzalo Maeso and Pascual Recuero in their glossary.⁷³

The Meam Loez underlines the importance of the story of the binding of Isaac in the Sephardic tradition, as we read in the introductory paragraph to this section:

Este capítulo es abizo de la 'ăqêdâh [sacrificio de Isaac; lit. atadura], i por ser kuento muy estimado mos ordenaron 'anšê kenêset ha-geđôlâh [nuestros sabios] ke esta pârâšâh [sección del Pentateuco] la digamos kada día en las zemîrôt de tefil.lâh [cánticos de oración], i también ke se mælde [recite] día de rō'š ha-šânâh [año nuevo] en el "Sêfer Tôrâh" [el rollo que contiene el Pentateuco], ke siendo día del kuzgo konbiene enmentar este kuento de la 'ăqêdâh... (Meam Loez, p. 640)

A subsequent statement reiterates the fact that this is the only biblical narrative to be read daily in the synagogue:

esta pârâšâh se dize kada día i es el kabdal de la ŷuderfa... (Meam Loez, p. 642)

From the very beginning, the Meam Loez narrative contains textual elements popular in the ballad tradition. One such example is the use of the word regalado to refer to Isaac. This adjective is not at all mentioned in Spanish versions of the Scriptures:

...toma agora aquel tu fijo singular amado que tienes quees Ysach, e vete a tierra de Moriya... (Alba Bible)

...toma agora a tu fijo a tu vno que amaste a Yishac y anda a ti a tierra de Moriah... (Ferrara Bible)

...toma agora a tu iko, a tu regalado, ke amastes, a Yishaq... (Meam Loez, p. 642)

It is reiterated in the ensuing dialogue:

- Senyor del mundo: 2 ikos tengo, ¿a kuál de elyos tomaré?
- A tu iko regalado.
- Tanto regalado de su madre es uno komo otro...
(Meam Loez, p. 651)

The introduction of Sarah into the narrative is purely midrashic in origin. As we have seen, she has become an integral part of many versions of the Sephardic romance, where the epithet regalado serves to stress the strong bond that exists between mother and son:

Paraile mientes* a Isaac
que es mi hijo arregalado... (Bn)

Se me da por la mi madre
que me tiene arregalado... (Bn)

But most of the coincidences that we come across as we compare the ballads to the Meam Loez narrative are more philosophical in nature. For example, after posing a series of questions concerning the possible underlying message of the Scriptural account, the commentator begins to ponder the logic of the biblical phrase "God tested Abraham" (Genesis 22:1). He insists that Isaac is the true hero:

I más ke abía de dezir: "I el Dyo prebó a Yishaq", ke en él konbiene dekolgar la koza más ke en Abraham.
(Meam Loez, p. 644)

This leads to an intense discussion among certain hākamīm [wise men] about the heroic qualities and the ultimate objectives of both father and son. Although the matter is never completely resolved, the commentator reconciles the issue by pointing to two distinct kinds of heroism:

por saber el Šy.t [Dios] ke el korasón de Abraham es muy limpyo i bien apegado kon el temor del Šy.t, por esto le prebó munčas vezes ke se publike su ħásidūt [devoción; piedad] por el mundo i konoskan su grandeza, ke su korasón está muy rezyo en el ħudezmo...

(Meam Loez, p. 646)

...para publikar tanbién la grandeza de Yishaq, ke aunke era mansebo a lo miġor de su logramiento, i siendo Abraham ombre vieġo ke kon un dediko lo podía aronċar, kon todo esto no abryó boka ni refuzó su palabra...

(Meam Loez, p. 649)

Thus, God intended to make Abraham the "public" hero while Isaac became the "quiet" hero who would help his father carry out God's will and suffer in silence. [See Chapter III]. How is this manifested in the Romancero? In direct contrast to the biblical account and in line with a tendency of the midrashic tradition, both the Moroccan and the Peninsular versions of the ballad reveal a certain predilection for Isaac, although the actions of both heros are held in high esteem. In the Sephardic ballads, Isaac valiantly accepts his fate and actively helps his father complete the difficult mission. However, one never loses sight of the fact that it is Abraham who is being tested:

El Dió del cielo a Abraham
Muchas veces le ha probado;
Para cumplirle las diez
Fuerte cosa le ha mandado; (Bn)

And at the end of the ordeal:

-Tate, tate*, tu, Abraham,
no mates a Ishaac horrado*,
que ya el Dio de los cielos,
ya te tiene bien prebado.- (ML)

* SEE GLOSSARY

There is, in fact, a passage in the Meam Loez which seems to suggest that the episode of the binding of Isaac was merely intended to put to rest certain rumors about Abraham's true faith:

...el kuento de la 'ġqēdāh kalyó las bokas de la kente ke ablaba mal de Abraham i todos dieron crédito ke su kudezmo era kumplido. (Meam Loez, p. 649)

The importance of Abraham's tenth test with regard to his reputation as a God-fearing man is also stressed by Moses Arragel in the Alba Bible commentaries, as he quotes a midrashic source:

Rraby Tanhuma dispone aqueste capitulo por otra via e dize asy: sabe que dies tentaciones tento nuestro Dios a Abraham, e esta postrimera fue la mas fuerte e graue, e que sy en esta la postrimera firme non touiera, quasy quel Satan, e avn las gentes, touieran que murmurar del padre Abraham diziendo que por que las otras nueve tentaciones non eran tan graues como aquesta las sufrio e que esta non pudo sufrir... (Alba Bible, p. 131)

In the Peninsular versions, as we have seen, Isaac becomes the true protagonist. The father is a man of means who likes to spoil his only son:

Un padre tenía un hijo
muy querido y estimado,
que no comía gallina
ni tampoco bacalao,
que comía pavos de Indias
que cuestan dos mil ducados. (Tudanca)

le traía bien vestido,
le traía bien calzado,
de los regalos del mundo
le traía regalado. (Herreruela)

Interestingly, Abraham's high social status and his love for his son are both echoed in the Meam Loez:

Siendo un hombre riko rikísimo i muy viego i dezeozo de ikos i siempre estubo kon este dezeo de tener un iko ke sea su yôrēs [heredero]; i kuando...lo alkansó a tener, sierto ke no kabe en pëndola el šī'ûr [límite, medida] de la amistad ke lo tenía;... (Meam Loez, pp. 646-47)

We are also reminded of the great celebration that took place when Isaac was born:

...ya abizemos...de la fiesta grande ke se izo kuando nasyó Yishaq, ke konbidó Abraham a 32 reyes...
(Meam Loez, p. 647)

And when Abraham receives the order to sacrifice Isaac, he asks Sarah to prepare a thanksgiving meal in honor of their "prized" son:

Siendo somos viekos i ... ke estamos kontentes de tener tal iko presyado, es razon ke de oy endelantre komamos i bebamos kon munčo gusto. (Meam Loez, p. 652)

Thereupon, Abraham informs his wife that Isaac must leave home temporarily to complete his studies. As father and son prepare to begin their long journey, she offers her blessings, but with the same apprehension expressed in the Sephardic versions of the romance:

...lyebadlo kon bos en la buena ora; mas kon partido ke no lo fiés de vuestro oko i no tardés munčos días porke me habzais šā'ar [dolor] grande, ke otro bien no tengo ni aspero a parirlo...
...a Abraham...le iba rogando, diziendo: -Mira, senyor, ke tengais su kargo de darle a komer en su ora i no lo dekes kaminar a pie ni ke baya por el sol, ni por los ayres. I si bos abla alguna palabra salida de orden, no le grités ni me lo anožés. (Meam Loez, p. 652)

-Paraime mientes* a Ishaac
que es mi hijo arregalado, * SEE GLOSSARY
paralde mientes* del sol
porque aun es niño y mochacho,
paralde mientes* del agua
porque no está acostumbrado. (ML)
(Paraile mientes*, Abraham,

yo le confío en tus manos.
Que el es mi vida y mi bien
mi consuelo y mi regalo.) (Bn)

The actual blessing given by Sarah in the ballad bears a striking resemblance to a question posed in the Meam Loez by the crying mother as she stares at her son in a very moving scene:

y échanos la bendición
porque seamos tornados.-
La bendición que les diera:
que vengáis vivos y sanos! (ML)

...kon los okos yoreando de lágrimas, [Sarah estaba] diziendo: -¿Tendré ventura de verte venir bibo i sano? (Meam Loez, p. 652)

As we established in the previous section of this chapter, the reference in some of the Peninsular ballad versions to Mount Moriah as monte de los anublados very likely stems from the midrashic and kabbalistic image of a dark cloud as the earthly representation of the Shechinah (God's presence). This symbol appears in the Meam Loez in the corresponding episode:

...alsó Abraham a sus okos i vido el lugar de lekos. I siendo vido una nube eskura i demudada mas ke resto de las nubes, ke estaba enbolbida i arodeada deredor de la montanya, diño entre sí: "-Parese ke esta montanya es el lugar ke me diño el Dyo". (Meam Loez, p. 653)

It is quite interesting that this image, oft-repeated in the Midrash, has survived in the Peninsular romance and not at all in the Sephardic ballad tradition.

In the scene that follows, the long and arduous journey up the mountain is described in vivid detail as it is in the ballad:

...siendo Yishaq era mansebo i kaminaba koriendo, lo kual Abraham, ke era vieko i su kaminar era debagar i no podía alkansarlo, por esto lo kargó kon la lenya para ke no pudiera korer siendo estaba kargado, i kon esto kaminaban los dos kuntos... (Meam Loez, p. 654)

The idea has been perfectly synthesized into four verses in many of the Moroccan versions:

Abraham, como era viejo,
va despacio y fatigado;
Isaac, como es pequeño,
de leña viene cargado; (GF)

In the Peninsular ballads, the focus shifts to a tiring and impatient Isaac:

En el medio del camino
el niño iba cansado... (Tudanca)

Cuando iban el monte arriba,
el niño se iba cansando:
Diga, diga, padre mío,
diga, diga, padre amado,
¿adónde estaba ese monte,
ese monte tan despoblado? (Herreruela)

Another important midrashic element in the Meam Loez is the early appearance of Satan as the antagonist (the mecatreg of the Sephardic ballads). Essentially, his role is to accuse both Abraham and Isaac of all sorts of wrongdoings without justification and to dissuade them from obeying God's commands. The Meam Loez goes so far as to suggest that Satan was the catalyst for God's ultimate decision to test Abraham, as reflected in these words:

no es Abraham tan bueno, asegùn parese; i la preba es ke izo konbite milagrozo i no tubo virtud de azer un qorbán [sacrificio] por kábôd [honor] del Šy.t [Dios], i siendo no tubo este kargo, parese ke su kudezmo no es kumplido. (Meam Loez, pp. 647-48)

Three centuries earlier, Moses Arragel had made reference to the same rabbinic interpretation:

...los talmudistas dizen en çanhedrin quel Satan, como vio la grand fiesta que Abraham fizo a su fijo, que dixera ante Dios: Senor, veras que nobleza de Abraham; que quantos toros e carrneros e otras rreses mato Abraham, non quiso sacreficar ante ti tan sola mente vn palomino... (Alba Bible, p. 130)

As father and son begin their journey to Mount Moriah, Satan intercepts them and attempts to discourage Isaac from going through with the sacrifice. In doing so, he takes advantage of what appears to be Isaac's only weakness:

Mas a lo menos debes de tener pydad de la desdiçada de tu madre... ke sãbete por sierto ke esto es su kabo de tu madre, ke de sentirlo se muere del şã'ar [dolor]... I a lo menos por este despeço debes de no azer tal koza, ke sierto tu madre se mata kon sus manos de la pasyón ke sentirá... (Meam Loez, pp. 656)

A similar motif appears in the 15th century Alba Bible:

En yendo, vino el Satan e parosele a la man diestra de Ysach e dixole asy: o cuytado, fijo de la cuytada, quantos ayunos malos ayuno tu madre ante que te ouiese, e avn este viejo tu padre, e agora a se enloqueçido que te va a degollar... (Alba Bible, p. 132)

In effect, Satan's words cause Isaac to hesitate as he turns to his father for help:

ditas ablas del šātān le izieron un poko de pe'ul.lāh [trabajo, acción] a Yishaq, ke se le aflokó el korasón algo kuánto i le rogo a su padre ke se apyadara de él.. (Meam Loez, p. 656)

As we have seen previously, Isaac's concern for his mother is clearly expressed in both ballad traditions:

no se me da por mi muerte
aunque muero mal logrado,
se me da por Sarah mi madre
que me tiene arregalado. (ML)

Y a la mi madre querida
no se diga en isti año;
si pregunta donde estoy,
dígame que estoy con amo... (Valdeteja)

This preoccupation on the part of Isaac as to the situation and manner in which Abraham is to break the news to Sarah is very much a part of the Judeo-Spanish midrashic tradition:

- Mira, senyor por amor del Dyo ke no se lo digas a mi madre kquanto está en el tekado... I también no se lo digais en súpito, i debes de tener munça pasensya i pensat bien de ké modo se lo dirēs, ke ya vistes lo ke lyoró akelya noçe por espartirme de su lado.
(Meam Loez, p. 658)

Abraham, by contrast, stands firm and remains unaffected by Satan's attempt to sway him from his responsibility. His commitment to God is unshakable:

-Bayte de mi lado,... mi korasón está apegado kon el kudezmo, no ago kuenta de tu konseko...
(Meam Loez, p. 655)

In the passage which describes the binding we also find several coincidences with the ballad tradition. Isaac's affirmation of his faith in God, for example, is immediately followed by a plea to his father for a "clean" sacrifice, a sacrifice that would conform to halachic principles outlined in the Talmud:

...kiero afirmar el komando del Šy.t, ma siendo que la alma es muy dulce... nosa ke la ora de eçar el kuçilyo

me entrará algún miedo y seré kabzante... de azer dos pekados... Por esto bos rogo munço ke me atés bien bien para afirmar la mišwāh de buen modo...

(Meam Loez, pp. 658-659)

This is clearly reflected in the Moroccan ballads:

Padre, ateisme los pies,
padre, ateisme las manos,
con el fervor de la sangre
no vos haga algún pecado; (ML)

But even the Peninsular versions include Isaac's specific instructions, as found in midrashic literature. Generally, the Leonese versions go into more detail than the Castilian:

-Si está mandado de Dios
cúmplase luego el mandado:
las manos me atará atrás
con un listón encarnado. (Salceda)

-Padre, cortaime las lengua,
por si vos ofendo en algo,
padre, ataime las manos,
porque no vaiga braciando,
padre, ataime los pies,
pa que no vaiga enredando. (Villarino)

Abraham, in turn, follows every instruction given by his son. The Meam Loez describes the step-by-step process with uncanny detail:

I ansí tomó Abraham a Yishaq i lo eñó en bako, la kara para la tierra, i le ató las dos manos i los dos pies para atrás, de modo ke no tenía valor de menearse del todo, i lo alebantó i lo puзо en dito mizbēeh [altar] ensima de dita lenya, i su kara para arriba... I asegún uza el šôhēt [matador] de meter el pie ensima de la behēmāh [bestia] kuando la ba a degolyar, lo mezmo se asentó Abraham de rodilyas ensima de Yishaq...

(Meam Loez, p. 659)

This description, which is missing completely from the Peninsular ballads, has been condensed in most of the Moroccan versions to four verses:

Con el tual* de la leña
 pies y manos le había atado,
 con una cinta morada
 los ojos le había tapado. (ML)

The reference to the blindfolding of Isaac by his father as a preparation for the sacrifice, seen in both the Moroccan and Peninsular versions of the ballad, does not seem to have originated in the Midrash [See Section B of this chapter]. Nevertheless, the image of Abraham's tears falling into Isaac's eyes as he lies bound on the altar, a scene often described in midrashic accounts, has been incorporated into the Meam Loez:

...los okos de Abraham iban lyorando yoros de lágrimas
 i le iban kalyendo dientro de los okos de Yishaq, ke
 aunke el korasón tenía muy alegre por afirmar la pala-
 bra del Šy.t, ma los okos iban lyorando.
 (Meam Loez, p. 659)

This midrashic passage may have given the composer of the romance poetic license to add to the binding of the hands and feet a more dramatic, or perhaps, a more human dimension to the ritual: that of blindfolding the victim so that he may not be tempted to look at his executioner.

An important aspect of the biblical account of the binding of Isaac that must not be overlooked is its symbolic value. Through many generations, historical circumstances have seen the Jewish people fall victim to various tyrants determined to oppress, enslave or destroy them. Very early on, Isaac became a symbol of the martyrdom of the Jews [See

Chapter VI, Section C]. This parallel is clearly expressed in the Meam Loez:

Yishaq estaba atado sobre el mizbēeh de modo ke no se podía menear, i ordenó su orasyon delante del Šy.t i le respondyó, lo mesmo rogamos ke mos responda también a nozotros en ora de nuestra angustya.

(Meam Loez, p. 659)

Of the many midrashic variants of the climactic scene in which God or an angel intervenes as Abraham raises the knife to kill his son, the Sephardic Jews seem to have a predilection for the following version:

El senyor de Abraham tomó el kučilyo kon la mano derecha i enpesó a kortar el kuero de la garganta de Yishaq, šī'ūr [cantidad] ke le koryó un rebī'īt [un poco] de sangre; entonses vino el šāṭān i le dyó un renpusón en la mano de Abraham de modo ke le saltó el kučilyo. I siendo vido Abraham esto, diķo entre sí:

-Parese ke no ēnbeluntaba el Šy.t ke lo degolye, i parese ke mi obligo es de afogarlo kon las manos.

I kuando kiķo Abraham aogarlo, le diķo el mal'āk:
-No tiendas tu mano a el moso... no le agas ninguna koza, ke todo fue por prebarte i publikar tu kudezmo...

(Meam Loez, pp. 659-660)

As we can see, the Midrash favored by Judeo-Spanish biblical folklore claims that Abraham actually began to cut Isaac's throat and to draw blood from his son before he was pushed aside by the evil Satan. This interpretation, which came about perhaps as an attempt to elevate Isaac's suffering to that of Christ [See Chapter V, Section C], has left some traces in the Moroccan ballads:

Abraham tomó el puñal
y al cuello se la había puesto. (Be)

Cuenta que ya le dió el golpe
cuenta que no se le ha dado. (Bn)

Isaac's virtues are extolled throughout the Meam Loez. He is portrayed as being pious, stoically courageous, and respectful of his father:

el senyor de Yishaq se deķó atar komo un karnero por
azer la veluntad de su padre... (Meam Loez, p. 659)

Abraham, on the other hand, represents steadfastness and the most absolute devotion to and fear of God:

-Agora supe ke eres temiente del Dyo...
(Meam Loez, p. 661)

The motif of Isaac's obedience to his father, as well as Abraham's compliance with God's will, are perfectly summarized in the last few verses of the Peninsular ballads from Santander:

-Detente, padre, detente
no mates a tu hijo amado,
que tú has ganado la gloria
y él también se la ha ganado;
tu hijo por ser obediente,
tú por cumplir mi mandado. (Puente-Pumar)

Finally, with regard to the death of Sarah, described only in the Moroccan ballads, the Meam Loez paraphrases the midrashic version which tells of not one, but two encounters between Sarah and Satan. At first, Satan falsely announces to Sarah that Isaac is dead:

Sabrés ke el kuento de la 'āqêdāh fue kabza de la muerte de la senyora de Šārāh... Siendo vido el šātān ke no abansó kon Abraham i Yishaq, ke ninguno le izo kuenta de sus ablas...por esto se fue delante de Šārāh en Beēr Šēba' i se la asemekó komo un ombre vieko ensima de un gamelyo i le diko:

¡No supistes lo ke te akontensyó, ke tu marido Abraham lyebó a tu iko regalado Yishaq...i lo ató pies i manos i lo degolyó, i por munčo ke gritó Yishaq no le tubo pyadad?
(Meam Loez, p. 671)

At this point, Sarah despairs but does not die of grief, as she does in some midrashic accounts and in the majority of Moroccan ballad versions:

Umá Abraham, tu marido,
te mató a Ishaac horrado.
Como esso oyera Sarah,
muerta cayó en un desmayo. (ML)

Instead, she goes to Hebron and asks passers-by about the whereabouts of her son Isaac. A stranger tells her of a vision of an old man hiding a younger man. She then returns home where Satan, disguised once again as an old man, awaits her to give this explanation:

-Sábete por sierto ke mentiras te abló akel vieko i
tenlo por seguro ke Yishaq está bueno i sano.
Sintiendo Śārāh dita habla la salyó el alma de la
alegría. (Meam Loez, p. 671)

This particular ending occurs in only one Moroccan version:

Como eso oyera Sará,
que su hijo es vivo y sano,
suspiro dió de alegría
y el alma perdiera al darlo. (Bn)

Our main objective in this section has been to demonstrate the significance and vitality of the story of the binding of Isaac in Sephardic literature and culture. This biblical tale, which has been interpreted repeatedly in rabbinic literature, has been adorned with an endless array of popular folk motifs by the oral tradition.

Indeed, the Meam Loez narrative represents a synthesis of midrashic, talmudic and other extra-biblical elements

popular in the folk traditions of Spanish Jews. In this respect, it coincides with the eclecticism of the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac. However, there is one important difference. When the Meam Loez was published, it became a compendium of biblical exegesis frozen in time and space. As such, it was helpful in pinpointing with relative accuracy the degree to which folk motifs and midrashic literature had influenced the interpretation of Scripture among the Sephardim up to the 18th century. The ballad tradition, on the other hand, represents constant change. Although we have seen many midrashic motifs reflected in various ballads, including some of the Peninsular romances, each version is but a small link in a long chain that spans centuries of invention and re-creation, elimination and expansion. What we have clearly seen is that the biblical folk motifs found in the Romancero, be they midrashic, talmudic or kabbalistic in origin, are a reflection of a larger body of folklore that surrounded and supplemented the Scriptures for thousands of years and became an integral part of the oral "heroic" literature of Spanish Jews before and after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹ Joel Rosenberg, "Biblical Narrative" in Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), p. 39.

² Rosenberg, p. 39.

³ Rosenberg, p. 40.

⁴ Robert Goldenberg, "Talmud" in Back to the Sources, ed. Barry W. Holtz, p. 131.

⁵ Goldenberg, p. 135.

⁶ Luis Suárez Fernández, Judíos españoles en la Edad Media (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1980), p. 33.

⁷ Harry Gersh, The Sacred Books of the Jews (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 139.

⁸ Gersh, p. 140.

⁹ "Midrash," Encyclopedia Judaica. Under the same entry, it is pointed out that "the name Midrash derives from the root drsh (דָּרַשׁ) which in the Bible means mainly "to search," "to seek," "to examine," and "to investigate."

¹⁰ Raphael Patai, Gates to the Old City (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), p. VII.

¹¹ Gersh, p. 150.

¹² Gersh, p. 150.

¹³ Gersh, p. 151.

¹⁴ Diego Catalán, Por campos del Romancero (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), p. 73. Catalán also mentions (p. 74, n.32) that this early version was later included in the Segunda Parte de la Silva de varios Romances, Zaragoza, 1550.

¹⁵ Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Catálogo del Romancero judío-español (Madrid: Imprenta Ibérica, 1907), p. 33.

¹⁶ Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman in Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) published the Benardete version (pp.

29-30) and refer to 16 other Moroccan versions, 11 of which have been published (p. 83).

¹⁷ Raphael Patai, Gates to the Old City: A book of Jewish Legends (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), p. 298. This particular passage is quoted from the Tanhuma waYera, pp. 22-23.

¹⁸ Meam Loez, el gran comentario bíblico sefardí, 3 vols., ed. David Gonzalo Maeso and Pascual Recuero (Madrid: Gredos, 1964-74), vol. I, p. 577.

¹⁹ Louis Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), vol. 2, p. 249, n. 229.

²⁰ Ginzberg, p. 249, n. 229.

²¹ Ginzberg, p. 274.

²² Daniel Chanan Matt, Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 34.

²³ The verses in parentheses were recreated by Benoliel according to the information provided by the informant.

²⁴ Ginzberg, p. 275.

²⁵ Ginzberg, p. 250, n.236

²⁶ Ginzberg, p.274.

²⁷ Patai, p. 299.

²⁸ Ginzberg, p. 275.

²⁹ Ginzberg, p. 275.

³⁰ Ginzberg, p. 280.

³¹ Ginzberg, p. 279.

³² Ginzberg, p. 279.

³³ Ginzberg, p. 280.

³⁴ Patai, p. 302.

³⁵ Patai, p. 302.

³⁶ Ginzberg, p.280.

- 37 Ginzberg, p. 281.
- 38 Ginzberg, p. 281.
- 39 Ginzberg, p. 281.
- 40 Ginzberg, p. 282.
- 41 Patai, p. 302.
- 42 Ginzberg, pp. 286-287.
- 43 Ginzberg, p. 287.
- 44 Ginzberg, p. 287.
- 45 Ginzberg, pp. 289-290.
- 46 Ginzberg, p. 287.
- 47 Ginzberg, p. 255, n. 258.
- 48 J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1970), p. 87, n. 67.
- 49 Hertz, p. 87.
- 50 Diego Catalán published certain portions of this version in a study entitled "El sacrificio de Isaac. Ejemplo de recreación colectiva" in Por campos del Romancero (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), pp. 56-75.
- 51 Published by Diego Catalán in Por campos del Romancero, pp. 56-57.
- 52 Catalán, Por campos, p. 57, n. 9.
- 53 Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, p. 249, n. 230.
- 54 Ginzberg, p. 247, n. 226. Ginzberg refers to sections 10a-11b of the first volume of the Zohar.
- 55 Sefer HaYashar or The Book of Yashar, translated by Mordecai Manuel Noah (New York: Hermon Press, 1972), p. 64. The editor, in his introduction, refers to this book as "that quaint admixture of Biblical history, Rabbinic Midrash and medieval legend of obscure origin." He goes on to say that "while believed by some to be one of the lost books of the Bible and quoted as such by some authorities in the Middle Ages, others regarded its authenticity as dubious. Probably because of its uncertain authorship, it was not

until 1552 that it was first printed in Naples." And with regard to the time and place of origin, "modern scholars are in agreement that it was compiled not before the eleventh century, but are divided as to where it was written: some placing it in Southern Italy, while others in Spain."

56 Philo Judaeus, De Abrahamo, 32. Edition used: Philo, 10 vols, translated by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958-68).

57 Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, translated by Gerald Friedlander (New York: Hermon Press, 1965), p. 223. The development of midrashic literature stretches over eight centuries (400-1200 C.E.) and is usually divided into three periods. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (compiled close to 750) belongs to "the Middle Period and is characterized by its heavy external influences from the Muslim." (Encyclopedia Judaica).

58 For a listing of medieval Spanish Bible translations, see Biblia Romanceada I.I.8, (The 13th Century Spanish Bible Contained in Escorial MS. I.I.8), edited by Mark G. Littlefield (Madison, Wisc.: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1983), pp. I-XIII.

59 Catalán, Por campos, p. 59.

60 The Diccionario de la lengua española (Madrid: Real Academia Española, Espasa-Calpe, 1970) gives the following definitions of señorito:

- (1) m. Hijo de un señor o de persona de alguna representación.
- (2) fam. Amo, con respecto a los criados.
- (3) fam. Joven acomodado y ocioso.

61 Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 31 (p. 226 in Friedlander edition, New York, 1965).

62 Ginzberg, p. 278.

63 Ginzberg, p. 251, n. 242. Ginzberg observes that, according to rabbinic sources, "the binding of Isaac by Abraham was in conformity with the law, which prescribes the binding of a sacrifice before it is slaughtered" and that "Abraham observed all the sacrificial ceremonies while preparing to offer up Isaac."

64 Midrash Rabbah, Bereshith Rabbah 65.10.

65 Sefer HaYashar, 23.63.

- 66 Sefer HaYashar, 23.61.
- 67 Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 31, p. 227.
- 68 Ginzberg, pp. 274-75.
- 69 Rafael Patai, Gates to the Old City (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), p. 302.
- 70 Ginzberg, pp. 285-86.
- 71 Ginzberg, p. 254, n. 255.
- 72 David Gonzalo Maeso and Pascual Pascual Recuero, Meam Loez, el gran comentario bíblico sefardí (Madrid: Gredos, 1964), Tomo Preliminar, p. 28
- 73 Meam Loez, vol. I, pt. 2, pp. 47-69.

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE: A SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS

A. OVERVIEW OF FOLK BALLAD THEORIES

Before we analyze the structure of El sacrificio de Isaac or attempt to break it down into its narrative components, we must have a clear definition of the term "ballad," not only within the literary realm, but also as a social phenomenon. Certain basic theories about the origin and evolution of the romance will have to be dealt with before we can engage in a synchronic study of thematic, stylistic and linguistic variations.

Ballad theorists have been disagreeing for at least a century about the origins and transmission of folk literature. Soon after the Romantics suggested that a collective group of people could create epic narratives and ballads out of a vacuum, others became intent on proving just the opposite, that the medieval epic poem and the ballad was the work of a specific individual at a specific place and time in history. As the basis for our study, we have chosen the middle road paved by Ramón Menéndez Pidal. As a traditionalist, and in reaction to the anti-Romantic theories of Joseph Bédier, Menéndez Pidal would have liked nothing more than to accept unconditionally the Romantic notion of the ballad created by the people and for the people. As a

literary critic, however, he could never deny the importance of the individual author-composer who was responsible for the first and original version of each ballad. As a result, he was quite successful in consolidating the two extreme philosophies without flatly rejecting either, as illustrated in the following statement:

Frente al principio antirromántico de que cada poesía tiene un autor, una patria y una fecha, creo que es preciso afirmar categóricamente este otro: cada verso o cada detalle de una canción popular puede ser refundido en un tiempo, en un país y por un autor diverso de los que refundieron cada uno de los otros versos o variantes de la misma canción. Frente a la afirmación moderna de que una poesía tradicional es anónima simplemente porque se ha olvidado el nombre de su autor, hay que reconocer que es anónima porque es el resultado de múltiples creaciones individuales que se suman y entrecruzan; su autor no puede tener nombre determinado, su nombre es legión.¹

The pioneering work of Menéndez Pidal immediately set the stage for the application of new theories within the neotraditionalist historical vein. Critics such as Paul Bénichou and Diego Catalán accepted the basic precepts set forth by Menéndez Pidal and took them a step further. As evidenced by their studies, these two scholars have shifted the emphasis from tracing the origin and transmission of a particular ballad to examining the aspects of ongoing creativity and re-creation. Far from doing away with historicism, they have incorporated it into their analyses of ballads as they undertook to scrutinize the variants. Along with quite a few of their contemporaries, they agree that the existence of multiple versions and variants of a

given text within a specific culture and period in history is truly what makes the romance unique. Menéndez Pidal himself had suggested this idea some forty years ago when he was trying to distinguish between popular and traditional poetry:

Esta poesía que se rehace en cada repetición, que se refunde en cada una de sus variantes, las cuales viven y se propagan en ondas de carácter colectivo a través de un grupo humano y sobre un territorio determinado, es la poesía propiamente "tradicional", bien distinta de la otra meramente "popular." La esencia de lo tradicional está, pues, más allá de la mera concepción o aceptación de una poesía por el pueblo que señala John Meier; está en la reelaboración de la poesía por medio de las variantes.²

If a ballad, as Menéndez Pidal and many other experts have stated, is defined through the variants existing within a social community bound by a common language, culture and history, then a structural analysis presupposes a kind of synthesis of as many narrative and linguistic elements as can be found in the different versions of the ballad. Students of the Spanish Romancero have found it useful, from time to time, to perform what has been referred to as a "reconstruction" of a ballad by consolidating all or most of its known versions. This somewhat artificial re-creation of a ballad can and has been undertaken for many wrong reasons, among them to claim to reproduce the original text, failing to take into consideration the process of substitution and re-creation that takes place over a period of time.

On the other hand, the task of bringing together the multiple variants of one ballad as they exist within certain parameters (location and time) and re-creating them as one, has at least one very positive result: it serves to unify and solidify all the aspects of the oral tradition as it relates to that particular ballad to give us a synthesis that can be studied more concretely. What must remain clear is that a ballad reconstructed from bits and pieces of its most popular versions is not necessarily a more complete ballad, nor is it always a valid attempt to arrive at the original text. For our purposes, it is simply a consolidation of the various manifestations of the ballad as they have come to be known in the oral traditions of a given geographical area.

Another technique that has proved useful to those engaged in both macro- and microanalysis of folk ballads is "motif-indexing." The traditional approaches to narrative were seriously challenged by the structuralists of the 1920's, among them Stith Thompson³ and Antti Aarne.⁴ Their bold attempt to demystify folk literature by breaking it down into its principal "motifs" had a long-lasting impact on the folklorists of generations to come. Among those who have adopted this method and most successfully applied it to the classification of the Spanish and Sephardic Romancero are Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman.⁵

It was also in the 1920's that Milman Parry began to devise a system which would ultimately help to demonstrate whether or not a poetic tradition was transmitted orally. The "common denominator" of this system was not the "motif" but the "formula."⁶ In later years, Albert B. Lord played an important role in broadening the application of this new "formulaic" theory as he joined with Parry to study the oral poetic tradition of Yugoslavia:

In the living oral tradition which they studied in Yugoslavia, Parry and Lord found that essentially no memorization of texts was involved, that the singers or oral epic learned a poetic language consisting of phrasal metrical formulas, became acquainted with a stock of lesser themes and broader story-patterns, and used these various elements to "recompose" in each performance a "song" which already existed in multiform in the tradition within which the singers lived.⁷

In the last two decades, many scholars of the Romancero, among them Ruth Webber and Bruce Beatie, have sought to apply the Parry/Lord theory to Spanish ballads, keeping in mind that:

to look simply for an "oral tradition" in the Spanish Romancero would be needless, since the "orality" both of the European ballad in general and of at least a considerable part of the Romancero in particular has been assumed as a matter of fact.⁸

The ballad of El sacrificio de Isaac falls into that category. Its oral tradition having been established, it would seem much more useful to compare "narrative motifs" than to look for "formulaic" language, although the presence

of certain stock formulas cannot be denied and will be discussed as part of our analysis.

But no sooner had the "motif" and the "formula" been established as units of comparison when Vladimir Propp came along to propose a different system. Rina Benmayor explains:

Addressing himself to this very issue, Vladimir Propp proposes in his 1928 Morphology of the Folktale that the essential hinge in folk-narrative composition is not the motif itself but the FUNCTION (the act defined by its significance for the plot) of the motif within the narrative. The motif, he argues, is much the same as the formula: Each element in it can be effectively substituted for another, forming an entirely different combination, a radically new motif. Yet numerous motifs fulfill an identical function...⁹

Propp came up with 31 different "functions of dramatis personae." He also developed a table of 151 narrative elements to give us a very stark outline of the infrastructure of the folktale:

Propp's contribution to the study of oral narrative was significant in this light. He proposed a synchronic method for discovering a system and articulating its internal laws: Inquiry into the plot structures of 100 magical fairy tales disclosed that the motive force of the plot resides in the dramatic ACTIONS of its personae, that the FUNCTIONS of the characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale. Thus, narratives that appear dissimilar on the surface because their motifs seem to be utterly different, in fact partake of a uniform infrasystem...¹⁰

However useful Propp's "functions" may have been or may continue to be to the study of folk ballads, some ballad experts found more than one reason to be apprehensive: (1) Propp was, after all, dealing with Russian fairy tales, not with folk ballads, let alone romances; (2) he seemed to have

ignored completely the diachronic method which proposed to bring into question that very crucial historical link, and which considered the passage of time to be the "raison d'être" of the folk ballad. Rina Benmayor echoes a general feeling:

It is important to note that oral tradition research rests on a series of bridges that have been constructed to link disparate geographical areas, genres, and time periods. This has led to a reliance, at times, on very loosely drawn analogies and, consequently, to challenges.. Propp's Morphology of the Folktale represented a significant step forward and improvement on the comparative motif type of research, but Propp's morphology is by no means a universally applicable tool.¹¹

Nevertheless, the notion of categorizing folk narratives became very attractive to students of oral literature. Many of the structuralists who followed were so deeply influenced by Propp's model that they set out to construct models of their own that would be more applicable to their particular field. In the area of the Romancero, Diego Catalán and Suzanne Petersen have made significant advances through the use of computers:

Applying theoretical propositions and methods developed by Brémond, Greimas and Segre to the Romancero, Diego Catalán and his team veer their attention from purely mechanical structures to investigation of the underlying symbolic meanings and narrative representational patterns that serve as deeper units for comparison than formulaic or motif resemblances...¹²

B. COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EL SACRIFICIO DE ISAAC

Although a computer database program has been used to effect the reconstruction of the ballad of El sacrificio de Isaac that is to follow, no attempt has been made to establish patterns by programming stylistic or linguistic variations. Here, the emphasis will be on the variation in narrative content. All the versions collected from the Peninsular and Sephardic traditions have been collated, then subdivided into functional units in order to facilitate comparison, just as Vladimir Propp himself suggested:

In setting down each text in detail under a given heading, each heading (when the material is read vertically) offers an extremely graphic picture that may be studied entirely independently. The texts which have been set down may be distributed in such a way as to emphasize the specially typical forms. A comparison of the material under each heading makes possible the study of the transformation and metamorphosis of each element.¹³

The reconstructed ballad of El sacrificio de Isaac as known in the Sephardic tradition is based on the nine versions studied in Chapter II. It contains a total of 146 verses. Its foundation is the 1915 version collected by Manrique de Lara (ML). Verses and episodes from the other versions have been added and are followed by the abbreviation of the collector's name; the words in brackets are also variants seen in other texts. Linguistic variants will be discussed in the section on Language (Section D of this chapter).

The reconstruction based on the Peninsular tradition is 150 verses long, and takes into account both branches of the Spanish tradition: (1) Castile (Santander, Palencia and Burgos) and (2) León (which includes Zamora). Variant words and verses are in brackets.

Both ballad reconstructions have been subdivided into their principal narrative components for easier reference in the study that follows. Although Propp's "functions" will not be used (since they are not always applicable to the content of our ballad), they are discussed in the ensuing commentaries. Moreover, the concept of subdividing a text into its narrative elements was inspired in the model he established for his folktales. The commentaries to each of the sections also take into account Propp's contention that superficial narrative differences do not betray the deeper underlying message of a particular passage.

Essentially each commentary will consist of two parts. The first part will be an attempt to compare Propp's model to our own classification and to find correspondences wherever they may exist. The second part will be devoted to an examination of El sacrificio de Isaac in light of the other Sephardic biblical ballads and the Romancero tradition in general. WORDS FOLLOWED BY AN ASTERISK (*) ARE EXPLAINED IN THE GLOSSARY (PP. 328-336).

ABBREVIATIONS USED:	AL: Alvar López (Tetuán)
	Be: Benardete (Tetuán/NY)
	Bn: Benoliel (Tangier)
	Ca: Catalán (Tangier)
	GF: García Figueras (Larache)
	He: Herreruella, Palencia
	LP: Larrea Palacín (Tetuán)
	ML: Manrique de Lara (Tangier)
	MR: Martínez Ruiz (Alcazarquivir)
	Pu: Puente-Pumar, Santander
	Sa: Salceda, Santander
	SM: San Martín de Humada, Burgos
	Tu: Tudanca, Santander
	Vm: Villamanín, León
	Vr: Villarino de Manzanas, Zamora
	Vt: Valdeteja, León

Moroccan Sephardic Tradition

Peninsular Tradition

A) LOCATION NOT MENTIONED

A) LOCATION SPECIFIED (Santander)

..... En un lugar junto a Burgos,
 que se llama Villarcayo, (Sa)

Propp's "temporal-spatial determination" applies only to the Peninsular versions. Here, the Russian fairy tales and the Spanish ballad tradition have something in common. Many romances, including those kept alive by the Sephardic tradition, often begin by naming the place where the action is to take place. Here are a few well-known examples:

En Castilla está un castillo
 que se llama Rocafriada... ("Montesinos y Rosaflorida,"
 Durán, ballad # 384)

En Santa Agueda de Burgos,
 Do juran los hijosdalgos, ("El Rey enojado destierra al
 Cid," Durán, ballad # 811)

En una famosa playa
 que está a vista de Pisuerga... ("En una famosa playa,"
 Durán, ballad # 1516)

Only three of the Sephardic biblical ballads make use of a similar type of introduction:

Mosé estaba en el campo
guiando su ganado... ("Consagración de Moisés I,"
Benoliel, ballad # 9)

Mosé salió de Misraín*,
huyendo del rey Parhó*... ("Consagración de Moisés II,"
Larrea, text # 44)

De la ciudad de Bersaba
huyendo salio Jahacob... ("Jacob y Rachel,"
Van Praag, pp. 23-24)

Temporal determination occurs only once:

A catorce era del mes,
el primo mes en el año... ("Paso del Mar Rojo,"
Attias, ballad # 79)

And one biblical ballad specifies both space and time:

Cuando el rey Salomón
en Yerušalaim enreñó... ("Juicio de Salomón,"
Attias, ballad # 75)

Moroccan	Peninsular
B) NO DESCRIPTION OF ISAAC	B) INTRO / DESCRIPTION OF SON (All versions)
.....	tiene un caballero un hijo
.....	muy querido y estimado,
.....	que no come de gallinas
.....	ni tampoco carne asado,
.....	que comía pavos de Indias
.....	que costaban cien ducados. (Sa)

The Peninsular versions continue to provide quite a bit of preliminary information, all condensed into six verses. In this section, which corresponds to Propp's "Initial Situation," the future heroes are introduced and their family relationship and high social status are made known.

This detailed description of the protagonist's well-being sets the stage for the "complication" to occur (in this case, the divine order to sacrifice the son). The Sephardic versions dispense altogether with this introductory section, which is not to say that less importance is given to Isaac. The latter's attributes are simply not expressed in the same manner. The Sephardic ballad tradition is somewhat more reticent about elevating a man to hero status merely by virtue of heritage. As a rule, biblical heroes do not inherit greatness; rather, they achieve it by their own actions. This is quite evident in other biblical ballads where the protagonist is the son of an important figure.¹⁴

Moroccan	Peninsular
C) DIVINE ORDER TO SACRIFICE ISAAC	C1) DIVINE ORDER TO SLAY SON (Burgos/Palencia)
Al Dio del cielo Abraham, al Dio del cielo Ishaac [horrado*. A nuestro padre Abraham nueve veces le ha probado, para cumplirle las diez fuerte cosa le ha mandado: -Dame al tu hijo, Abraham a tu hijo Ishaac horrado*: lo pondré por sacrificio en el monte aseñalado.- (ML) [-Ya sabes tú, Abraham que tu hijo Isaac le quiero [corbán*] (Be)	Estando un día por la tarde de reposo merendando, oyó una voz que decía estas palabras hablando: Este tu hijo, Abrán, ha de morir degollado. (He) C2) DIVINE ORDER TO BURN SON (León) Dios, por saber su entención, dice que ha de ser quemado. (Vr)

At first glance, it would seem clear that the Sephardic versions begin in medias res. If we look carefully, however, we notice that the first two verses may well be considered a

short introduction since they fulfill a primary function, which is to capture the attention of the listener. The characters are introduced only by name. No descriptions are needed; the words "Ishaac horrado" is the only hint necessary to an audience that is all too familiar with the story. This technique of crystalizing the importance of the protagonist with an epithet is, of course, as old as epic poetry itself. But the biblical ballads seem especially fond of this idea, especially with respect to a beloved son:

-Un hijo preciado
parí yo aquí; ("Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham,"
Attias, ballad # 127)

que lo ayegues por qorbán*
por tu hijo regalado. ("Sacrificio de Isaac II,"
Attias, ballad # 128)

no hubo varón
como Mošé rabbenu*, ("Vocación de Moisés II,"
Attias, ballad # 78)

que vos mataron al hijo,
vuestro hijo, Abšalom. ("David llora por Absalón,"
Attias, ballad # 86)

Even the devious Amnon, as he plots to violate his sister Tamar and thereby dishonor his family, is treated kindly by his unsuspecting father:

-¿Qué tienes y tú-le habló-,
hijo mío y de mi alma? ("Tamar y Amnón,"
Larrea, ballad # 45)

The Burgos/Palencia versions continue to make good use of the element of contrast. In this case the father's well-being is interrupted by the shocking news that his son is to be slain. According to Propp's scheme, this command is made

all the more sudden by the atmosphere of tranquility that precedes it:

...the initial situation gives us a description of particular, sometimes emphasized, prosperity... This prosperity naturally serves as a contrasting background for the misfortune to follow. The spectre of this misfortune already hovers invisibly above the happy family. From this situation stem the interdictions... A command often plays the role of an interdiction.¹⁵

This brings us to the divine order ("tu hijo...ha de morir degollado") which is, in essence, an inverted form of the traditional interdiction. It corresponds to Propp's function # IX ("The hero is approached with a request or command")¹⁶ and sets the stage for one of two responses: the command will either be obeyed or it will be violated.

Moroccan	Peninsular
D) ABRAHAM'S CONSENT	D) FATHER'S CONSENT (Palencia)
De alma y de corazón el sí le había otorgado.(ML)	-El rey del cielo lo manda, que se cumpla su mandado.-(He)

This is the one response that Propp does not account for: the immediate and unconditional acceptance of an order. According to Propp's model, the interdiction is promptly violated, thereby complicating the action and allowing for the villain to enter the scene. This leads us to point out some very significant differences between Propp's folktales and our biblical ballads. In the folktales, the nature and origin of the interdiction are not crucial factors; what is important is that, for whatever reason, the interdiction is

violated. The violation is in itself a prophecy of what is to come. It brings with it a maze of complications and difficult tests that the hero must resolve in order to overcome the villain and bring the tale to a happy ending. By contrast, in the biblical ballads it is God who gives the orders, and the protagonists are well-known biblical heroes. Therefore, there is little chance that an order will be violated, the only villains being those who try to prevent the protagonist from carrying out his task. Within this context, the hero's task is essentially a test of faith.

From the narrator's perspective, however, there is in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac what may be considered to be an "implicit" violation of God's command: the violation of His own commandment "Thou shalt not kill." It is precisely this apparent contradiction which exacerbates the internal conflict felt by Abraham and which makes the story so poignant.

Just as Abraham consents with heart and soul to carry out the divine will ("De alma y de corazón / él se le había otorgado") all the heroes of the biblical ballads express the same strong faith in God. Interestingly, in the Sephardic ballads there is an added element. The hero is not totally on his own; God often shows compassion and is even willing to help, protect and comfort him through his most difficult trials:

malak* del cielo
 me acompañara,
 porque so criado
 del Dió bendicho. ("Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham,"
 Attias, ballad # 127)

Y le dixiera, no temas,
 que siempre amparandote estoy. ("Jacob y Rachel,"
 Van Praag, p. 23-24)

No lloréis, Rahel,
 ni tengáis enojo,
 toma está rízá*,
 alímpiase los ojos. ("Rahel nuestra madre,"
 Attias, ballad # 130)

y dirás al rey Parhó
 que te entregue las llaves
 de mi pueblo el hebreo,
 y si no te las entregare,
 castigarle quiero yo... ("Consagración de Moisés II,"
 Larrea, text # 44)

In El sacrificio de Isaac, God's compassion is not quite as
 evident at this point in the ballad, except for one version
 where the hero seems to have God at his side ready to help
 with the difficult task at hand:

le haremos el sacrificio
 en el monte aseñalado. (AL)

There is only one biblical ballad where God deals directly
 with the violation of an interdiction. As one would expect,
 it occurs in the ballad of "The Original Sin." The
 punishment is swift and severe:

¡Pecaste ante el Señor santo y bendito?

 Bendito El*, que dió a cada uno su suerte:
 al culebro arrastrarse sobre el vientre,
 a la mujer parir con dolor fuerte,
 al hombre trabajar hasta la muerte.
 ("El pecado original," Benoliel, ballad # 10)

Moroccan

Peninsular

E) NO REFERENCE TO ISAAC

E) SON PLAYING / SUMMONED BY
FATHER (Santander)

.....

Un día fuese a enredar
 a la calle con los muchachos.
 Mándale a llamar su padre
 por el señor secretario. (Sa)

The order having been given, the father having accepted his difficult task, the attention now turns to the son. Once again, the Peninsular versions make good use of the element of contrast: the son's innocence and nonchalance are brought back to mind momentarily, as he goes out to the street to play with his friends. This scene is immediately shattered by the appearance of "el señor secretario," which serves to intensify the situation in more than one way: firstly, his role as "go-between" creates a moment of suspense and anticipation as it becomes clear that the son will confront his father; secondly, it reinforces the fact that the hero belongs to a well-to-do family. In the Sephardic versions, there is no attempt to build suspense at this stage in the ballad. As we shall see later, Abraham himself will take the initiative and order Isaac to follow him.

Moroccan

Peninsular

F) KNIFE NOT YET MENTIONED

F) FATHER SHARPENS KNIVES
(Palencia)

.....

Ha cogido los cuchillos
 y a afilarlos ha marchado:
 a la orillita de un río
 a la orillita de un lago; (He)

At this stage, the Herrerueta (Palencia) version continues to increase the level of suspense by placing the emphasis on the sharpening of the knives. There seems to be a "fairy tale-like" quality to this scene: the father, who is, after all, the hero (or one of the heroes) of the ballad, temporarily takes on the role of a sneaky villain preparing his deadly weapons as he plots to kill his innocent child. Just as Propp accounts for an occasional "false hero" to enter the scene,¹⁷ we seem to have in this case a "false villain" who will ironically become the hero. The figure of the father becomes all the more complex, for if the act of accepting the divine order will make him a hero in the eyes of God, the repeated mention of the knives and the conversations between father and son, typical of the Peninsular versions, are an attempt to humanize the situation, to remind the listener that, taken out of context, the act of killing one's own son is far from a heroic deed. Insofar as it deals with the situation on a more human level, the ballad is more in spirit with the Midrash than with the Scriptures (See Chapter II).

Moroccan	Peninsular
G) ABRAHAM ADDRESSES ISAAC IN THE FORM OF AN ORDER	G) FATHER CALLS SON (Palencia)
Ya viene Abraham a yevar a Isaac corado*. -Vamos conmigo Isaac, que del cielo es mandado-(Be)	después que los afiló a su querido ha llamado: -Ven acá, tú, hijo mío, ven acá, tú, hijo amado, (He)

In the Palencia version, as soon as the knives are sharpened, the father speaks to his son for the first time. The endearing words "querido," "hijo mío" and "hijo amado" set the tone for the rest of the ballad. The father and his son will repeatedly address each other in such terms. By contrast, the repetition of "ven acá" has an ominous ring to it. This is merely the prelude to a long dialogue between father and son.

As was previously noted, the entire sequence of events beginning with the son playing and ending with the dialogue is peculiar only to the Peninsular versions. In the Sephardic versions, nothing is explained from the time Abraham accepts God's decree until the journey begins (with Sarah's blessing). The Benardete version attempts to fill in the gap as Abraham comes personally to take his son. Because he is carrying out God's will, he addresses Isaac with authority; his words sound final ("Vamos conmigo Isaac / que del cielo es mandado"). There seems to be little room for dialogue. It should be pointed out that, in doing away with the details of Isaac's activities, the preparation of the knives, the dialogue and so forth, the Sephardic ballad tradition appears to be more preoccupied with maintaining decorum, with preserving the nobility of character attributed to both Abraham and Isaac in the Scriptures, in short, more intent on sticking to the source.

Moroccan

Peninsular

H) NO RESPONSE FROM ISAAC

H) SON RESPONDS (Santander)

.....

El niño como era humilde
 iba luego a su mandado.
 -¿Qué me quiere, padre mío
 qué me quiere, padre amado? (Sa)

As the dialogue proceeds, the character of the son begins to take shape: we are told that he is humble; evidently, he is also obedient and quite respectful of his father; but, he also seems to be somewhat inquisitive. The first response to his father is in the form of a question. This is what Propp would classify as "motivated interrogation."¹⁸ The motivation is simple curiosity on the part of the child. The effect is, once again, that it produces a certain tension, it serves to hold the attention of the listener as he begins to wonder how and when the father will explain to his son what he plans to do.

Moroccan

Peninsular

I) ABRAHAM TO SARAH: ASKS
 FOR BLESSING / REVEALS
 DESTINATION

I) ABRAHAM TO ISAAC: REVEALS
 DESTINATION (Castilian)

Ya feron en cade* Sará
 La bendición la tomaron: (Bn)

-Que vamos a ir los dos
 al monte de los anublados.
 (Tu)

-Queda en buen hora, Saráh,
 que nos vamos para el campo
 y échanos la bendición
 porque seamos tornados.- (ML)

[Vamos a caza, hijo mío,
 a aquel monte desastrado.]
 (SM)
 -Si tenemos que ir los dos
 vamos luego caminando. (Sa)

As the dialogue between father and son continues in the Peninsular ballads, a new figure appears in the Sephardic versions: Isaac's mother, Sarah. As discussed in Chapter II, the importance of the mother in this and other biblical stories is well established in rabbinic literature. Every Midrash on the Akedah makes it a point to describe Sarah's feelings as her son is about to leave home.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the Sephardic versions remain faithful to the biblical text and the midrashic tradition as Abraham continues to avoid a direct dialogue with Isaac. The father addresses his wife, not his son, as he announces that they are going out to the field. In direct contrast, the father of the Peninsular ballads feels compelled to answer his son's questions, to keep him informed. He does not hesitate to give specific details about the destination of or even lie about the true purpose of the trip: "al monte de los anublados;" "vamos a caza."²⁰ The son understands his responsibility to his father and accepts it immediately.

Moroccan	Peninsular
J) SARAH GIVES HER BLESSING	J) NO BLESSING IS GIVEN
La bendición que los dió:	
¡Que volvan vivos y sanos!	
Con gueburá*, mis señores,	
Con gueburá* seais tornados. (Bn)	
Sarah gives the traditional blessing that a mother would give to her husband and children as they begin a long	

journey: "¡Que volvan vivos y sanos!" The mother plays a very important role as the "protectress" of the family in many other Sephardic biblical ballads.²¹ Her strong maternal instincts often lead her to perform truly heroic feats. For example, in a popular ballad on the birth of Abraham, the expectant mother, without the help of her husband, manages to leave her home and walk long distances until she finds a cave where she can safely give birth to her first-born:

En fin de nueve meses parir quería,
iba caminando por campos y viñas;
a su marido, tal no lo descubriría.
Topó una mehará*; ahí lo pariría.

("Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham I,"
Attias, ballad # 127)

And there is, of course, the mother who would rather give her child away than accept King Solomon's judgment:

-Llevalde, señor, llevalde,
que yo no quiero nada;
cuando el niño sea grande,
por la su madre buscara.

("Juicio de Salomón,"
Attias, ballad # 75)

On a more symbolic level, Rachel represents the mother of the children of Israel as she asks God to give them eternal redemption²².

Los mis hijos eran,
los mis hijos son,
o por malos ó por buenos
dar les vo la rigmición*.

("Rachel, nuestra madre,"
Attias, ballad # 130)

Moroccan

Peninsular

K) FATHER AND SON LEAVE

Ya sale el padre y el hijo,
descalsos salen al campo; (LP)
Legua y media ando Isaac
legua y media y más andando. (MR)

K) FATHER AND SON LEAVE
(Burgos)

Otro día de mañana
al monte se caminaron.
(SM)

We have reached what Propp considers to be one of the most important functions in the plot of a typical folktale: the decision on the part of the hero or heroes to leave home.²³ In our ballad, it is the first concrete sign we have that Abraham will keep his promise and go through with the sacrifice of his son. At this point, Propp makes an important distinction:

The departures of seeker-heroes and victim-heroes are different. The departures of the former group have search as their goal, while those of the latter mark the beginning of a journey without searches, on which various adventures await the hero.²⁴

The complexity of the biblical story of the Akedah, with its countless midrashic legends and rabbinic interpretations, leads one to conclude, once again, that Propp's functions do not always apply neatly to biblical ballads, especially those that have more than one level of meaning. If Propp's division could be applied directly, there would be at least three ways to interpret the role of Abraham and Isaac as heroes:

(1) They could both be considered victim-heroes, Isaac being his father's victim and Abraham, God's victim. The fact that they encounter all sorts of unexpected adventures

during their journey (according to the midrashic legends) would serve to support this particular point of view [See Chapter II].

(2) Abraham could be the seeker-hero. This would be a more symbolic interpretation whereby Abraham is, in a sense, in search of himself. The test of faith becomes the crucial factor as Abraham is trying to determine where he stands in his relationship with God. Isaac would remain the innocent victim-hero.

(3) Finally, Isaac might be considered a seeker-hero by extension, since his father's faith depends almost entirely on his own faith and determination. Symbolically, they would both be embarking on a journey in search of God.

Whichever scheme is preferred, and whether we are dealing with a Midrash or with a ballad, one fact remains: the departure of the hero or heroes announces the end of the introductory section and the beginning of the climactic part of the story which Propp refers to as "the complication."

Moroccan	Peninsular
L) SARAH FOLLOWS / ASKS ABRAHAM TO CARE FOR ISAAC	L) NO MENTION OF SARAH
Tras de ellos salió Saráh	
legua y media y más ha andado:	
-Paráime mientes* a Ishaac	
que le tengo arregalado,	
paralde mientes* del sol	
porque aún es niño y mochacho,	
paralde mientes* del agua	
porque no está acostumbrado. (ML)	

Paraile mientes*, Abraham,	
yo le confío en tus manos.	
Que él es mi vida y mi bien	
mi consuelo y mi regalo. (Bn)	
-Yo te le pararé mientes*	
y del Dio sea parado.- (ML)	

Sarah reappears in the Sephardic versions. The protective mother follows husband and son for miles and pleads with Abraham to take good care of Isaac. Abraham agrees to do his best as he calls for God's protection. The continuous presence of Sarah adds a very important dimension to the ballad. Her devotion to her family, her strong maternal instincts and her possessiveness of Isaac ("...mi vida y mi bien / mi consuelo y mi regalo") combine to make Isaac's departure one of the most emotional scenes in the ballad. This also emphasizes the importance given to a son by the Jewish tradition. There are at least 10 other biblical ballads in the Sephardic repertoire that put primary importance on the son. Some ballads tell of mothers willing to give away their children to save them from imminent danger ("Nacimiento de Moisés" and "Juicio de Salomón"); others describe a mother's grief at the loss of a beloved son ("David y Absalón" and "Los siete hijos de Hana"); and yet others describe how the enemies of the Jews often inflict the most terrible of punishments, the killing of the first-born:

Lugo a las cumadres encomendaba
 que toda mujer, preñada quedaba,
 y si hijo pariere al punto lo mataran,
 ("Nacimiento de Abraham," Attias, ballad # 127)

Ya mandó por las cumadres,
 cuantos en Aífto* son;
 las juró y las conjuró:
 Todo el hijo que nacía,
 al río lo echarían;

("Nacimiento de Moisés,"
 Attias, ballad # 77)

It is interesting to note that the Peninsular versions make no allusion to Sarah at this point. As we shall see more clearly in the next section of this chapter, it is very likely that this episode was not at all part of the original composition of the romance but added on much later to the versions that became popular in Morocco.

Moroccan	Peninsular
M) NO MENTION OF THE FIREWOOD	M) CUTTING OF THE FIREWOOD (León)
.....	Coge el hacha tras del cinto
.....	y a su hijo de la mano;
.....	Adán cortaba la leña,
.....	su hijo la iba atropando.
.....	Después de atropadita,
.....	se sentaron de cansados. (Vm)

On the other hand, the Leonese versions have remained very faithful to the biblical text in at least one respect: its detailed description of the preparation of the firewood; albeit, at the expense of accuracy of the father's name.²⁵ The Sephardic versions make no mention of this episode.

Propp would likely categorize this and the next episode as "equipping for the journey" (element # 65).²⁶ In this case, however, the journey does not lead to an act of rescue or liberation as it does in many folktales, and the

"equipment," in fact, consists of the instruments of death of one of the heroes. Here, the objective is not to help a central character in the story but to kill him. And what is truly unique is that the individual in charge of killing the hero is also considered a hero, since he is acting out of devotion to and faith in God. With that in mind, every action taken in that direction, beginning with "equipping for the journey" and ending with the act of sacrifice itself, falls under the heading of "Difficult Task" (Propp functions # XXV and XXVI). Whether it be in folktales, epic poems or ballads, this function can be the key element in maintaining the focus on the hero. Abraham painstakingly goes through all the motions, as does his obedient son. The pathos begins to build as each step, each act, each word leads closer to Isaac's impending death.

Moroccan

N) JOURNEY UP THE MOUNTAIN / ISAAC CARRIES FIREWOOD

Abraham como era viejo, (GF)
 hombre grande y sin pecado, (Bn)
 va despacio y fatigado; (ML)
 Fuerzas al Dió iba pidiendo
 para cumplir lo ordenado. (Bn)
 Ishaac como era pequeño
 de leña viene cargado. (ML)
 [Con tres cargas de leña,
 Isaac iba cargado.] (AL)

Peninsular

N) JOURNEY UP THE MOUNTAIN (Castilian)

Iban por el monte arriba,
 el niño ya iba cansado.
 Ajincado de rodillas
 gracias a Dios iba dando. (Sa)
 [A eso de metá camino
 el niño ya iba cansado.] (SM)

At this point, the action seems to slow down somewhat. It has been well established that variation in rhythm is a

useful tool used by the storyteller to hold the attention of his audience. Spanish ballads are no exception. The pace of a typical romance changes many times before it reaches its conclusion. The technique of variation is used not only by the composer of the original version but also by those poets among the masses who have kept this oral literature alive through the centuries.

In the case of the biblical ballads, the pace of the narrative is invariably defined by its contents. In the Sephardic versions, we read how Abraham's old age slows him down physically. And since he is "hombre grande y sin pecado," his only request is that he be provided with the necessary strength to comply with God's wish. Isaac, who is younger and stronger, carries the firewood.

The Peninsular versions typically focus the attention on the son and make no mention of the father's physical or emotional suffering. Nevertheless, the effect is the same, i.e., that of moderating the pace of the narrative.

The verse "ajincado de rodillas" is of great interest because it is one of the first references made to a Christian practice. In Chapter V, the process of "christianization" and "dechristianization" of traditional Spanish ballads will be discussed in more detail.

Moroccan

Peninsular

O) ISAAC ASKS ABOUT FIREWOOD

O) SON IMPATIENT / REASSURED
BY FATHER (Castilian)

[Ya van el padre y el hijo
y van de leña cargados.]
-¿Qué vas hacer con esta leña
que yevas tan cargado?
-Para ponerlo en el monte,
.....(Be)

-Mucho tarda, padre mío,
mucho tarda, padre amado,
mucho tarda en llegar
al monte de los anublados.
-Allá arriba está, hijo,
donde está el cierzo posado.
(He)

After the sketchy description of the long and arduous journey up to the mountain, the pace suddenly quickens and the tension builds once again as the dialogue is reintroduced. Isaac's words begin to weigh heavily as they seem to convey both innocence and suspicion about his fate. The provocative question of the Sephardic versions ("¿Qué vas hacer con esta leña...") as well as the complaint uttered in the Peninsular versions ("mucho tarda en llegar / al monte") find an immediate response from the father, who tries to reassure his son without revealing the real purpose of the mission.

Moroccan

Peninsular

P) ARRIVAL ON MOUNTAIN / REST

P) ARRIVAL ON MOUNTAIN /
KNIVES (Castilian)

Se pararon en un monte, (Be)
Al pie de una carga verde
allí había descargado. (ML)
[allí habían descansado] (Bn)

Después que llegó allá,
los cuchillos ha sacado.(He)
[Iban por el cuesto arriba;
cuchillos iba afilando.

Propp refers to a central function in his study of folktales in which "the hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the

whereabouts of an object of search."²⁷ This episode seems to correspond precisely if we keep in mind that Isaac is about to become the hero of the ballad. Symbols borrowed from biblical and midrashic sources are used to indicate that the point of destination has been reached. In the Peninsular versions, it is the image of the "frozen wind" ("el cierzo posado"), mentioned in the previous passage, that signals the Shechinah (God's holy presence). This mystical symbol is followed by a very practical one, the sharpening of the knives, mentioned in all but the Leonese versions. In the Sephardic versions, it is the proverbial "thicket" ("una çarça verde") which signals their arrival on Mount Moriah. The heroes have reached their final plateau, both literally and figuratively. The stage is set for the final confrontation between father and son.

Moroccan	Peninsular
Q) ABRAHAM SAYS NOTHING	Q) FATHER ANTICIPATES SON'S QUESTION (León)
.....	-¡Tú qué me miras, mi hijo,
.....	qué me miras, mi regalo? (Vt)
.....	

The peculiarity of the Leonese versions lies in its lyricism, its intensity, its poetic depth. A certain feeling of absolute serenity is conveyed as we imagine Abraham and Isaac, their faces lit by the fire, staring at each other, and anticipating the "moment of truth." Abraham's concern and affection for his son is evident. But his words also

seem to unveil a trace of resentment, a sudden feeling of guilt for what he is about to do. Will his son understand the true purpose of the mission? Will Isaac fight back and see his father as a villain? These are some of the questions that may be troubling Abraham as he asks repeatedly "¿qué me miras, mi hijo, / qué me miras?"

It should be noted that the rest of the Peninsular as well as the Sephardic versions follow the traditional dialogue sequence of the Scriptural text, i.e., Isaac becomes suspicious of the situation and inquires first.

Moroccan	Peninsular
R) ISAAC ASKS ABOUT THE LAMB	R1) SON ASKS ABOUT THE LAMB (León)
Levantara Ishak sus ojos, Y a su padre así ha hablado: (Bn) -Padre, ya truxe* la leña y el barbex* no veo atado. (ML) [¿Dónde está el bárber*, mi padre, que yo no lo veo amarrado?] (LP)	-Miro, padre, aquella lumbre cómo se va alborotando ¿quién será el manso cordero que en ella se verá asado? (Vt)
NO MENTION OF KNIVES	R2) SON ASKS ABOUT KNIVES (Castilian) -Diga, diga, padre mío, diga, diga, padre amado, ¿pa qué son estos cuchillos de acero, tan afilados? (He)

The all-important question is asked by Isaac. The Sephardic versions have remained faithful to their biblical source as the son innocently inquires about the sacrificial lamb. Both branches of the Peninsular tradition, however, have deviated from the traditional phrasing of Isaac's question, but in

very different ways. The lyrical Leonese ballads maintain a contemplative tone as the son stares at the flame and asks suggestively "who will be the lamb?" The less sophisticated Castilian versions continue to focus the attention on the weapons. The son gets right to the point as he inquires about the purpose of the knives. Unless this particular scene was part of the original composition, it is very likely that it was inspired in a situation common to many popular fairy tales in which the hero-victim nags the villain with all sorts of "naive" questions which point inadvertently to his own misfortune.²⁸

Moroccan	Peninsular
S) ABRAHAM'S DIRECT REPLY	S1) FATHER'S REPLY (León)
-Tú sox el barbex*, Ishaac, que del Dio era mandado. (ML)	-Tú has de ser manso cordero que en ella has ser arrojado.
[Tú sos el cabrito, mi hijo, que es corbán* para Dios.] (Be)	S2) FATHER'S REPLY (Castile)
	-Para matarte, hijo mío, para matarte, hijo amado, que está mandado de Dios que ha de morir en mis [brazos. (Sa)]

As we noted in sections B and C, both the Sephardic and the Peninsular ballad traditions deviate from the biblical text in that Abraham's evasive response ("God will provide the lamb..." - Genesis 22:8) is turned into a powerful, dramatic and direct reply on the part of the father. With these rather harsh words ("tú sox el barbex," "para matarte, hijo

mfo," "en ella has ser arrojado"), the son's inquisitiveness and curiosity come to a very sudden end. The plot to kill Isaac is finally revealed and immediately justified as a divine command. With this revelation, the ballad begins a new narrative cycle in which the son will gain importance as the true hero. The "difficult task" proposed to Abraham at the beginning of the ballad is now implicitly being proposed to Isaac.

Moroccan	Peninsular
T) ISAAC CONSENTS	T) SON CONSENTS (León, Santander)
-Si el Dio lo manda, mi padre, no salgáis de su mandado; (ML)	-Si está mandado de Dios cúmplase luego el mandado: (Sa)
[no saldré de su mandado.] (Bn)	[-Si lo mandó el mi Dios, [padre, lo haré con mucho agrado.] (Vm)

As interpreted by the midrashic tradition, Isaac's enthusiastic response comes immediately. Any hesitation on his part would make him less than a hero. The key phrase is "si el Dio lo manda," clearly implying that Isaac's decision is prompted not merely out of respect for his father but rather by his faith in God. In a conventional folk story, if the hero is ever threatened physically, even by his own father, he would most likely quarrel and try to defend himself. That type of situation would correspond to a function referred to by Propp as "struggle with the villain."²⁹ "The Sacrifice of

Isaac," however, is not a conventional tale. The presence of a divine force that rules over the characters, judges them and holds them accountable for their actions adds a supernatural dimension to the narrative. That is not to say that folktales do not take supernatural elements into account. On the contrary, Propp explains in detail the frequent inclusion of a "helper" or "magical agent" into the course of action.³⁰ This magical agent is not an omnipresent force, as is God in the biblical legends, but something that temporarily "falls into the hands" of the hero to help him resolve some difficulty. In any case, it is Isaac's immediate and unconditional acceptance of his fate which makes him the true hero of the ballad, very much as in the Midrashim and quite unlike the account in the Scriptures.

Moroccan	Peninsular
U) ISAAC CONCERNED FOR MOTHER	U) SON CONCERNED FOR MOTHER (León - after Binding)
no se me da por mi muerte aunque muero mal logrado, se me da por Sarah mi madre que me tiene arregalado. (ML)	Y a la triste de mi madre no se lo diga en un año, si le pregunta por mí, dígale que estoy con amo, si le pregunta que a donde, cerca del Monte Calvario. (Vm)

Isaac does have, however, one very serious reservation. He is deeply concerned for his mother. This theme, which is well developed in midrashic literature,³¹ appears in all of the Sephardic versions and in the Peninsular versions from

León as well. Many other biblical romances place great importance on the relationship between a mother and her son. For example, when King David learns of his son Absalom's death, he is sure to inform the mother first:

-Ven aquí, la mi mujer,
madre sos de Abšalom;
enteñid vuestros vestidos,
y asentavos al cantón,
que vos mataron al hijo,
vuestro hijo, Abšalom. ("David llora por Absalón,"
Attias, ballad # 86)

In a ballad about the birth of Moses, the infant refuses to drink milk from an adopted mother:

Dés que la arquita abrió,
el mundo s'arelumbró.
Ya mandó por las lecheras,
cuantas en Aífto* son.
Mošé, como era nabí*,
no quijo leche de mižrit*; ("Nacimiento de Moisés,"
Attias, ballad # 77)

And in the ballad of "Hannah and her seven sons," as the mother watches each of her children die for refusing to give up their Jewish faith, she maintains hope as long as one son remains alive. But when the last one is killed, she goes up to the roof and jumps to her death:

Ya vido la madre negra
al tejado sovería;
se rojó de allí abašo
y también se muriría. ("Los siete hijos de Hana,"
Molho, ballad # 5)

It is interesting to see that the theme of the mother as the "pillar" of the family, perpetuated by the midrashic legends, has also had a profound influence on the ballad

tradition of Eastern Europe. The following is the synopsis of a passage of a sixteenth century Yiddish epic poem entitled Agedath Jishag ("The Binding of Isaac"):

As Abraham raises the knife, Isaac wonders who will inform his mother of his death. He bids Abraham give the blessing in a loud voice so that he can say Amen to it. He again mourns his mother's sorrow. Upon his mentioning his mother, earth and heaven tremble, as though the world were going to perish...³²

Moroccan

V) THE BINDING

Padre, atéisme los pies,
padre, atéisme las manos,
con el fervor de la sangre
no vos haga algún pecado;
padre tapéisme los ojos,
no vos vea mal airado*.-
Con el tual* de la leña
pies y manos le había atado,
con una cinta morada
los ojos le había tapado.

(ML)

[Isaac, ataparte los ojos,
porque del cielo es mandado]

(Be)

Peninsular

V) THE BINDING (All versions)

los brazos me atará atras
con un cordón encarnado;
los ojos me ha de vendar
para no verle airado. (Pu)

[-Áteme de pies y manos,
pa que muera sosegado,
y póngame un paño a los ojos
porque no le mire airado.]

(He)

[Venza, padre, los mis ojos
que ellos no vayan llorando]

(Vt)

[-Padre, cortáime la lengua,
por si vos ofendo en algo,
padre, atáime las manos,
porque no vaiga braciando,
padre, atáime los pies,
pa que no vaiga enredando.]

(Vr)

This is approximately where Propp's folktales would have "the hero and the villain join in direct combat."³³ If Abraham were considered the villain at this point, Isaac would try to defend himself and a fight would ensue between father and son. But this is where our ballad deviates

completely from the narrative logic of the standard folktale. Not only does Isaac not resist but he does his best to cooperate. He remains composed throughout the difficult ordeal, enough to be able to give his father the necessary instructions for his own sacrifice. This is perhaps the most intense scene in the ballad. It is this passage that gave its name to the entire biblical story, commonly referred to as the Akedah (The Binding). There is a strange mixture here of adherence to a certain legal logic concerning the rules for a sacrifice and the irrationality of a mission whose goal is the senseless killing of an innocent child. What puts it all into clear perspective, and what has given the biblical folk tradition the freedom to dramatize this episode in many different ways, is popular knowledge of the final outcome. The fact is that all along God had an ulterior motive: his objective was never to see Isaac die at the hands of his father but to give to the man who would become patriarch of an entire nation one last difficult test of faith. As we have seen, the romance tradition goes beyond by placing Isaac in the forefront as a willing participant in this test of faith.

Moroccan

Peninsular

W) ABRAHAM ABOUT TO STRIKE

W) FATHER ABOUT TO STRIKE
(Palencia only)

Alçó Abraham su puñal
con su braço arremangado, (ML)
[Abraham tomó el puñal (Be)
y al cuello se le había puesto.]
tate*, que ya le dio el golpe,
tate*, que no se lo ha dado; (ML)

Ya tenía todo hecho
y el cuchillo levantado:
(He)

We finally reach the moment of truth. There is a conscious effort, especially in the Sephardic text, to continue to dramatize the situation. Whereas in the Scriptures, the father only goes so far as to stretch forth his hand and take the knife (Genesis 22:10), in the ballad he puts the weapon to his son's neck. There follows the antithetical "...le dio el golpe / ... no se lo ha dado" to taunt the audience further. With these verses, the dramatic tension that has been building since the two heroes began their journey reaches its optimum level. The stage is now set for God to intervene and reveal the true purpose of the mission. This scene is analogous to a situation in Propp's folktales, usually a skirmish between the hero and the villain, which prepares the way for the transmission of a magical agent.³⁴

Moroccan

Peninsular

X) DIVINE INTERVENTION:
VOICE FROM HEAVENX1) VOICE FROM HEAVEN
(León, Burgos)

salió una voz de los cielos
que a Abraham iba llamando:
(ML)

-Detente, Arabán, detente,
que a mi Dios ya le has pagado
(SM)

[Subió los ojos al cielo
y escuchó una voz que decía:]
(Ca)

-Tate, tate*, tú, Abraham,
no mates a Ishaac horrado,
que ya el Dío de los cielos,
ya te tiene bien prebado.-
(ML)

X2) THE VIRGIN MARY
(Santander)

En estas palabras y otras
bajó la Virgen del Rosario.
-Detente, padre, detente,
no mates a tu hijo amado,
que tú has ganado la gloria
y él también se la ha ganado;
tu hijo por ser obediente,
tú por cumplir mi mandado.
(Pu)

LAMB IS NOT MENTIONED

X3) LAMB IS PROVIDED
(Palencia)

.....
.....
.....
.....

-Detente, Abrán, detente,
mira un cordero enzarzado,
ya tienes a Dios contento
y a tu corazón pagado. (He)

To use Propp's terminology, God may be considered "the helper" in this scene if one thinks of the lamb as the "magical agent," although Propp never makes a clear distinction between the two:

It often happens that various magical creatures, without any warning, suddenly appear ... and offer their services and are accepted as helpers. Most often these are heroes with extraordinary attributes or characters possessing various magical qualities.³⁵

This statement would lead us to conclude that God could, after all, be considered the real hero of the ballad. But in light of the importance given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and other biblical heroes in the Sephardic ballad tradition, one would have to compromise and accept the co-existence of two kinds of characters, hence two classes of heroes: those who are mortal and those who are eternal. A close look at the folk literature dealing with biblical

heroes, ranging from midrashic legends to medieval ballads to modern parables, would certainly reveal an absolute dependence of the strongest of heroes on the will of their Creator. On the other hand, God makes Himself known through His creatures. This symbiotic relationship between God and man is illustrated in quite a few ballads:

Grande zékut* tiene el señor de Aḇram,
que por él conocemos al D¹o de la verdaḡ.
("Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham I,"
Attias, ballad # 127)

Without a doubt, the power and awesomeness of God is the most repeated theme in the biblical ballad tradition of the Sephardim.³⁶ In the ballad about Adam and Eve, God is praised for inflicting eternal punishment on those who dared to disobey Him:

Bendito El*, que dió a cada uno su suerte:
al culebro arrastrarse sobre el vientre,
a la mujer parir con dolor fuerte,
al hombre trabajar hasta la muerte. ("Pecado original,"
Benoliel, ballad # 10)

In most cases, however, God is not the spoiler but the "helper." Having completed His work of creation, He turns His attention to His people. In one ballad, He saves Abraham from the furnace; in another, He consoles Rachel; in yet another, He rescues the Jews from the clutches of Pharaoh. And when God is not a central character, there are numerous references to His many wonders. The word "alabar" is used quite often:

En primero alabaremos
al D¹o grande y verdadero,

que crió cielo y tierra
y a la luna con el sol... ("Sacrificio de Isaac II,
Attias, ballad # 128)

Alabado sea su nombre
porque siempre bien nos dió,
y en los cielos y en la tierra
su merced nunca faltó. ("Consagración de Moisés II,
Larrea, ballad # 44)

In gratitude for this divine protection, there are numerous
expressions of faith in and responsibility to God:

Razón es que lo servamos,
y sus mišvot* que hagamos,
a el Dió la cuenta daremos,
el que dió anokí*. ("Las tablas de la ley,"
Attias, ballad # 81)

There is even scorn for those who refuse to believe in the
only "true" God:

Dizilde a Nimrod que pedrió su tino
porque no quiere creer en el Verdadero.
("Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham I,"
Attias, ballad # 127)

The christianization of certain Peninsular versions
continues. In the Santander ballads, it is the Virgin Mary
who comes down to Abraham and Isaac to promise them a place
in heaven ("tú has ganado la gloria / y él también se la ha
ganado"). Only the Herrerueta version mentions the lamb
("mira un cordero enzarzado"). As will be demonstrated in
the next chapter, there is clear evidence that this episode
was part of the original composition.

It should be noted that in Propp's folktale scheme,
there is a function which applies directly to this type of
denouement. He refers to it as "the task is resolved" and

explains that there is an enormous variety of possible solutions:

Forms of solution correspond exactly, of course, to the forms of tasks. Certain tasks are completed before they are set, or before the time required by the person assigning the task.³⁷

In the case of our ballad, there is a dichotomy. The task is, in a sense, completed by the two heroes, but it is the assigner of the task (God) who resolves it. In effect, the resolution of the task signals the end of the Peninsular versions. Most of the Sephardic ballads do not end at this point, however; they go on to tell the story of Sarah's death.

Y) SARAH'S DEATH (Moroccan versions only, non-existent in Peninsular ballad tradition):

ANGEL/MESSENGER BREAKS THE NEWS OF ISAAC'S FATE TO SARAH

Allí se alhadró* un mecatreh* [un malaj*]
 que a Sarah lo fue a contallo:
 -Si supieras tu, Saráh,
 lo que por tí hoy ha pasado,
 Umá* Abraham, tu marido, * SEE GLOSSARY
 te mató a Ishaac horrado*.-
 Como esso oyera Sarah,
 muerta cayó en un desmayo (ML)

[Cayó al suelo en un desmayo
 -Si el Dió ansí se lo mandó
 que se cumpla su mandado.
 -No te desmayes, Sará,
 que tu hijo es vivo es sano;
 que el Dió no dexó a Abraham
 que matara a Ishak l'honrado;
 y sí se lo encomendó
 fué solo para probarlo.
 Como eso oyera Sará,
 que su hijo es vivo y sano,
 suspiro dió de alegría
 y el alma perdiera al darlo.] (Bn)

ANGEL/MESSENGER REPORTS SARAH'S DEATH TO ABRAHAM

Allí se alhadró* el mesmo él
 A Abraham se fue a contallo:
 -Si supieras tú, Abraham,
 lo que por ti hoy ha passado,
 Umá* Saráh, tu mujer,
 muerta cayó en un desmayo.- (ML)

FATHER AND SON LEAVE / GO TO HEBRON TO BURY SARAH

Ya viene el padre y el hijo
 descalços y encapillados. (ML)
 [Allí fueron a Hebrón
 donde una cueva han mercado] (Bn)
 con los cien pesos de plata
 la mortaja le habían mercado,
 con otros tantos de oro
 la fuessa* le habían mercado;
 en el campo [monte] de Hebrón
 allí [con amor] la habían enterrado,
 al lado de nuestras madres
 allí la habían echado.

In a relentless effort to explain the cause of Sarah's sudden death, as told in the Scriptures, rabbinic literature has continually put emphasis on the strong bond that existed between Isaac and his mother. The direct influence of the midrashic legends in this episode is undeniable and has been illustrated in Chapter Two. Its subsequent insertion into the Moroccan ballads is indicative of the preoccupation in the Sephardic folk tradition with the matriarch Sarah, her thoughts, her feelings, her tormented soul as she awaited to hear about the fate of her husband and son. As the epitome of a caring mother and wife, she has all the qualities of a heroine in this ballad of many heroes. Ironically, it is at this time that we encounter our first real villain, an evil messenger who enters the scene to bring Sarah the worst

possible news. According to Propp's study, the closest equivalent to this type of situation would be a function entitled "misfortune or lack is made known."³⁸ There are, however, considerable differences. Firstly, in a typical folktale, a misfortune is usually made known at the very beginning which sets the stage for the hero to enter the scene. In our ballad, the "apparent" misfortune is made known at the end, after the task has been resolved, and it personally involves one of the heroes. Secondly, as the audience is very much aware, this misfortune is simply a fabrication of one of the characters. As such, this episode seems to have a life of its own. It is set apart from the rest of the ballad in that it is a direct contradiction to the ballad's otherwise happy ending. In one of the older versions (Benoliel), Sarah first hears the tragic news, then learns that her son is alive and well; however, the happy truth is just as shocking and she thereupon "loses her soul." If this episode seems a bit contrived, it is probably because its ultimate purpose was to justify Sarah's death and thus complete the midrashic narrative cycle that ends with the burial of Sarah. We now turn to the very last verses of the ballad.

Moroccan

Peninsular

Z) MISCELLANEOUS ENDINGS

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC MOURN

Ya viene el padre y el hijo
y en Abel* se habían sentado.
(ML)

THEY RETURN HOME AND WEEP

Ya enterran a la saddika*
ya a su casa son tornados,
llorando el padre y el hijo,
sin poder ser consolados. (Bn)

SARAH DIES INSTEAD OF ISAAC

Lo que había de morir Isaac,
murió la su madre. (Be)

ISAAC MARRIES

El mes no había pasado
Isaac s'había casado. (MR)

Z) MISCELLANEOUS ENDINGS

ISAAC ASKS TO BE FORGIVEN
(León)

-Voy a pedirles perdón
por el tiempo que me han criado
y a la mi madre querida
por la leche que me ha dado.
¡Válgame nuestra Señora,
válgame el señor Santiago!
(Vt)

The feelings of Abraham and Isaac are expressed in detail: they mourn Sarah's death; they cry and cannot be consoled; they refer to her as a saint ("saddika") and one Sephardic ballad points out the irony that Sarah should die instead of Isaac. Curiously, in one of the Peninsular versions, Isaac is so guilt-ridden for the suffering that he unwillingly caused his mother that he begs for forgiveness. But the most unique, and perhaps the most unexpected of our ballad endings, is Isaac's precipitous marriage ("El mes no había pasado / Isaac s'había casado") which figures in Propp's scheme as the classical ending of his folktales ("The hero is married and ascends the throne").³⁹ Within the context of

our ballad, however, the appendage of such motifs as a sudden marriage or even a sudden death is a sure sign of its decay, as Martínez Ruiz points out:

El Romancero, como cuerpo enfermo, recurre a la terapéutica; así vemos desenlaces estereotipados, aplicados a varios romances.⁴⁰

As we have just seen, the reconstruction of a ballad as it exists in two separate traditions can be useful in many ways. In this case, it allows us to see the Peninsular and the Sephardic traditions side by side, enabling us to scan quickly through the texts and detect the presence and/or absence of certain narrative elements. Secondly, it provides us with a base with which older versions may be compared. In the following chapter, four other versions will be taken into account: a 15th century Peninsular text which could well be the original ballad, a 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version, a 19th century version recorded among the crypto-Jews of Portugal, and a ballad from Salonika with the same theme. The ballad subdivisions will make it easier for us to compare styles, to observe with more scrutiny the textual changes, to take into account the frequent repetition, substitution and omission of certain words or even entire verses as we trace the ballad through the centuries. This will give us further insight into the re-creative process of the romance. Finally, the analysis of linguistic variations [see Chapter VI] will also be greatly facilitated.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹ Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "Poesía popular y poesía tradicional" in El Romancero, teoría e investigaciones (Madrid: Editorial Paez, 1928), p. 38.

² Menéndez Pidal, El Romancero, teoría, p. 40.

³ Stith Thompson's six-volume Motif-Index of Folk Literature was and still is one of the most complete indexes of folklore motifs in existence. The latest edition was published in Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1955-66.

⁴ Antti Aarne published The Types of the Folktale in 1923 and became one of the forerunners of the Finnish school of folklore. Stith Thompson's English translation of this work was also published in Finland (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961).

⁵ The culmination of Armistead and Silverman's ambitious plan to classify the Sephardic Romancero is their three volume "Catalog-Index" entitled El Romancero judeo-español en el archivo Menéndez Pidal, 3 vols. (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1978).

⁶ Parry's definition of the "formula": "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." In "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making...", Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, vol. 41, p. 80.

⁷ Bruce A. Beatie, "Oral-Traditional Composition in the Spanish Romancero of the Sixteenth Century," in Journal of the Folklore Institute, I (1964), p. 96.

⁸ Beatie, p. 96.

⁹ Rina Benmayor, "Oral Narrative and the Comparative Method..." in Romance Philology 31:3 (1978), p. 507.

¹⁰ Benmayor, "Oral Narrative," p. 507. In the last few decades, there have been numerous attempts to condense Propp's extensive list of narrative elements into broader subdivisions. For example, Louise Mirrer-Singer applies to the Romancero William Labov's model, which consists of six sections: the Abstract, the Orientation, the Complicating Action, the Evaluation, the Resolution, and the Coda. [See Louise Mirrer-Singer, The Language of Evaluation (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 25-35].

¹¹ Rina Benmayor, "New Directions in the Study of Oral Literature" in La Coronica 7:1 (1978), p. 39.

¹² Benmayor, "New Directions," p. 39.

¹³ Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, translated by Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 119.

¹⁴ See the following biblical ballads: "Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham I," "Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham II," "El sacrificio de Isaac II," "El nacimiento de Moisés," "El nacimiento de Samuel," "Tamar y Amnón," "David llora por Absalón" and "Los siete hijos de Hana." Armistead and Silverman's catalog-index (El Romancero judeo-español en el archivo Menéndez Pidal, vol. I, pp. 198-225) gives a list of sources of the many variants of these ballads.

¹⁵ Propp, Morphology, p. 27.

¹⁶ Propp, p. 36.

¹⁷ Propp, pp. 60, 120. Propp discusses the presence of a "false hero" in many of his Russian folktales. In most cases, it is a brother or a stepsister of the hero who either takes on the identity of the hero or is mistaken for him. This false hero is eventually exposed and found to be an accomplice of the villain. In the case of our ballad, the reverse seems to apply. At first, Abraham takes on the role of a villain, as he prepares to kill his own child. However, when what seems to be a diabolical plot turns out to be a divine test of faith, Abraham is "exposed" as a true hero.

¹⁸ Propp, p. 121. "Interrogation, reconnaissance" is listed by Propp as elements # 36-38.

¹⁹ See Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, Vol. II, pp. 274-276.

²⁰ The midrashic sources of "el monte de los anublados," a reference to Mount Moriah, are outlined in the last few pages of Chapter II, Part C.

²¹ The figure of the mother comes into play in at least 10 Sephardic biblical ballads: "Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham I," "Sacrificio de Isaac I," "Sacrificio de Isaac II," "Rahel, nuestra madre," "Nacimiento de Moisés," "Nacimiento de Samuel," "David y Absalón," "Juicio de Salomón," "El sitio de Jerusalén" and "Los siete hijos de Hana."

²² This ballad, known as "Rahel, muestra madre," is popular only in the area of the Balkans. It seems to have been composed soon after the Expulsion, and has often been interpreted as a symbolic song of lament over the plight of Spanish Jews.

²³ Propp, Morphology, pp. 39, 123. Propp refers to this function (# XI) as "The hero leaves home."

²⁴ Propp, p. 39.

²⁵ Abraham's name undergoes significant changes in two of the three Leonese versions studied: he is "Pedro Adán" in the Valdeteja version and simply "Adán" in the Villamanín version. In most other Peninsular ballads, however, he is referred to merely as "el padre" [See Chap. II, sect. C].

²⁶ Propp, p. 123.

²⁷ Propp, pp. 50-51 (Function # XV).

²⁸ The classical example of this type of situation is the climactic dialogue between the wolf and the heroine in "Little Red Riding Hood." This element is not fully discussed by Propp, although it is alluded to in such functions as "preliminary misfortune" and "deceptive agreement" (Morphology, p. 122).

²⁹ Propp, p. 125 (Elements # 102-105).

³⁰ Propp, p. 124. See function # XIV ("The hero acquires the use of a magical agent"), pp. 43-50.

³¹ See Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, Vol. II, p. 280. For other midrashic sources, refer to Chapter II notes.

³² Percy Matenko and Samuel Sloan, "The Agedath Jishaq: a sixteenth century Yiddish Epic" in Two Studies in Yiddish Culture (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), p. 11. The episode in which Isaac refers to his mother may be found on p. 60 (stanzas # 52-54). It reads as follows:

Az bald nam er das šext mesꝛ in di(e) hant
 Jišṣaq geign Abhraham ziin oigꝛ uuant
 er šprax uuer zol ton miinꝛ mutꝛ bikant
 man hot gišext Jišṣaq diin iinig kind ginant.

Un' dà er das šext mesꝛ zax
 Jišṣaq tsu Abhraham uuidꝛ šprax
 libꝛ uatꝛ di(e) b'rakha hox max
 das ix kàn zágꝛ droif amen ax.

Ô uuei(e) miinꝛ mutꝛ grosis liid
 az bald er fun ziinꝛ mutꝛ Sarah ziit
 dà tsitrꝛn himꝛ un' erd ali biid
 gliix az uueltn zi(e) untr gein mit vorxtsom kiit.

33 Propp, p. 51 (function # XVI).

34 Propp, p. 123 (element # 78).

35 Propp, pp. 45-46.

36 God is alluded to in the majority of biblical ballads, among them "La creación," "El pecado original," "Nacimiento y vocación de Abraham I & II," "Sacrificio de Isaac I & II," "Jacob y Rahel," "Rahel nuestra madre," "Vocación de Moisés I & II," "Consagración de Moisés I & II," "El paso del Mar Rojo," "Las tablas de la ley," "Nacimiento de Samuel," "Reconstrucción del Templo," and "Los siete hijos de Hana." God is not mentioned in the following ballads: "El robo de Dina," "Nacimiento de Moisés," "David y Goliat," "Juró el rey David," "Tamar y Amnón," "David llora por Absalón," "Juicio de Salomón," "El sitio de Jerusalén" and most of the ballads about Queen Esther.

37 Propp, p. 62 (function # XXVI).

38 Propp, p. 36 (function # IX).

39 Propp, pp. 63-64 (function # XXXI).

40 Jose Martínez Ruiz, "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional," Archivum XIII (1963), pp. 96-97.

CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION OF BALLAD STYLE: A DIACHRONIC STUDY

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPANISH BALLAD

In the previous chapter we compared the two best known ballad traditions of El sacrificio de Isaac. Some of the variants studied dated as far back as the early part of this century. Nevertheless, the analysis was accurately termed "synchronic" because the objective essentially was to compare and contrast the narrative structure of two co-existing traditions.

In this chapter, we aim to bring into play the "diachronic" dimension of the ballad, as we take into consideration much older compositions. In doing so, we shall find that the geographical factor cannot and should not be completely overlooked, especially when dealing with the Sephardic tradition. The 16th century publication of a Peninsular version, for example, was quickly followed by the discovery of a very similar 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version, and two centuries later by a text popular among the Crypto-Jews of Portugal.

The term "diachronic study" has many implications and there are numerous possibilities on how to proceed. Ultimately, however, the main objective of such a study must be to trace carefully the evolution of a ballad text through

the centuries, focusing attention on stylistic, thematic and linguistic changes. The examination of sources, narrative structure and textual differences among variants of the same general period, as undertaken in the previous sections, must be complemented by a meticulous study that focuses on the historical element, that is to say, on the effect of time on the evolution of a particular ballad.

Critics have pointed to the existence of two distinct historical approaches to the study of the Romancero. The older, more traditional approach tends to look to a glorified past for clues; it tries desperately to recover the "authenticity" of the older texts; consequently, it considers the evolution of a ballad to mean its ultimate destruction. This was the notion of the Romantic theorists and of Menéndez Pidal in his early years:

Cuando poco antes de 1898 Menéndez Pidal dedicó en su primer libro un capítulo al Romancero, su interés por los romances era ancilar de otros más íntimamente relacionados con su deseo de devolver a España una conciencia del pasado y una razón de ser como colectividad.¹

In an insightful article, Alan Dundes refers to this folklore theory of historical retrogression as "the devolutionary premise." He explains:

The most common devolutionary notion is that folklore decays through time ["zersingen"]. Another notion is that folklore "runs down" by moving from "higher" to "lower" strata of society ["gesunkenes Kulturgut"]... A logical consequence of this "aristocratic" origin of folklore theory was that folklore consisted largely of reworked remnants that had managed somehow to survive the presumed downward transmission of culture.²

Dundes goes on to say that these two notions are still very popular among some of his own contemporaries. He considers the former to be more damaging to the study of ballads:

...no more overt statements of the premise can be found than in the conception of "zersingen" in folksong theory. "Zersingen" refers to the "alterations of a destructive nature" which occur as songs are sung. The very act of singing a folksong is thus construed to be a potentially destructive act endangering the continued stability of the song sung. Moreover, just as singing songs is presumed to destroy them, so the telling of folktales is thought to run the risk of ruining them.³

Although the application of this "devolutionary" theory has, in fact, been very helpful in explaining the origins and evolution of our modern ballads, it was its particular focus, its obsession with restoring ballads to a so-called "pure" form, that disturbed most modern folklorists.

This leads us to the second, more contemporary historical approach. Ruth Finnegan refers to it as the "historical-geographical school" and explains how the focus, the ultimate objective, rather than the method itself, is what really distinguishes this from the Romantic theories:

Scholars of this school take some particular literary item - most often a story [the theory was first applied to folktales] - and try to trace its exact historical and geographical origins, then plot its journeys from place to place... To aid the process of recognising the 'same' tale in its various guises at different places and times, folklorists of this school have laid great emphasis on developing systems of classification... Plots, motifs and episodes have been classified and labelled, so that any given item can be isolated, identified and followed by a systematic mapping of its origins. In this way all the variants of a tale can be collected and divided into their various components, so that finally the 'life history' of that particular tale can be established.⁴

Ironically, it was Menéndez Pidal himself who gave the thrust to the eventual acceptance and application of this theory/method to the Romancero. Diego Catalán explains:

...más tarde fue ganando prioridad en sus investigaciones la consideración de otro tipo de "tradicionalidad", bastante diverso de la tradicionalidad literaria o letrada que en un principio había atraído su atención. Al estudiar la vida oral, sin soluciones de continuidad, de los romances de raíces medievales, desde los siglos XIV y XV hasta los siglos XIX y XX, se percató de la singularidad y perfiló los rasgos distintivos de la poesía oral de creación colectiva, poesía abierta a continua renovación..., pero a la vez poesía capaz de retener, durante siglos y siglos, memoria fiel de toda una serie de pormenores tocantes a un suceso pretérito real o imaginario.⁶

The key phrase, in reaction to the very narrow Romantic perspective of the ballad, was "poesía abierta." This new, fresh outlook opened the way for numerous scholars to begin to study the creative process of the traditional romances from many different perspectives [see Chapter III, part A]. By the 1950's, one of the main preoccupations in the field of ballad research was to seek out the characteristics of the Spanish ballad; to define, once and for all, those stylistic elements that were common to all romances, regardless of their origin or destination. Menéndez Pidal came up with four series of "caracteres específicos." These were: (1) esencialidad, intensidad; (2) naturalidad; (3) intuición, liricidad, dramatismo; and (4) impersonalidad, intemporalidad.⁶ But he also pointed to the influence and continued presence of epic formulas in Spanish ballads as he made the important distinction between "romances-cuento" and

"romances-diálogo." He discussed in detail certain very specific elements of "ballad style" such as repetition, enumeration, fragmentation, exclamation, and many others.⁷

The seed having been planted, the next two decades brought to the surface a great number of ballad scholars and folklorists who devoted themselves to scrutinizing the stylistic elements of the Romancero, determined to uncover the secrets of its creative process. Needless to say, there are still and there will always be many "uncovered" secrets concerning the Romancero. But important strides were made.

The types of studies that will especially concern us in this chapter are those with a particular focus on the elements of "ballad style." Whereas many such studies are very general in scope, there are quite a few which undertake to examine specific romances in their historical trajectory.⁸ Others attempt to demonstrate the process of poetic creation through the study of textual variants.⁹ While some look to expand the list of ballad characteristics as outlined by Menéndez Pidal,¹⁰ others attempt to condense it to a "formula."¹¹ In short, the studies are as numerous and varied as the particular viewpoints or specialties of the scholars themselves. As we examine the evolutionary process of the "Isaac" ballad tradition, we must also keep in mind the sources discussed in the last chapter, particularly the midrashic legends.

B. THE EVOLUTION OF EL SACRIFICIO DE ISAAC

The oldest known version of El sacrificio de Isaac first appeared in Spain in an early 16th century manuscript.¹² It was subsequently published in Segunda parte de la Silva de varios Romances (1550).¹³ Diego Catalán considers this primitive ballad, composed "en estilo juglaresco," to date back to the late fifteenth century.¹⁴

In 1922, J. Leite de Vasconcellos made an important discovery of a 17th century text popular among the Sephardim of Holland which closely resembled the earlier Peninsular ballad.¹⁵ But Catalán cautions against treating this version as "traditional:"

La versión de la miscelánea judaica no es tradicional. Se trata de un texto resumido y mal recordado, pero sin la imprescindible reelaboración que habría supuesto una continuada transmisión oral.¹⁶

There may be some disagreement concerning the "traditional" or "non-traditional" characteristics of these early texts, which will be discussed later. The importance, at this point, rests on the fact that by the 17th century a direct link can be established between the ballad tradition of Spain and that of a Sephardic culture in exile. Another significant link attesting to the continuity of the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac has also been found in the Hebrew literature of the 18th century.¹⁷

The story of Isaac, as we know, acquired a life of its own in Morocco and in parts of Spain. But it also found its

way into the "Orações" of the Crypto-Jews of Portugal.¹⁸

Finally, we must also take into account a ballad recorded in Salonika, also known as El sacrificio de Isaac, which is in some ways related to, but certainly less popular, than the Moroccan ballad studied thus far.¹⁹

The procedure in this section will be to begin with the oldest available text, the 16th century Peninsular ballad, and to trace its evolution to this day in all existing traditions. The commentaries will concentrate on those elements of ballad style which point to textual and thematic re-creation. In the process, textual and linguistic variants will, of course, be considered. As in the previous chapter, and in order to facilitate comparison, the ballad has been divided into 18 functional narrative units, each with its own appropriate heading.

Before we begin, however, it may be useful to discuss briefly the importance of "ballad openings," their characteristics as well as their various functions. Ruth H. Webber examined carefully this aspect of the Romancero and came up with two distinguishable tendencies:

There is manifest a tendency toward fragmentation that leads to cropping the story although always beginning it at an easily recognizable stage. Simultaneously, there is a tendency toward extension, which manifests itself in prefixing one or more introductions or prologues of variable length, sometimes quite independent of the ballad to come, as if it were a practice on the singer's part to show off a bit and to entice the audience into listening more carefully as well as to prolong the performance by delaying the introduction of the desired song.²⁰

In the case of El sacrificio de Isaac, it is not the first but the second tendency which predominates. Over the many centuries, each tradition has elaborated its own unique introduction to this ballad. By now we are familiar with the prologue appended to many of the Peninsular versions:

En un lugar junto a Burgos,
que se llama Villarcayo,
tiene un caballero un hijo
muy querido y estimado...

This type of prologue succeeds in bringing the audience closer to the story by localizing the narrative and presenting characters that are real and easily identifiable within the culture. The Judeo-Spanish tradition, on the other hand, appeals to a sense of Jewish solidarity felt by those who were exiled from Spain. Consequently, God becomes the central character of many ballads and the ultimate unifying force. The first two verses of the majority of the Moroccan Sephardic versions as well as those of the ballad from Salonika clearly reflect this:

Al Dió del cielo Abraham,
al Dió del cielo Ishaac horrado. (Morocco)

En primero alabaremos
al Dió grande y verdadero. (Salonika)

These opening verses have become formulas that are used again and again by the singer to get the attention of the audience and to signal that the story is about to be told. The prologue to the Judeo-Portuguese version achieves this

not by mentioning God's name but by making immediate direct references to "father Abraham" and "Mount Moriah":

Pela jura que juraste
Ao nosso pai Abraão,
Mandamentos que fizeste
Nos campos de Marião.
Depois das palavras ditas,...

and the romance begins at this point.

It is important to emphasize that the prologues that we have seen are mere appendages to the central narrative. They do not necessarily identify the ballad nor are they crucial to the plot. As we are about to see, the 16th century romance does not begin with such a prologue. In direct contrast to the modern ballad tradition, the introductory verses of this primitive version are essential to the story. But as Ruth Webber points out:

With or without prologue, the romance will always have a standard functional opening of relative stability that identifies it, provides essential information, initiates the action and, at the same time, has certain formal qualities that make it readily recognizable as such.²¹

Now we can begin to trace the evolution of El sacrificio de Isaac. The analysis of each of the 18 narrative sections will be subdivided into 6 stages and proceed in this order:

- (A) 16th century Peninsular text: oldest known version (probably composed at the end of the 15th century)
- (B) 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version
- (C) Crypto-Jewish version from Portugal
- (D) modern Peninsular tradition

(E) modern Moroccan Sephardic tradition

(F) modern version from Salonika (remotely related)

(1) ABSENTATION / DIVINE ORDER

Si se partiera Abraam,
patriarca muy honrrado,
partiera se para el monte,
donde Dios le hauia mandado
sacrificar su propio hijo,
que Ysaac era llamado;

(A) The ballad opens "in medias res." God has given the order and Abraham is on his way to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac.

There are two key words in these first few verses that have disappeared completely from the modern versions:

"patriarca" and "sacrificar," although "sacrificio" does appear once in the Sephardic texts. The omission of the aspirated "h" in "Abraam" and "Ysaac" points to a tendency to latinize the names of biblical heroes.

Another singularity of this ballad is the reverence expressed for Abraham ("patriarca muy honrrado"). This will take an interesting turn in the more recent ballads where the stress shifts to Isaac, the prized son.

From the outset, it may seem quite surprising to see that the first few verses of this medieval ballad continue to show traces in the Sephardic tradition while disappearing completely in the Peninsular ballads. The consonant rhyme

scheme (-ado) of this romance juglaresco, however, has evolved to become assonant (-a/o) in all the modern ballads.

(B) In the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version we read:

Ya se parte Abraham

 partese para los montes
 donde Dios le ha embiado
 a sacrificar su ijo
 Ishak que era nombrado.

Although this particular text may indeed have been "resumido y mal recordado" as affirmed by Catalán, it is difficult to agree completely with the second half of his statement ("sin la imprescindible reelaboración que habría supuesto una continuada transmisión oral"²²) when, in fact, this seems to be precisely where the process of re-creation begins to take shape. We are, at this point, in the embryonic stages of the evolution of a ballad. We can already point to four very significant changes:

1) The introduction of "Ya" in the first verse. This change was due more probably to a desire to adopt a traditional epico-lyric formula (popular in Spanish oral poetry ever since the Poema de Mio Cid) than to forgetfulness on the part of the singer. The idea is to make the story come alive and to call attention to the listener by giving the impression that the story is already in progress. In the Romancero there are, of course, numerous examples, such as the well-known opening of La boda estorbada:

Ya se marcha don Belardo,
ya se marcha, ya se va,

and in many other ballads that begin with the protagonist's departure:

Ya se salen por la puerta
por la que salía al campo. (Durán, #796)

2) The simplification of verb tenses from past to present: partiera > parte; hauia > ha. As Menéndez Pidal points out:

El presente histórico, importante recurso para actualizar la narración, abunda mucho más en los romances que en las gestas.²³

3) The first examples of lexical re-creation: mandado > embiado; llamado > nombrado.

4) The "hebraization" of names: Abraam > Abraham; Ysaac > Ishack.

In spite of the fact that parts of the older ballad have apparently been forgotten, the basic octosyllabic structure remains, just as does the consonantal rhyme scheme.

(C) In the Judeo-Portuguese ballad, the second and third verses of the 16th century text have remained almost intact:

Partiu Abraão pelos montes,
Onde o Senhor o mandava.

However, "Dio" has been replaced with the traditional and very convenient epithet "o Senhor," which is often used not only by devout Jews ("Adonai" in Hebrew) but is also popular among Christians. Also, these verses are a prime example of

what Menéndez Pidal referred to as "esencialidad" in the Romancero. Contrary to the Sephardic tradition at large, the ballad tradition of the Crypto-Jews of Portugal clearly reflects a tendency toward "condensation" and "fragmentation." The result is greater intensity in the lyricism of the poem as it becomes shrouded in an atmosphere of mystery.

(D) As we have mentioned, these first few verses have not left a single trace in the Peninsular versions. Instead, they have evolved to the point where God himself speaks to Abraham:

-Este tu hijo, Abrán
ha de morir degollado.

(E) Curiously, the Moroccan Sephardic tradition has undergone the same change and has taken it a step further. God engages in a conversation with Abraham and is willing to help him carry out his task:

-Dame al tu hijo, Abraham,
a tu hijo Ishaac horrado*:
lo pondré por sacrificio
en el monte a señalado. * SEE GLOSSARY

It is important to mention here that in the 16th and 17th century ballad texts God never appears, let alone speaks to Abraham. The dialogue is strictly between father and son. It is the angel who later intervenes on behalf of God. Clearly, the Sephardic texts have more in common with these older romances than do the Peninsular versions. Certain verbs and

adjectives, for example, have been preserved while others have been rearranged. It is interesting to note how the focus has shifted from Abraham to Isaac:

patriarca muy honrrado > a tu hijo Ishaac horrado

donde Dios le hauia mandado > fuerte cosa le ha mandado

sacrificar su propio hijo > lo pondré por sacrificio

The words "sacrificar" or "sacrificio" never appear in any of the Peninsular versions.

(F) The Salonikan ballad bears no resemblance to the other traditions at this point. Its introduction digresses from the story with ten verses about Creation and four more about Abraham's exploits.

(2) FATHER CONSENTS / TAKES SON

toma el niño por la mano
obediente a su mandado.

(A) The sequence of events continues to proceed very swiftly. There is no dialogue at this point, only narration. In the modern tradition this scene has branched out in two directions: the Sephardic versions have introduced Sarah at this point, as Abraham explains to her why they must leave and asks for her blessing; in the Peninsular texts, as many as 12 verses have been added, consisting mostly of a lively face-to-face dialogue between father and son about their mission.

(B) (C) These two verses have apparently been forgotten in the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic text as well as in the Judeo-Portuguese ballad. This brings to mind one of the major controversies regarding fragmentation and omission in romances. It deals specifically with the singers' ability to improvise, to add to or take away from the text in an attempt to make the story more interesting, more suggestive. Menéndez Pidal has repeatedly stressed the importance of timely omission ("saber callar a tiempo") in the creative process of the Romancero. Other critics, such as Sánchez Romeralo, have downplayed this factor:

...si es cierto que las versiones truncadas de algunos romances pueden deberse - como insistió tantas veces Menéndez Pidal - al instinto artístico del cantor popular (ciencia del callar a tiempo, dejando la historia en un enigmático, sugeridor inacabamiento), creo yo que las más veces el cantor calla cuando ha olvidado la historia o no la comprende y su buen sentido le hace preferir el silencio al disparate.²⁴

(D) Only one Peninsular version (Herreruela) expresses the same idea, but it introduces God:

-El rey del cielo lo manda,
que se cumpla su mandado.

Again, we see the convenient use of an epithet ("rey del cielo") that is certainly popular in scriptural and in rabbinic literature, but that is also used in Christianity. In light of the midrashic influence that we have observed in the Peninsular tradition [see Chapter II, section C] and of the sudden omnipresence of God in certain Spanish versions,

it would seem reasonable to assume that this and other biblical ballads were, at least in some regions of the Peninsula, perpetuated by "conversos" and "cristianos nuevos" over many centuries. This theory will be discussed further in the next chapter.

(E) Although the Moroccan versions stick to the original narrative form, the entire passage has been replaced with a popular expression:

De alma y de corazón
Él se le había otorgado.

This popular phrase performs two very important functions. It underlines Abraham's commitment to God and acts as a passage of transition before his encounter with Isaac.

(F) The ballad from Salonika preoccupies itself with details about Isaac's birth, the age of his parents, etc. When it finally begins to tell the story of the sacrifice, it gets right to the point:

Lo hizo de treinta y cuatro,
lo ayegó* por alzación*. * SEE GLOSSARY

The action in this ballad is very precipitated, the style uneven. In fact, nothing more is said until the episode where Abraham is about to strike Isaac, at which point we may be able to see more clearly some indirect influences from the other traditions. Until then (Section 15), no further comment will be made about this particular version.

(3) FATHER CONCERNED ABOUT SON

Yua triste y pensativo
 el buen viejo y lastimado,
 en pensar que ha de matar
 al mismo que ha engendrado,
 y lo mas que le lastima
 es en verlo ya criado.
 Y con estos pensamientos
 al pie del monte han llegado.

(A) This is the only instance in the entire repertoire of ballads where Abraham's concern and sadness are openly expressed. In midrashic literature, Abraham is often described as being terribly tormented by the thought that he must kill his own son. When the father and son begin their journey, for example, Sarah goes out to the road to see them off and begins to weep. And Abraham joins her:

And when Sarah heard the words of her son Isaac, she wept bitterly, and Abraham wept with her...²⁵

It is more than likely, however, that the eight verses of the ballad were inspired in a popular midrashic episode in which Satan appears in disguise and attempts to make Abraham doubt the logic of his own actions and, by extension, the validity of God's command:

And while Abraham and Isaac were proceeding along the road, Satan came and appeared to Abraham in the figure of a very aged man, humble and of contrite spirit, and said to him: "Art thou silly or foolish, that thou goest to do this thing to thine only son? God gave thee a son in thy latter days, in thine old age, and wilt thou go and slaughter him...?"²⁶

These provoking questions which, in the Midrash, do not seem to deter Abraham from following God's will, have essentially

become, in the romance, Abraham's innermost thoughts and feelings. The midrashic encounter with Satan ends at the precise moment when Abraham sees Mount Moriah in the distance:

Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place at a distance, which God had told him.²⁷

This seems to correspond to the verses "y con estos pensamientos / al pie del monte han llegado."

(B) (C) (D) This episode has been completely omitted from our 17th century version and seems to have left no traces in any of the modern ballad traditions.

(E) The Moroccan Sephardic ballads, however, may offer an interesting link, although the entire passage has been re-created. The expression of concern comes not from Abraham but from Sarah:

Paraille mientes*, Abraham,
yo le confío en tus manos.
Que él es mi vida y mi bien
mi consuelo y mi regalo.

and culminates with Abraham's assurance:

-Yo te le pararé mientes*
y del Dio sea parado.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Sarah's concern for Isaac before his departure is well established in the Midrash. But how did this scene evolve in the ballad from the intriguing description of Abraham's state of mind seen in the older text? Although there may be more than one

answer to this question, the key factor seems to be the versatility and evolving nature of midrashic literature and the role that it has played over the centuries in "giving life" to the Scriptural text. As Harry Gersh explains:

By its nature - the explanation of wonders and hidden things through illustrative stories and allegories - ...the creation of midrashic material did not stop at any particular point... There was no canon of midrashim to be closed.²⁸

Just as the rabbis would often select particular passages of a Midrash to illustrate or enliven certain biblical stories, likewise did the singers of romances over the generations. It is very probable that the eight-verse description of Abraham's feelings, which was no doubt quite effective four or five centuries ago, began to lose its luster by the 17th century. It was eventually eliminated from the ballad, later to be replaced in the Moroccan tradition by Sarah's emotional plea to her husband. This is a clear example not of "textual" but of "thematic" re-creation, whereby a midrashic episode can be substituted for another to restore the same basic theme.

(4) CARRYING THE FIREWOOD

Hizo el viejo vn haz de leña
y al niño se lo ha cargado;

(A) These two verses are a paraphrase of the biblical text:

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son. (Genesis 22:6)

The terseness of these verses and the repeated use of the past tense has the effect of freezing the action in time, giving it a tone of finality. By contrast, the modern ballads are much more dynamic. It is also interesting to note that this particular version does not refer to Abraham and Isaac as "el padre" and "el hijo," as in the later Peninsular and Sephardic traditions, but rather as "el viejo" and "el niño."

(B) This passage does not appear in the 17th century ballad.

(C) The Judeo-Portuguese version makes no mention of the firewood. But it is the only ballad that refers to the two young men of the biblical text who escorted Abraham and Isaac to the foot of the holy mountain:

Mandou aos seus mancebos:
-Mancebos, ficai aqui,
Que eu e o moço iremos.

(D) In the Peninsular tradition, only the Leonese versions describe the cutting of the firewood. The scene has been expanded to six verses:

Coge el hacha tras del cinto
y a su hijo de la mano;
Adán cortaba la leña,
su hijo la iba atropando.
Después de atropadita,
se sentaron de cansados. (Villamanín)

This passage is a re-creation loosely based on the biblical text. It bears no resemblance to the two verses of the older ballad. But the style is very typical of a romance: the

repetition of certain words ("hijo" and "atropando"); the lack of adjectives (not one adjective is used); poetic parallelism (every two verses act as a unit); the variation in the use of tenses. All of these elements combine to produce an episode that is fast-moving and intense, yet dramatically real.

The mixing of tenses ("coge"; "cortaba"; "se sentaron") is very common in the Romancero. As a general rule, the present is used to depict the characters in action or to express urgency; the preterite stresses the completion or the consequences of an action; the imperfect is usually introduced to describe a scene or a prolonged action.²⁹

(E) The Moroccan ballads emphasize the carrying of the firewood rather than the cutting. In the process, they exhibit the greatest variety of dynamic styles. The Larrea version, for example, introduces the passage with the adverb "ya":

Ya van el padre y el hijo
y van de leña cargados.

"Ya" followed by the present tense is quite effective in bringing the scene to life. The audience is made to feel that it is actually witnessing the sequence of events. In essence, the actions are described, not after they have taken place, but as they develop.

The Benardete version opts for a dialogue in which, strangely enough, it is Abraham who carries the wood. The son speaks first:

-¿Qué vas hacer con esta leña
que yevas tan cargado?
-Para ponerlo en el monte...

The dynamism of this dialogue can hardly compare with the austere verses borrowed from the Scriptures and paraphrased in the 16th century ballad. However, there may be a link. It is not at all difficult to see the evolution in this case, especially since key words such as "hacer," "leña" and "cargado" have survived:

Hizo el viejo un haz de leña
> -¿Qué vas hacer con esta leña

y al niño se lo ha cargado;
> que yevas tan cargado?

(5) JOURNEY UP THE MOUNTAIN

y subiendo por el monte
yua Ysaac muy fatigado,
mucho mas yua Abraham
por ser ya viejo y pesado,
mas con toda la fatiga
hazia del esforçado.

(A) Some of the stylistic features that are typical of the romance continue to be evident. The use of the imperfect tense in this episode succeeds in "dragging out" the action, in conveying the difficulty of the climb. The insertion of descriptive adjectives such as "fatigado," "viejo," "pesado" and "esforçado," although not common in romances, seem almost necessary in this case to express the physical strain caused by the journey.

The re-creation of this episode in subsequent ballad traditions presents an interesting dilemma. Let us now observe what clearly appears to be a three-step evolutionary process.

(B) In the first step, the six verses of the 16th century ballad are reduced to four and the first verse undergoes a major change as we go to the 17th century text remembered by the Sephardim of the Netherlands:

Abraham hiua por el monte arriba,
Ishack hiua mui fatigado,
mucho mas lo hiua Abraham,
por ser ja viejo pezado

(C) This passage is non-existent in the Judeo-Portuguese ballad.

(D) What is fascinating is that it is not the older Peninsular text but the poorly remembered Sephardic verses which make their way back into the Peninsular ballads, as we notice in the first two verses of this version from Salceda, Santander:

Iban por el monte arriba,
el niño ya iba cansado.
Ajincado de rodillas
gracias a Dios iba dando.

There are, nevertheless, some noticeable changes. The Santander ballads never mention the names of the heroes: "Abraham" is simply "el padre" and "Ishack" becomes "el niño." "Fatigado" has been replaced with "cansado." But

perhaps the most important change is that the verses which describe Abraham's fatigue have been eliminated and replaced with a Christian motif: the son gets on his knees and gives thanks to God.

The introduction of Christian motifs into Peninsular biblical ballads is not uncommon nor surprising. What is more puzzling is the perpetuation of certain Jewish motifs and the appearance of traces from Sephardic texts in the Peninsular Romancero. This matter will be discussed further in the next chapter.

(E) The Moroccan Sephardic tradition has not eliminated the reference to Abraham's fatigue, seen in the older texts, but rather placed it in the forefront:

Abraham como era viejo
va despacio y fatigado.

There is a certain feeling of reverence and respect for the older Abraham that comes through much more strongly in the Sephardic than in the Peninsular tradition. This may explain how the description of Abraham as "viejo y pesado" of the older ballads has evolved to become "viejo y sin pecado" in many of the Moroccan versions.

The Benoliel version also seems to suggest a possible link with the modern Santander ballads, in that it contains two verses which refer to Abraham's faith in God:

Fuerzas al Dio iba pidiendo
para cumplir lo ordenado.

Finally, it is important to note that the Moroccan Sephardic versions are generally more faithful to the lexicon of the older texts. The adjective "fatigado" remains, as do the biblical names of the patriarchs.

(6) SON INQUIRES ABOUT LAMB

Allí hablara el niño,
bien oyreys lo que ha hablado:
-Padre mio, padre mio,
padre mio muy honrrado,
veo el cuchillo y la lena
y el fuego aparejado
y no veo el sacrificio
que ha de ser sacrificado.

(A) Menéndez Pidal lists as one of the "epic intuitive formulas" encountered in the Romancero a technique often used to call attention to a particularly important passage:

Otro modo de actualizar los sucesos es sugerir una representación a los oyentes mediante un apóstrofe encabezado con el verbo "ver": ... "Veréis sacar los caballos..."³⁰

In the case of our ballad, it is not ver but rather the verb oir ("bien oyreys lo que ha hablado") that is used to entice the listener, to bring him closer to the story. This phrase is often used in many of the older Spanish ballads:

Allí hablara el rey don Juan,
bien oíreis lo que decía:
(Romance de Abenámar y el rey don Juan, verses 31-32)

It is reminiscent of the technique used by Gonzalo de Berceo:

Sí vos me escuchasedes por vuestro consiment,
Querria vos contar un buen aveniment...
(Milagros de Nuestra Señora, verses 2-3)

To hold the listener's attention, Isaac opens the dialogue with a series of repetitions. It has often been noted that this stylistic feature is more common to ballads than to epic poetry:

La principal figura retórica usada en el estilo tradicional es la repetición. El lirismo gusta remansarse reiterando sus efusiones. Esa reiteración, común a toda la lírica en general, es sin duda lo que más distingue el estilo épico-lírico de los romances respecto al estilo propiamente épico de las gestas.³¹

The last four verses of this passage are inspired in the biblical text. The major discrepancies are the mention of the knife, which survives in some of the modern Peninsular versions, and the use of el sacrificio as a synecdoque for "the lamb for a burnt-offering."

(B) These important verses do not appear in the poorly remembered 17th century Dutch-Sephardic text.

(C) The Judeo-Portuguese ballad has kept the dialogue and condensed Isaac's portion to four lines:

Disse Isaac lá no campo:
-Senhor! está aquí o fogo,
E a lenha para acender;
Mas onde está a vítima?

Ironically, although this passage, even more so than the 16th century version, is directly inspired in the biblical text, the substitution of el sacrificio with a vítima not only seals this ballad with originality, but also surrounds it with mystery. This is what Menéndez Pidal has often referred to as "lo irreal, lo impreciso" in the Romancero.

There seems to be a vague symbolism in these verses. If there is an attempt to stay close to the biblical source, as appears to be the case, why hasn't sacrificio been replaced with carnero, as in the Sephardic ballads? What does the word vítima suggest? Indeed, it may not be far-fetched to consider the possibility that, aside from its literal interpretation, this ballad may have had a special symbolic meaning for the Crypto-Jews of Portugal. These Jews who were condemned to live in hiding for so many generations became helpless witnesses to the persecution and execution of their own brothers. It is not unlikely that the firewood and flames associated with the "autos da fe" became a living symbol of the sacrificial altar and that these secret Jews were constantly asking God, as Isaac asks his father: "Who will be the victim?"

(D) In the modern Peninsular tradition the dialogue between father and son as they journey up the mountain is quite lengthy, especially in the versions from Santander where it reaches 12 verses. There are two parts to the dialogue. First, the father tries to quell his son's impatience, as we see in the Puente-Pumar version:

mucho tarda en llegar
al monte de los anublados.
-Ya está cerca, hijo mío,
detrás de aquellos collados.

In all but the Leonese versions, the knife mentioned in the 16th century text ("veo el cuchillo y la leña") not only reappears but has become one of the central motifs:

Iban por el cuesto arriba;
cuchillos iba afilando. (Salceda)

This introduces the second part of the dialogue. The son persistently inquires about the knives:

-Diga, diga, padre mío,
diga, diga, padre amado,
¿pa qué son estos cuchillos
de acero, tan afilados? (Herreruela)

In the Leonese versions, the entire scene has been re-created. The introduction to the son's inquiry about the lamb is itself a question. It is the father who first expresses concern:

-¿Tú qué me miras, mi hijo,
qué me miras, mi regalo? (Valdeteja)

The son answers, then asks his own provocative question:

-Miro, padre, aquella lumbre
cómo se va alborotando,
¿quién será el manso cordero
que en ella se verá asado? (Valdeteja)

As illustrated in some of the previous verses, the repetitious style seen in the dialogue of the 16th century ballad can be traced to the modern Peninsular versions:

padre mio, padre mio > diga, diga, padre mío.

As far as the lengthening of the dialogue is concerned, this seems to be part of the natural evolution of the Peninsular romance. What is interesting, however, is that

much of the added dialogue seems to be inspired in episodes from the Midrash [See Chapter II, section C].

(E) The Sephardic biblical ballads, on the other hand, have the tendency to condense the dialogue in an effort to accommodate some of the key narrative elements taken from the Scriptures. This passage has been reduced to two verses in most of the Moroccan versions:

-Padre, ya truxe* la leña
y el barbex* no veo atado. (M. de Lara)

The Benoliel version introduces Isaac's words with a narrative verse that may well be a remnant of the 16th century text:

y a su padre así ha hablado: >
bien oyreys lo que ha hablado:

It should also be stressed that the only ballad traditions to make a direct reference to the lamb at this point are the Sephardic ("el barbex") and the Leonese ("el manso cordero").

(7) FATHER'S EVASIVE REPLY

-Hijo, Dios proueera,-
dixo- no tengas cuydado.-

(A) This is the first of two replies given by Abraham to his son. The source for these verses is the biblical narrative:

Dixo Abraham: Dios lo deparara (proueera) el carnero para la olocasta, mi fijo... (Alba Bible, Genesis 22:8)

(B) (C) (D) (E) This seemingly evasive reply, which has often been interpreted as a reaffirmation of Abraham's faith in God, has not carried over to any of the ballad traditions that followed. In every version studied, from the 17th century on, Abraham's reply to his son is swift and to the point, as we will see in passage # 9.

(8) ARRIVAL ON MOUNTAIN / REST

E diciendo estas palabras,
encima el monte han llegado.
Assentaron se los dos
y vn rato han descansado.

(A) These verses serve as a passage of transition between Abraham's first and second reply. It is important to keep in mind that in the Scriptures Abraham gives only one reply ("God will provide the lamb..."). The midrashic tradition, however, as do all the other ballad versions of El sacrificio de Isaac, have replaced this with the more direct reply that we shall see in the next section. One of the peculiarities of this 16th century version is that it contains both replies. The implication is that the evasive explanation of the biblical text is given by Abraham to his son as they arrive on top of the mountain ("e diciendo estas palabras / encima el monte han llegado"). After a period of rest ("vn rato han descansado") Abraham confronts his son once again and reveals the real purpose of the mission.

(B) (C) (D) As was previously noted, in the other versions of this ballad Abraham responds only once to Isaac's question about the lamb. Therefore, it seems very likely that this passage of transition soon became obsolete and was probably eliminated in the early stages of the evolution of the ballad.

(E) In the Sephardic ballads, there are several references to the heroes' arrival on the mountain, although, in every case, it takes place before Isaac makes his inquiry about the sacrificial lamb. Some of the Sephardic verses may have evolved from the primitive Peninsular text:

encima el monte han llegado > se pararon en un monte
y vn rato han descansado > ahí habían descansado (Bn)

(9) MISSION REVEALED

Y al cabo de vna gran pieça,
Abraam assi ha hablado:
-Hijo mio, hijo mio,
descanso de mi cuydado,
para mi dolor nacido,
para mi dolor criado,
desto que os quiero dezir
no querays estar turbado,
porque Dios manda y ordena
que seays sacrificado.

(A) Once again, a two-verse narrative passage announces that Abraham is about to speak. As he begins his explanation, the repetition of hijo mio and para mi dolor calls attention to the urgency of his words. Although the father seems to be concerned about his son's reaction ("no querays estar

turbado"), the suspenseful moment arrives and the purpose of the journey is finally revealed.

(B) This passage not only survives in the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic text, but remains almost intact. The only significant changes are: the elimination of the introductory two verses and the substitution of one word to exaggerate the paradox of Isaac's birth:

para mi plazer nacido,
para mi dolor criado.

(C) Of all the modern ballads, it is the Crypto-Jewish version from Portugal which remains closest to its Peninsular predecessor:

Olhai, vós, meu filho
Isso não vos dê cuidados,
Que manda o Senhor,
Que sejais sacrificado.

The connection with the 16th century text is evident:

-Hijo mio, hijo mio > Olhai, vos, meu filho

porque Dios manda y ordena
que seays sacrificado.
> Que manda o Senhor,
Que sejais sacrificado.

It is also interesting to see how two verses from the 16th century text (verses 4 and 8 of this passage) have combined to form one verse in the Judeo-Portuguese ballad:

descanso de mi cuydado + no querays estar turbado
> Isso não vos dê cuidados,

(D) In the modern Peninsular ballads, the dialogue between father and son is very fast-paced. Abraham's reply is direct and usually consists of only two verses:

-Tú has de ser manso cordero
que en ella has ser arrojado. (Villamanín)

-Para quitarte la vida,
que ha sido de Dios mandado. (Tudanca)

The Salceda version has lengthened the passage to four lines through the use of repetition and by adding a dramatic phrase at the end:

-Para matarte, hijo mío,
para matarte, hijo amado,
que está mandado de Dios
que ha de morir en mis brazos.

The evolution of this particular passage through the centuries is a clear illustration of the tendency in the Romancero to reduce the text to its principal motif:

... al repetirlo, [el gusto popular] va eliminando del texto primitivo las partes poco afortunadas; tal vez añade algún rasgo que estima necesario; y en esta busca de sencillez y viveza, el romance gana una esencial intensidad.³²

In effect, the details of Abraham's very sensitive yet calculated reply to Isaac, which consists of eight verses in the primitive ballad, have been forgotten in all but the Judeo-Portuguese version. The narrative introduction, the father's expression of his own grief as well as the concern about his son's reaction, which once served as a dramatic prelude to Abraham's revelation, apparently did not continue to captivate its audience. As the passage was being

condensed, however, there were other creative forces working to intensify the scene. What some of the Romantic theorists have traditionally thought of as the disintegration of a romance, Menéndez Pidal calls "intuición; liricidad; dramatismo":

El estilo épico tradicional no gusta de la narración trabada; tiende a una visión intuitiva, instantánea, inmediata... [Se] introduce en cambio tonalidades líricas emotivas, reiteraciones, enumeraciones simétricas, exclamaciones.³³

These and other elements have combined to transform Abraham's eloquently tragic words to his son into a striking statement that is meant to surprise the listener and cause a sudden emotional response.

(E) In the Sephardic ballads as well, Abraham's drawn-out reply and the tone of serenity which so typifies the older versions have been reduced to an abrupt declaration consisting of no more than two verses:

-Tú sox el barbex*, Isḥaac,
que del Dio era mandado. (Manrique de Lara)

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, this particular reply given quickly and without a moment's hesitation does not come from the Scriptures. This is a clear case where both the Sephardic and the modern Peninsular traditions coincide with the straightforward style of the Midrash:

Isaac said to his father: O my father! Behold the fire and the wood, where is the lamb for the burnt-offering? He replied to him: My son! Thou art the lamb for the burnt-offering...³⁴

(10) FATHER CONCERNED FOR MOTHER

Hijo, vuestra triste madre
sentira dolor doblado,
desque ya sepa la nueua
como sereys degollado.-

(A) These four verses comprise the second part of Abraham's declaration to Isaac. At first, it may appear quite rude and insensitive for Abraham to make such a disconcerting statement immediately after informing Isaac that he is about to be sacrificed. These words do not at all reflect the desire expressed by Abraham to comfort his son through his difficult ordeal ("no querays estar turbado"). Why, then, does Abraham make such a statement? The answer seems to lie, once again, in the importance given to Sarah in midrashic literature. In the Midrash, Isaac's first concern when he learns of his tragic fate is his mother's well-being. In the romance, it is Abraham who makes it known to Isaac that Sarah will suffer as a consequence of his death, as if this were the most tragic news of all.

(B) (C) (D) (E) This passage does not reappear in any other ballad, although in the Leonese versions it is Isaac who expresses concern for his mother as he accepts God's order (see passage # 13). The Sephardic tradition takes it a step further and introduces Sarah as one of the protagonists.

It is interesting to see the word "degollado" reappear in the Herreruella version. Abraham's reply to Isaac as he asks about the knives is:

-Para tí son, hijo mío,
que has de morir degollado.

(11) FATHER AND SON CRY

Estas palabras diciendo,
las lagrimas le han saltado.
Llora el vno, llora el otro
y los dos se han abraçado.

(A) Once again, Abraham is overcome with emotion as he expresses his intent to follow God's will. This is a familiar pattern: first, Abraham speaks and/or acts with great resolve in the name of God, then he begins to doubt his own words or actions. Passage # 2 was a clear example of this:

toma el niño por la mano
obediente a su mandado.

is immediately followed by

Yua triste y pensativo
el buen viejo y lastimado,
en pensar que ha de matar
al mismo que ha engendrado.

The ballad is, in effect, portraying an Abraham torn by two conflicting roles: his unswerving faith in God labels him as the patriarch-to-be of the Scriptures; but his more ordinary human qualities, his role as a father, his fears and concerns about Sarah, these all seem to be derived from the midrashic tradition. As was mentioned earlier, the Midrashim

often point to Abraham's emotional breakdowns and describe them in detail. One such episode occurs as father and son are about to leave home to begin their journey:

And when Sarah heard the words of her son Isaac, she wept bitterly, and Abraham wept with her, and their son wept with them, a great weeping, also those of their servants who went with them wept greatly. And Sarah caught hold of Isaac, and she held him in her arms, and she embraced him...35

There seems to be little doubt that this is the scene that inspired the passage in our 16th century version, especially the last two verses ("llora el vno, llora el otro / y los dos se han abraçado"). The major changes, of course, are that Sarah and the servants have been eliminated (it is Abraham who embraces Isaac in the ballad) and the context is not the same (in the ballad, Abraham cries not as he leaves home but as he reveals the purpose of the mission).

(B) (C) (D) (E) This emotional scene has disappeared from the 17th century text and does not reappear in any of the other ballads. In the Sephardic versions, the sentimental component has shifted to Sarah, while Abraham remains stoic and resolute in his desire to satisfy God's will.

(12) SON CONSENTS

Allí hablara el niño,
desta manera ha hablado:
-Pues que Dios así lo quiere
que se cumple su mandado,

(A) Once again, the dialogue is introduced by a two-verse formula that identifies the speaker. It is important to remember that in the biblical text Isaac never explicitly agrees to be sacrificed. Isaac's response is based on the Midrash:

Isaac said unto his father, "I will do all that the Lord hath spoken to thee with joy and cheerfulness of heart."³⁶

This is where the midrashic tradition takes the opportunity to accentuate Isaac's qualities as a hero. When his father questions him about his true feelings, Isaac's response is even more emphatic:

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is nothing in my heart to cause me to deviate either to the right or to the left from the word that He hath spoken to thee. Neither limb nor muscle hath moved or stirred on account of this, nor is there in my heart any thought or evil counsel concerning this. But I am joyful and cheerful of heart in this matter, and I say, Blessed is the Lord who has this day chosen me to be a burnt offering before Him."³⁷

The motif of Isaac's "willful" participation in his own sacrifice, which originated in rabbinic literature, eventually found its way into the Romancero of the fifteenth century and has persisted to this day. In fact, Isaac's two-verse acceptance has become a permanent formula. It has taken all sorts of twists and turns through the centuries but has basically remained faithful to its original, as we are about to see.

(B) The 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version is a replica of the older text:

-Pues que Dios assi lo quiere,
que se cumpla su mandado.

The two verses used to introduce the speaker have been eliminated and will not be seen again in any other ballad. The early omission of what Menéndez Pidal refers to as "verso de unión" or "verso introductor" may be attributed to the popular tendency to condense oral poetry, to capture the essence of long narratives, a process which began with the evolution of epic poetry:

El verso introductor es narración; todo rastro de narración es suprimido para dar más viveza a la escena. Siguiendo este uso épico, romances hay que no son sino un girón dialogístico desprendido de un conjunto narrativo.³⁸

(C) The Crypto-Jewish ballad also reflects a direct connection with the 16th century text:

Se o Senhor manda e ordena
Cumpra-se o seu santo mandado!

Even the phrase "manda y ordena" comes from the older Spanish text. In passage 9, we read:

porque Dios manda y ordena
que seays sacrificado.

(D) In the modern Peninsular tradition, most of the versions have remained very close to the primitive text:

-Si está mandado de Dios
cúmplase luego el mandado: (Salceda)

In the Herreruella version, it is Abraham, as he explains about the knives, who says:

-Para tí son, hijo mío,
que has de morir degollado,
el rey del cielo lo manda,
se cumplirá su mandado.

In some versions, the first verse has been altered while the second remains almost intact:

-Si me ha de quitar la vida
cúmplase luego el mandado; (Tudanca)

In one of the Leonese versions, the reverse is true:

-Si lo mandó el mi Dios, padre,
lo haré con mucho agrado. (Villamanín)

But the basic two-verse structure of this passage and its message has survived remarkably.

(E) The Sephardic ballads have kept the same basic formula. In many versions, however, although Isaac implicitly agrees to be sacrificed, the use of the second person seems to put the onus on Abraham:

-Si el Dió lo manda, mi padre,
no salgáis de su mandado;

This may have been inspired in a midrashic episode where Isaac, bound on the altar and ready to be sacrificed, tries to encourage his father with words like:

I adjure thee, therefore, my father, make haste,
execute the will of thy Creator... 39

(13) SON CONCERNED FOR MOTHER

a la triste de mi madre
 m'encomendareys de grado,
 dezilde que no se aflija
 de perder su hijo amado,
 que quien muere por su Dios,
 en el cielo es coronado,
 y dezilde como muero
 en aqueste despoblado,
 muy contento y satisfecho
 en ser vos dello pagado.

(A) As was already mentioned, Isaac's concern for his mother is a major theme in midrashic literature. What appears to be original here is the message itself. Isaac wants his mother to know that he did not die in vain ("quien muere por su Dios / en el cielo es coronado") nor against his will ("muy contento y satisfecho"). In the Midrash, the tone is more fatalistic as Isaac comes to realize that no explanation will do, that his mother simply cannot live without him:

O my father, when thou shalt have slain me and burnt me for an offering, take with thee that which shall remain of my ashes to bring to Sarah my mother, and say to her, this is the sweet smelling savor of Isaac...⁴⁰

(B) In the Dutch-Sephardic ballad, the last four verses have been forgotten and the first two have undergone some lexical changes:

A la querida mi madre
 embiaredes de grado
 dezilde que no se afliga
 en perder su hijo amado,
 que el que muere por Dios
 en el Cielo estoi coronado.-

(C) In the Judeo-Portuguese ballad the passage has been reduced to two key verses:

Quem morre pelo Senhor
No céu é coroado.

Why have only these two verses survived in this version? One cannot help but think that they may have had a special meaning to the Crypto-Jewish community of Portugal. As was previously suggested, the entire ballad, which is actually a prayer to Isaac ("Oração ao sacrifício de Isaac"), may have served as a symbol of their suffering. As they lived under the constant threat of being caught and "sacrificed" for secretly practicing their true faith, they may indeed have identified with and found consolation in Isaac's heroic affirmation that he who dies for God does not die in vain.

(D) In the modern Peninsular tradition, only the Leonese ballads have kept this passage. In this case, however, Isaac does not speak these words of concern until he is bound on the altar and Abraham is ready to strike. In the version from Villamanín, the first verse has not deviated at all from the original Peninsular text, whereas the rest of the passage has been completely re-created:

Y a la triste de mi madre
no se lo diga en un año,
si le pregunta por mí,
dígame que estoy con amo,
si le pregunta que a donde,
cerca del Monte Calvario.

This passage is particularly intriguing because it begins with what may be a midrashic concept, Isaac's wish that his mother not be informed of his death within the year (see Chapter II, section C), and ends with a Christian motif. "Dígale que estoy con amo" may explain the reason originally given in the Midrash by Abraham for taking Isaac away from Sarah:

"My son Isaac is grown up, and he has not yet studied the service of God. Now, to-morrow I will go and bring him to Shem and Eber his son, and there he will learn the ways of the Lord..."⁴¹

But "cerca del Monte Calvario" is an obvious reference to Jesus Christ. At this point, it may be wise to consider the possible symbolism of these verses and to ask ourselves some questions. Is this simply a case of the arbitrary insertion of a popular Christian verse? Or are we to read between the lines? Shalom Spiegel, among others, has reminded us that, from early Christianity to the Christian writers of our day, Isaac has often been considered a precursor of Jesus:

Already in the Epistle of Barnabas, Isaac is referred to as the prototype for the sufferings and trials of Jesus. Irenaeus exhorts Christians that in their faith they too must be on the alert to "bear the cross" just as Isaac bore the wood for the burnt-offering woodpile. The Church fathers were especially fond of this image of one bearing his own cross - which occurs in midrashic-talmudic sources, as does the phrase, "Like one going out to be burned and carrying on his own shoulders the wood for his pyre..." Christian writers make Isaac the symbol of their faith, and so interpret the Akedah chapter as to have it serve as a foreshadowing of the death of Jesus.⁴²

The analogy made in the ballad becomes somewhat clearer. If the Peninsular ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac was perpetuated by cristianos nuevos, as may well be the case, then one plausible symbolic interpretation would be that Isaac is going to the site where Christ was crucified to accept the Christian faith and renounce Judaism. At least, that is what he would like his mother to know. More deeply symbolic, however, is the fact that Isaac utters those words just as Abraham raises his knife, almost as a desperate cry of repentance, as a last hope for salvation. Within the context of the Peninsular ballads, therefore, Isaac saves his own life by accepting Christianity. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that in some versions it is the Virgin Mary who ultimately intervenes and saves Isaac. This brings to mind the popular medieval story of the Jewish child who accepts communion and is saved from the clutches of his own father by the Virgin (Cantigas de Santa María, no. 4; Milagros de Nuestra Señora, no. 24).

(E) The Moroccan Sephardic ballads have condensed this passage to four lines. It exists only in the two older versions:

No se me da por mi muerte
aunque muero mallogrado,
se me da por la mi madre
que me tiene arregalado. (Benoliel)

This version has lost its religious content. There is no explicit message to be delivered to Sarah, no words of

consolation, no heroic affirmation of faith. What is left is Isaac's expression of concern for his mother. This episode represents a good example of textual condensation without significant re-creation. The key words, which are concentrated at the end of each verse, have an antithetical effect: "muerte / mallogrado;" "madre / arregalado."

(14) BLESSING / THE BINDING

Dadme vuestra bendición
por que muera consolado,
tambien las manos me atad
porque este mas sosegado,
porque con la juuentud
no haga algun desaguisado.-
El niño estaua humilde
en el suelo arrodillado;
dada ya la bendición,
los ojos le han enuendado.

(A) As was demonstrated in chapter 3, Isaac's instructions to his father as he is being prepared for the sacrifice are derived from the Midrash:

"Father, make haste, bare thine arm, and bind my hands and feet securely, for I am a young man... When I behold the slaughtering knife in thy hand, I may perchance begin to tremble at the sight and push against thee...⁴³

This passage clearly illustrates that the connection between youth ("juuentud") and committing a blunder ("no haga algun desaguisado") is not simply a cliché used by the composer but rather a well-established midrashic principle that has been subtly incorporated into the ballad.

The blessing mentioned in the first verse ("dadme vuestra bendicion") and again in the ninth ("dada ya la bendicion") seems to have a double meaning. Isaac could be asking his father to bless him for going through with the ordeal. It is more likely, however, that the composer was injecting a talmudic principle which prescribes giving the proper blessing to a sacrifice in conformity with the law.⁴⁴

The most original section of this passage consists of the last four verses. Isaac is not stretched out on the altar, as in the Scriptures, but rather kneeling on the ground ("en el suelo arrodillado") and blindfolded ("los ojos le han enuendado"). The possible sources of this scene are discussed in chapter II.

(B) Strangely enough, this important episode has been forgotten in the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version.

(C) The Crypto-Jewish ballad has preserved the essence of the older text:

Peai-me de pés e mãos,
Para que, na hora da minha morte,
Não faça algum desavisado,
Não erga os olhos contra o Senhor,
Nem contra vós, meu pai irado.
Tapou Abraão os olhos a seu filho Isaac,

The blessing has been omitted and there is no mention of Isaac's age. But the reference to the binding of the feet as well as the hands ("pés e mãos"), the ominous introduction of the word "death" ("na hora da minha morte"), and Isaac's

fear of offending his father, all seem to be founded on a passage from the Midrash:

Bind for me my two hands, and my two feet, so that I do not curse thee; for instance, a word may issue from the mouth because of the violence and dread of death, and I shall be found to have slighted the precept, "Honour thy father"...45

The passage ends with Abraham blindfolding Isaac, an action which is not mentioned in the Midrash nor in the Scriptures, but which can be traced to a verse of the older Peninsular ballad.

(D) In the modern Peninsular ballads the message of this episode has survived, although the text has gone through significant changes. Interestingly, two of the eight versions studied (Herreruela and Villarino) are true to the midrashic text in that Isaac asks that both hands and feet be tied. In the version from Burgos, Isaac wishes only to be blindfolded. But the majority of versions have remained faithful to the 16th century ballad, i.e., Isaac asks that his hands be tied and his eyes be covered in preparation for the sacrifice:

los brazos me atará atrás
con un cordón encarnado;
los ojos me ha de vendar
para no verle airado. (Puente-Pumar)

Venza, padre, los mis ojos
que ellos no vayan llorando,
venza, padre, los mis brazos,
que ellos no vaigan braceando. (Valdeteja)

The only verses that seem to have evolved directly from the 16th century ballad are found in the Herreruela version:

-Áteme de pies y manos, < tambien las manos me atad
pa que muera sosegado < porque este mas sosegado

and in the Santander versions:

los ojos me ha de vendar < los ojos le han enuendado

(E) In the Sephardic ballad tradition, Abraham's blessing has been eliminated from this episode. It was eventually replaced with the blessing given by Sarah to her husband and son as they are about to begin their journey. The more positive tone of the Sephardic version reflects its happier context and a certain degree of optimism on the part of Sarah:

Dadme vuestra bendición > Damos tu bendición, Sará,
por que muera consolado > porque seamos tornados

dada ya la bendición, > la bendición que les diera:
los ojos le han enuendado > que volvan vivos y sanos

The binding scene of the Moroccan versions has evolved to become more colorful with the addition of certain details seen in the modern Peninsular ballads: Issac's hands are tied together with the rope used to hold the firewood:

Con el cordel de la leña
pies y manos l'había atado (M. Ruiz 1)

As in the Peninsular versions, Isaac's blindfold is given a color. In this case it is not red but purple:

con una cinta morada
los ojos le había tapado. (M. de Lara)

Curiously, there is another verse that only the Moroccan ballads and the modern Peninsular tradition seem to have in common. It indicates Isaac's reason for wanting to be blindfolded:

padre tapéisme los ojos,
no vos vea mal airado*. (M. de Lara)

los ojos me tapará
para no verle airado*. (Salceda)

Since these verses do not appear in any of the older versions, the question that immediately comes to mind is: could there have been a reciprocal influence between the Peninsular and the North African ballad tradition? This may have been difficult, although not entirely impossible, for centuries following the Expulsion. But by the first decade of this century the channels of communication were sufficiently open to allow for this sort of cultural exchange to take place. As was explained in chapter I, it is quite conceivable that many Sephardic versions of Spanish ballads found in North Africa made their way back to the Peninsula, and vice versa, as early as the mid 1800's. This may help to explain certain lexical and thematic coincidences between the two traditions which cannot be traced to a common source.

(15) FATHER ABOUT TO STRIKE

Echa mano a su cuchillo,
con semblante denodado,
ya que quiere dar el golpe
con su brazo bien alçado,

(A) This is another of those passages that very neatly illustrates the process of textual re-creation which takes place over a period of centuries and in different cultural settings. The verses of this 16th century ballad are merely a poetization of the biblical text:

Tendio Abraham su mano el tomo el cuchillo para
degollar su fijo. (Genesis 22:10, Alba Bible)

The expression of Abraham's valor ("con semblante denodado") seems to be an invention of the poet.

(B) The 17th century Dutch-Sephardic text has shortened this passage to two verses and made some substitutions:

Ia le hiva a dar el golpe,
con su brazo muy ayrado,

(C) The Crypto-Jewish ballad has reduced it to one verse:

E ergueu a mão para dar o golpe.

(D) In the Peninsular tradition there seems to be only one remnant of this passage. The two-verse description appears in the Herreruela version:

Ya tenía todo hecho
y el cuchillo levantado:

(E) The Moroccan Sephardic versions have condensed the action into one verse, then complemented it with a verse based on a midrashic motif:

Alçó Abraham su puñal
con su braço arremangado,

There has also been an effort to dramatize the episode through the use of exclamatory remarks. Most of the Moroccan versions make this scene come to life with verses like:

tate*, que ya le dio el golpe,
tate*, que no se lo ha dado;

Finally, the Benardete version stands alone in its pursuit of vivid detail:

Abraham tomó el puñal
y al cuello se lo había puesto.

(F) The text of the Salonikan ballad which left off when Abraham was taking his son away to be sacrificed (passage # 2) takes a giant leap and resumes with a description of Abraham as he is about to strike Isaac. Interestingly, these two verses are very reminiscent of the Benardete version:

El cueyo ya está esandido
y el cuchiyó aparejado.

These obvious similarities between the two versions prompt us to ask certain questions. Firstly, is there a common source that could explain these textual similarities? The answer is no. The older ballads make no reference to Isaac's neck and the midrashic episode is much more closely related to the Salonikan than to the Moroccan version:

...Isaac stretched forth his neck upon the altar...
and Abraham stretched forth his hand to take the
knife...⁴⁶

Is this, therefore, evidence of close cultural contact between the Sephardim of North Africa and those of the Balkans? Not very likely; contact between the two Sephardic

cultures was severely limited for many centuries due to the distance that separated them and to the isolationist tendencies of the Jewish community from the Balkans. Is this then simple coincidence? Perhaps. But there appears to be one possible clue. It rests on the fact that the Benardete version was recorded in New York in the 1920's. Although the informant was from Tetuán, it is quite possible that she was living in a community of predominantly Levantine Jews⁴⁷ and that her Moroccan version became contaminated with elements of the Salonikan ballad tradition.

As a summary to this section and to illustrate the creative possibilities within the Romancero, let us trace the evolution of the second verse of the couplet. We begin with the biblical text in Spanish. This is followed by the verse as re-created in each of the six ballad traditions:

Tendio Abraham su mano y tomo el cuchillo >

- (a) con su braço bien alçado
- (b) con su brazo muy ayrado
- (c) E ergueu a mão
- (d) y el cuchillo levantado
- (e) con su braço arremangado
- (f) y el cuchiyo aparejado.

(16) DIVINE INTERVENTION: ANGEL

descendio del cielo vn angel
y del braço le ha tomado:
-Dexa, dexa, Abraham,
dexa, dexa, viejo honrrado,
porque Dios es ya contento,
de tí contento y pagado,
que cierto tu coraçon
el lo tiene bien prouado;

(A) This episode has changed very little in subsequent ballad traditions. We notice, once again, the exaggerated use of repetition, probably inspired in the biblical text in which the angel calls out Abraham's name not once but twice. The effect of repetition is that it intensifies the message. As such, its main function is to get the listener to pay closer attention to the verses that follow. Other examples of "intensification" are the repetition of "contento" and the use of adverbs like "bien" and "cierto."

But one of the most dramatic and original scenes of this ballad is described in the first two verses: this particular angel does not simply call out to Abraham to stop, as in the Scriptures, but actually descends from heaven and seizes Abraham by the arm just in time to save Isaac. This midrashic motif has become a popular scene in European art from the 13th century to the modern era.

(B) The 17th century text offers some interesting examples of early literary re-creation. The same angel descends to stop Abraham, but this time seems to go as far as to take the knife away:

deciende del Cielo un angel,
de la mano lo ha quitado.

The repetition of "dexa, dexa" has been substituted with a phrase that has remained popular in the Sephardic ballad tradition until this day:

-Tate, tate*, Abraham,
tate, tate, viejo honrado,

The rest of this version shows certain lapses but no other significant differences.

(C) As is usually the case, the Crypto-Jewish version from Portugal has remained very faithful to the 16th century Peninsular text, although some verses have been condensed:

Neste tempo veio um anjo:
-Tate, Abraão! Velho honrado,
Está o Senhor satisfeito
E de tí já está pago.

(D) In the Santander versions, the entire passage has been refashioned and the descending angel of the early Peninsular ballad has been transformed into the Virgin Mary:

En estas palabras y otras
bajó la Virgen del Rosario.
-Detente, padre, detente,
no mates a tu hijo amado,
que tú has ganado la gloria
y él también se la ha ganado;
tu hijo por ser obediente,
tú por cumplir mi mandado. (Puente-Pumar)

As reiterated in the last few verses of this passage, the most unique aspect of the Peninsular ballads is, without a doubt, the insistence on Isaac's heroism. Although most of the midrashic legends treat Abraham as the hero, there is a current which consistently praises Isaac's faith in his father and his resignation to God's will [see chapter II].

It is important to note that all of the Peninsular ballads end at this point. Many of the endings still contain

reminiscences of the older texts, some of which have been given richer meaning by the elimination of repeated words or concepts. The following verses, for example, from the 16th century version:

porque Dios es ya contento,
de ti contento y pagado

have been enhanced to express the notion that both God and Abraham have benefited from the experience:

ya tienes a Dios contento
y a tu corazón pagado. (Herreruela)

A mi Dios tienes contento
y el cielo tienes ganado (Villamanín)

The most original ending of any Peninsular ballad is that of the version from Valdeteja, León:

-Voy a pedirles perdón
por tiempo que me han criado
y a la mi madre querida
por la leche que me ha dado.
¡Válgame nuestra Señora
válgame el señor Santiago!

The tone of repentance expressed in this passage is not at all congruous with the traditional happy ending of the biblical tale. As we began to uncover in the analysis of passage 13, the mention of such Christian motifs as "Monte Calvario" and, in these verses, the Virgin Mary and the Patron Saint, as well as the moving scene where father and son stare into the fire as they contemplate the sacrifice, all seem to suggest that there may be a powerful underlying message in these ballads. Do these Leonese versions simply represent the christianization of an Old Testament theme?

Did the story of Isaac have the same symbolic importance for the Jews, the Christians and the conversos? These are questions which must be addressed within the broader context of Spanish history and culture. They will be discussed further in the next chapter.

(E) In the Moroccan Sephardic versions, it is not an angel who comes down to Abraham but a voice that calls out from heaven, as in the Scriptures:

salió una voz de los cielos
que a Abraham iba llamando:

The "tate, tate" of the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic ballad, which had evolved from "dexa, dexa", has carried through to the modern Sephardic tradition as have other key verses:

-Tate, tate, Abraham,	>	-Tate, tate, tú, Abraham,
tate, tate, viejo honrado	>	no mates a Ishaac horrado

que Dios esta... contento	>	que ya el Dio de los cielos
ya lo tiene bien prouado	>	ya te tiene bien prebado

(F) In the ballad from Salonika, this passage contains four verses:

Saltó una boz del cielo,
con Abram hay platicado:
-State, state, tú, Abram,
que el Dio t'está aprobando.

Although this passage is curiously similar to the Moroccan text, it is more likely that each of the Sephardic branches evolved independently from the same primitive source.

(17) RAM CAUGHT IN THE THICKET

cata alli do esta vn cordero
 entre las çarças atado,
 aquel manda que le des
 el señor sacrificado-
 Y desaparecio el angel
 despues desto hauer hablado,
 y alli quedo Abraham
 atonito y espantado.
 Y entonces, con gran plazer,
 a su hijo ha desatado,
 y tomaron el cordero
 y aquel han sacrificado.

(A) This passage is a poetic interpretation of the biblical episode:

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns... Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. (Genesis 22:13)

The timely use of such descriptive adjectives as "atonito y espantado" and the expression "con gran plazer" injects the ballad with the emotion that seems to be missing from the biblical text. In effect, the biblical romances seem to try to accomplish, on a much smaller scale, what rabbinic literature set out to do: to interpret the Scriptures, to read between the lines; and in doing so, to bring out its humanity, the inner thoughts and feelings of those larger-than-life biblical heroes.

It may also be of interest to point out that the "ram caught in the thicket by his horns" of the Scriptures has become the proverbial lamb ("vn cordero") in this primitive version.

(B) In the 17th century text, only the first four verses remain:

Toma d'ally vm cordero,
entre las sarças atado,
que manda le den
al señor sacrificado.-

Here again, we have the image of a lamb caught in the bushes, rather than the ram of the biblical account.

(C) In the Crypto-Jewish oração from Portugal, the three verses which refer to the sacrificial lamb correspond to the ending of the ballad:

Manda-te o Senhor que vás àquela ribeira
Que lá está um cordeirinho
E dele farás sacrificio ao Senhor.

The use of the diminutive ("um cordeirinho") seems to minimize the gravity of the sacrifice and was probably meant to bring a sense of relief to an audience who had previously heard such suggestive verses as "... está aqui o fogo ... mas onde está a vítima?"

(D) As we mentioned earlier, all of the Peninsular ballads end when Isaac is saved at the eleventh hour by either the Virgin Mary or a voice from heaven. The Herreruella version, however, also contains one verse which refers to the lamb:

-Detente, Abrán, detente,
mira un cordero enzarzado,
ya tienes a Dios contento
y a tu corazón pagado.

(E) This episode has been completely left out in the Sephardic ballad tradition of Morocco. The only mention of the "sacrificial lamb" occurs in earlier verses, when Abraham confronts Isaac:

-Tú sos el barbex*, Ishaac,
que del Dió era mandado.

In an attempt to abide by the biblical source, the lamb ("el cordero") of the other ballad traditions has been replaced with a ram ("el barbex") in the Sephardic versions.

From this point on, most of the Moroccan Sephardic versions re-introduce Sarah and proceed to tell the story of how some misinformation about her son's fate became the eventual cause of her death. The details of Sarah's burial are then described. This episode, as long as 38 verses in the Benoliel version, is unique to the Moroccan tradition and may have, at one time, constituted a separate romance.

(F) The Salonikan version still retains these four verses:

Ahí a la zarzamola
un barvez* hay aparejado;
que lo ayegues* por qorbán*
por tu hiño regalado. * SEE GLOSSARY

This passage may somehow have evolved from the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic text, although the terminology has gone through significant changes:

vm cordero	>	un barvez
las sarças	>	la zarzamola
atado	>	aparejado
que manda	>	que lo ayegues
sacrificado	>	qorbán ("sacrifice" in Hebrew)

The archaic word "barvez," seen in both branches of the Sephardic tradition, was probably used in medieval Spain and became fossilized in the Judeo-Spanish dialects (See Glossary). It appears in the Ferrara Bible (1630):

...anduuo Abraha y tomo al baruez y alçolo por alçaio
en lugar de su hijo... (Folio 10A)

(18) FATHER & SON RETURN HOME

Y despues de todo hecho
y el sacrificio acabado,
boluiera se con su hijo
a su casa consolado.

(A) This appears to be one of those stock ballad endings in which the heroes return home after having successfully completed their mission.

(B) It has been reduced to two verses in 17th century text:

Fuese Abraham a su caza
com su hijo mui consolado.

(C) (D) The verses of this passage have not left a trace either in the Crypto-Jewish ballad or in the modern Peninsular tradition.

(E) Of the many endings found in the Sephardic ballads of Morocco, only one version continues to show traces of the primitive Peninsular text. The key word is "consolados," although it is used here in a very different context:

Ya enterran a la saddika*
ya a su casa son tornados,
llorando el padre y el hijo,
sin poder ser consolados. (Benoliel)

(F) There is no mention of Abraham and Isaac's return home in the ballad from Salonika. Instead, this version ends with a reference to Rebecca, Isaac's future wife, and a two-verse traditional praise to God:

A la tornada que torna
ya le dan la besorá*
que le nació la novia
del Señor de Izhak;
que nombre que le mitiera
la señora de Ribka;
Hodu ladonay ki tov*,
ogaño* mos rigma* el Dió. * SEE GLOSSARY

We have seen in this chapter how a ballad evolves through time and space; how the poets among the masses have perpetuated, re-shaped and given new meaning to one of the most popular biblical tales known to Western man while preserving it tenaciously as a romance. The ballad composed in Spain in the 15th or 16th century was the spark that rekindled the fire of tradition. Throughout the generations, exiled Jews, Crypto-Jews, New Christians and Old Christians all seem to have found a special message in El sacrificio de Isaac. Consciously or not, over a period of many centuries, each consecutive generation has enriched the text by adding something of its own, be it a midrashic episode or a simple lyrical phrase. That is the uniqueness of the Romancero:

La profunda refundición de la escena, lograda en el curso de la transmisión oral del romance, ejemplifica, de forma magnífica, como una comunidad "crea" colectivamente, como a partir de un texto pre-tradicional dado llega a elaborar una obra poética substancialmente distinta de su prototipo.⁴⁸

There have been many generalizations made about the stylistic elements of the Sephardic Romancero and about our particular ballad which may or may not apply here. Diego Catalán's 20-page study⁴⁹, for example, which is the most thorough investigation of El sacrificio de Isaac carried out thus far, points out some of the differences between the Moroccan and the Peninsular traditions:

La tradición judía y la tradición cristiana de "El sacrificio de Isaac" tienen, según creo, un origen común; pero las versiones castellano-leonesas y las marroquíes se diferencian notablemente. El romance judío sigue siendo predominantemente narrativo y, en su andadura, se asemeja más al original juglaresco...⁵⁰

That the Moroccan romances are predominantly narrative is an accurate statement, although there are some exceptions. The 54-verse text collected by Benardete in New York City is 41.5 % narration / 58.5 % dialogue, while the 38-verse Alvar version is only 36.8 % narration and as much as 63.2 % dialogue. Although the ongoing process of re-creation invariably affects these proportions, as a general rule it is the poorly remembered versions which contain a larger percentage of dialogue. It would seem that the narrated verses are more easily forgotten. However, the proportion of narration to dialogue in the Moroccan versions does fall somewhere between the primitive 16th century text and the modern Peninsular versions, as illustrated in this chart:

	<u>Narration</u>	<u>Dialogue</u>
Salonika	85.0 %	15.0 %
16th century Peninsular	55.6 %	44.4 %
Moroccan Sephardic	49.7 %	50.3 %
Modern Peninsular*	37.6 %	62.4 %
17th century Dutch-Sephardic	36.6 %	63.4 %
Crypto-Jewish (Portugal)	33.3 %	67.7 %
*According to region: Castilian	40.7 %	59.3 %
Leonese	29.3 %	70.7 %

This type of chart has often been used to illustrate the creative and conservative tendencies within a particular branch of a ballad tradition. If we take the two extremes, for example, we would conclude that the Eastern Sephardic tradition is much more conservative than the Portuguese. Paul Bénichou, Diego Catalán and Suzanne Petersen, among others, have made clear the correlation between dialogue and creativeness:

...no hay duda que la rama portuguesa es la que en época moderna da muestras de una mayor creatividad. Y esta capacidad renovadora se nos manifiesta indirectamente en la muy elevada proporción de diálogo que caracteriza al Romancero portugués.⁵¹

And on the other hand:

...la proporción relativamente baja de diálogo en las versiones judías de Oriente encaja perfectamente con el carácter conservador de esta rama.⁵²

There is no doubt that statistics of this type can help us better understand the evolutionary process of the Romancero and create a greater awareness of some of the "inherent" differences among the various ballad traditions. We must keep in mind, however, that such figures must always be interpreted within proper contexts. For example, based on

its relatively low 50.3 % proportion of dialogue, one may easily label the Moroccan ballad tradition "conservative" when contrasted with the modern Peninsular tradition. But compared to the larger body of biblical ballads, El sacrificio de Isaac contains a much larger proportion of dialogue and is indeed one of the prime examples of literary re-creation within the Sephardic Romancero:

	<u>Narration</u>	<u>Dialogue</u>
"Sacrificio de Isaac" (Morocco)	49.7 %	50.3 %
All Moroccan biblical ballads	62.6 %	37.4 %
Eastern Sephardic biblical ballads	66.0 %	34.0 %

Another characteristic often mentioned with regard to the style of the Romancero is the scarcity of descriptive adjectives. The proportion of adjectives used in each of the ballad traditions varies greatly, as the following chart illustrates:

17th century Dutch-Sephardic	8.6 %
16th century Peninsular	8.1 %
Modern Castilian	7.7 %
Moroccan Sephardic	5.1 %
Salonika (Eastern Sephardic)	3.8 %
Modern Leonese	3.8 %
Portuguese Crypto-Jewish	3.4 %

It is difficult to draw conclusions from such figures, since it has been established that there can be a wide disparity even among the variants of one given geographical area. What we can safely say is that in all branches there has been a gradual but general erosion in the use of adjectives. This statistic may help us answer a very important question that arises out of our earlier findings: Is there a connection

between the elimination of adjectives and the process through which the plastic description of the older texts has given way to the stark but suggestive verses of the Crypto-Jewish oração and the Leonese versions? It appears indeed that at least two creative forces have been working inversely throughout this process: as the dialogue was being lengthened and intensified, there was less and less dependence being placed on the descriptive adjective:

	<u>dialogue</u>	<u>adjectives</u>
16th century Peninsular text	44.4 %	8.1 %
Portuguese Crypto-Jewish text	67.7 %	3.9 %
Leonese ballad tradition	70.7 %	3.8 %

What is also quite interesting is the retention of certain descriptive adjectives as the older text evolved into the many branches that we have today. In many cases, however, the subject has changed and a new situation or context has been created around the old adjective. The word "ayrado," for example, which we first noticed in the 17th century text, was originally a substitution for "alçado;" as the ballad evolved, however, it acquired a very different meaning:

con su braço bien alçado (16th C)
 > con su braso muy ayrado (17th C)
 > para no verle airado (Castilian)
 > no vos vea mal airado (Moroccan)

Here are other examples:

amado: de perder su hijo amado (16th C)
 > no mates a tu hijo amado (Castilian)
 > padre mío, padre amado (Castilian)
 > un niño... muy amado (Leonese)

- aparejado: veo el cuchillo y la leña
y el fuego aparejado (16th C)
> el cueyo ya está expandido
y el cuchiyo aparejado (Salonika)
> Ahí a la zarzamola
un barvez hay aparejado (Salonika)
- consolado: boluiera se con su hijo
a su casa consolado (16 th C)
> llorando el padre y el hijo,
sin poder ser consolados (Moroccan)
- fatigado: y subiendo por el monte
yua Ysaac muy fatigado (16th C)
> Abraham hiua por el monte ariba,
Ishack hiua mui fatigado (17th C)
> Abraham, como era viejo,
va despacio y fatigado (Moroccan)
- honrado: Si se partiera Abraam,
patriarca muy honrrado, (16th C)
> -Dame al tu hijo, Abraham,
a tu hijo Ishaac horrado (Moroccan)

-Dexa, dexa, Abraham,
dexa, dexa, viejo honrrado,
> -Tate, tate, tú, Abraham,
no mates a Ishaac horrado (Moroccan)
- humilde: El niño estaua humilde
en el suelo arrodillado (16th C)
> tu hijo por ser humilde,
tú por cumplir mi mandado (Castilian)
- obediente: tomo el niño por la mano
obediente a su mandado (16th C)
> tú por ser obediente,
tú por cumplir mi mandado (Castilian)
- regalado: de los regalos del mundo
le traía regalado (Castilian)
> -Para mientes a Isaac
que le tengo arregalado (Moroccan)
> que lo ayegues por qorbán
por tu hiño regalado. (Salonika)
- sosegado: tambien las manos me atad
porque este mas sosegado (16th C)
> -Áteme de pies y manos,
pa que muera sosegado (Castilian)

It is also important to point out the abundance of geminated words, particularly in the Sephardic ballads: "sanos y salvos"; "chico y muchacho"; "de alma y de corazón"; "mi vida y mi bien"; "hombre grande y sin pecado" and many others. In this respect, the Moroccan ballad tradition is more faithful to the 16th century text, which also makes frequent use of gemination ("triste y pensativo"; "viejo y pesado"; "contento y satisfecho"; "atonito y espantado";...). The modern Peninsular versions contain only one such example: "muy querido y estimado."

After comparing the Sephardic and Peninsular ballads to the older texts, Diego Catalán makes this final statement:

[El romance judío] se ha alejado ostensiblemente del texto publicado en el siglo XVI, para ajustarse a la tradición talmúdica. El romance cristiano, en sus dos ramas, castellana y leonesa, ha adquirido plenamente el estilo tradicional, y se ha metamorfoseado poéticamente, haciéndose mucho más emotivo y bello que su original literario; sin embargo, conserva con mayor fidelidad numerosos motivos y expresiones procedentes del texto juglaresco.⁵³

There are many interesting points made in this concluding paragraph that need to be addressed. Firstly, we must make clear the distinction between Talmud and Midrash. As we pointed out in Chapter II, it is not likely that the Jewish ballads were directly inspired in the Talmud. Most of the scenes and motifs were probably borrowed from the midrashim that were popularized by the rabbis of the time. Secondly, we must keep in mind that the 16th century text itself

contains numerous midrashic motifs, such as Abraham's after-thoughts on his way to Mount Moriah, the details of the climb, Isaac's concern for his mother, the father and son weeping, Abraham's blessing, the description of the binding, the descending angel. Consequently, the modern Peninsular tradition not only adopted some of those same midrashic motifs but, curiously, added new ones: the cloud as a symbol of the Holy Presence, Isaac's request that his mother not be told of his death, the fear of offending his father during the sacrifice. As we have seen thus far, a detailed study of all the ballad versions reveals that midrashic elements abound in every tradition, even in the Christian romances.

Another point made by Catalán refers to the fidelity of the Peninsular ballad to its original, despite the more lyrical style of the modern versions. This cannot be denied. In fact, the statement is well supported by a list of 15 examples given in a previous section.⁵⁴ It seems just as important, however, to note the traces of the 16th century text inherited by the Sephardic ballads. In addition to the use of descriptive adjectives and geminated words mentioned earlier, there are quite a few motifs which have survived in the Moroccan versions:

...el monte, / donde Dios le hauia mandado
 > en el monte señalado

toma el niño por la mano
 obediente a su mandado.
 > -Vamos conmigo, Isaac,
 que del cielo es mandado.

al pie del monte han llegado.
 Hizo el viejo vn haz de leña
 y al niño se lo ha cargado;

- > Se pararon en un monte,
 de leña le había cargado.
- > Ishaac como era pequeño
 de leña viene cargado.

yua Ysaac muy fatigado,
 mucho mas yua Abraham
 por ser ya viejo y pesado,
 > Abraham, como era viejo,
 (hombre grande y sin pecado)
 va despacio y fatigado;

veo el cuchillo y la leña
 y el fuego aparejado
 y no veo el sacrificio
 que ha de ser sacrificado.
 > la leña truxí, mi padre,
 y el barbej no veo atado.

Assentaron se los dos
 y vn rato han descansado.
 > Al pie de una zarza verde
 ahí habían descansado.

porque Dios manda y ordena
 que seays sacrificado.
 > -Tú sox el barbex, Ishaac,
 que del Dió era mandado.

-Pues que Dios ansi lo quiere,
 que se cumpla su mandado,
 > -Si el Dio lo manda, mi padre,
 no salgáis de su mandado;

a la triste de mi madre
 m'encomendareys de grado,
 dezilde que no se aflija
 de perder su hijo amado,
 > No se me da por mi muerte
 aunque muero mallogrado
 se me da por la mi madre
 que me tiene arregalado.

Dadme vuestra bendicion
 por que muera consolado,
 > Damos tu bendición, Sara,
 por que seamos tornados.

tambien las manos me atad
 porque este mas sosegado,
 porque con la juuentud
 no haga algun desaguizado.

> Padre, atéisme los pies,
 padre, atéisme las manos,
 con el fervor de la sangre
 no vos haga algún pecado;

dada ya la bendicion,
 los ojos le han enuendado.
 > Con una cinta morada
 los ojos le ha amarrado.

-Dexa, dexa, Abraham,
 dexa, dexa, viejo honrrado,
 porque Dios es ya contento,...
 el lo tiene bien prouado;
 > -Tate, tate, tu, Abraham,
 no mates a Ishaac horrado,
 que ya el Dió de los cielos,
 ya te tiene bien prebado.

One factor that has not been taken into consideration up until this point is the "social" context of ballads. In the next chapter, as we attempt to synthesize the importance of El sacrificio de Isaac as well as the uniqueness of biblical ballads within the Romancero, we will also examine the symbiotic relationship that exists between an oral tradition and its social environment.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

¹ Diego Catalán, "La creación tradicional en la crítica reciente," in El Romancero en la tradición oral moderna, ed. S. G. Armistead and Diego Catalán (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1972), p. 153.

² Alan Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory" in Analytic Essays in Folklore, (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 17-18.

³ Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise....," p. 18. Alan Dundes humorously explains how the concept of "zersingen," taken to its extreme, theoretically brings the performance of folklore to a complete stop: "One can just imagine folklorists running around begging the folk not to sing folk-songs, kindly explaining to them that singing them in time destroys them. This is perhaps analogous to librarians who are so concerned about injuries to and losses of books that they would almost prefer to keep all books safely locked up, away from all potential readers." (p. 26, n. 5).

⁴ Ruth Finnegan, Oral Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 41. Finnegan refers to Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folk Literature as the "most monumental of the systems of classification" and adds that "any collection of tales was deemed incomplete - in fact not even to have started on the process of analysis - if it did not include references to the relevant types in Thompson's Motif Index..." (pp. 41-42).

⁵ Catalán, "La creación tradicional....," pp. 153-54.

⁶ Menéndez Pidal explains these four characteristic elements in Romancero hispánico: Teoría e historia, Vol. I (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953), pp. 59-63.

⁷ Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, pp. 63-80.

⁸ Armistead and Silverman, Paul Bénichou and Diego Catalán, among others, have been firmly committed to widening the possibilities of the modern historical approach. They have focused their attention on the vitality of the modern ballad tradition. See Armistead and Silverman, The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yoná (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971); Paul Bénichou, Creación poética en el romancero tradicional (Madrid: Gredos, 1968); Diego Catalán, Por campos del Romancero (Madrid: Gredos, 1970); G. Di Stefano, Sincronía e diacronía nel Romanzero (Pisa: Istituto di letteratura spagnola e ispanoamericana, 1967).

⁹ See Diego Catalán, "El romance tradicional, un sistema abierto," in El romancero en la tradición oral moderna (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1972), pp. 181-206; Diego Catalán, "Análisis electrónico de la creación poética oral," in Homenaje a la memoria de Don Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino (Madrid: Castalia, 1975), pp. 153-194; Bráulio do Nascimento, "Processos de Variação do Romance," Revista Brasileira do Folclore, IV (1964), pp. 59-125; Suzanne Petersen, "Creación poética. Nuevos métodos de estudio," in El romancero en la tradición oral moderna.

¹⁰ See Manuel Alvar, "El paralelismo" in Cantos de boda judeo-españoles (Madrid: C. S. I. C., 1971), pp. 65-83; Bráulio de Nascimento, "Eufemismo e Criação Poética no Romancero Tradicional," in El romancero en la tradición oral moderna, pp. 233-275;

¹¹ There have been quite a few attempts to apply the Parry/Lord "orality test" to the Spanish Romancero. Among them, Ruth H. Webber, "Formulistic Diction in the Spanish Ballad," UCMPH, XXXIV (1951), pp. 175-278; Bruce Beatie, "Oral-traditional Composition in the Spanish Romancero of the Sixteenth Century," Journal of the Folklore Institute, vol. 1 (1964), pp. 92-113.

¹² The complete title of the manuscript, dating from about 1535, names nine biblical ballads but contains only eight: Nueve Romances. El I de Abraham ["Sacrificio de Isaac"]. El II del rey Saul. El III del rey David. El IIII del rey David. El V de la muerte de Golias. El VI de la aleuosia que hizo Jacob a Esau. El VII de Bersabe. El VIII del rey Salomon. El IX del Nascimento [text not included]. It seems that the only concrete information we have about this manuscript, in addition to its title, are the first few verses of six of the eight ballads; they are listed in the Catálogo de la biblioteca de Salvá, I (Valencia, 1872), p. 73 a-b.

¹³ Four of the ballads from the 1535 manuscript made their way into the two volumes of the Silva (Zaragoza, 1550). In Primera Parte de la Silva de varios Romances, we find ballad # IV, "Triste esta el rei David" which later became known in the Sephardic tradition as "David llora por Absalón" (Attias, # 86); and ballad # V, "Ese gran rei de Israel" which corresponds to the Sephardic ballad "David y Goliat" (Benoliel, # 7). In Segunda Parte de la Silva de varios Romances, we find ballad # I, "Si se partiera Abraham" [known to us as "El sacrificio de Isaac"]; and ballad # VIII, "Quando el gran rey Salomon" which became "El juicio de Salomón" (Attias, # 75) in the Sephardic ballad repertoire.

- 14 Catalán, Por campos del Romancero, p. 73.
- 15 J. Leite de Vasconcellos found this along with a Portuguese ballad in a loose manuscript in the British Museum in London and published them as part of the article "Dois romances peninsulares," RFE, IX (1922), pp. 395-398.
- 16 Catalán, Por campos, pp. 68-69.
- 17 Armistead and Silverman, "El antiguo Romancero sefardí: citas de romances en himnarios hebreos (siglos XVI-XIX)," Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, XXX (1981), pp. 488-89. One of the ballad incipits mentioned is "Ya se partea Abraham," very reminiscent of the 17th century Dutch-Sephardic version mentioned earlier. The incipit was found in: Avenary, H., "Cantos españoles antiguos mencionados en la literatura hebrea", AMu, 25 (1971), pp. 67-79.
- 18 A 36-verse ballad in Portuguese entitled "Oração ao sacrificio de Isaac" was published by Amílcar Paulo in his article "Os marranos em Tras-os-Montes. (Reminiscencias Judio-Portuguesas)" in Douro-Litoral, 7 (1956), pp. 556-57.
- 19 This ballad, which we refer to as "El sacrificio de Isaac II" is 40 verses long and was published by Moshe Attias in his Romancero Sefaradí (Jerusalem: Instituto Ben-Zewi, Universidad Hebrea, 1961), ballad # 128. It was included by Royce W. Miller in his doctoral thesis "A Linguistic and Literary Study of the Sephardic Romancero..." (St. Louis: Washington University, 1967), p. 449. Oddly enough, it does not figure in Menéndez Pidal's collection; Armistead and Silverman make no mention of it in their Catalog-Index.
- 20 Ruth H. Webber, "Ballad Openings: Narrative and Formal Function" in El Romancero hoy: Poética (Madrid: 1979), p. 64.
- 21 Webber, "Ballad Openings," p. 64.
- 22 Catalán, Por campos, pp. 68-69.
- 23 Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, I, p. 68.
- 24 Antonio Sánchez Romeralo, "Razón y sinrazón en la creación tradicional" in El Romancero hoy: Poética (Madrid: Gredos, 1979), p. 13.
- 25 Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. I, p. 275.

- 26 Ginzberg, p. 276.
- 27 Ginzberg, p. 278.
- 28 Harry Gersh, The Sacred Books of the Jews (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 151.
- 29 Joseph Szertics, Tiempo y verbo en el Romancero viejo (Madrid: Gredos, 1974). In this very complete study on verb and tense usage, Joseph Szertics lists hundreds of examples taken from some of the older Spanish ballads.
- 30 Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico, I, p. 67.
- 31 M. Pidal, Romancero, I, p. 78.
- 32 M. Pidal, Romancero, I, p. 59.
- 33 M. Pidal, Romancero, I, p. 60.
- 34 Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, p. 226.
- 35 Ginzberg, pp. 275-276.
- 36 Ginzberg, p. 279.
- 37 Ginzberg, p. 279.
- 38 M. Pidal, Romancero, I, p. 65.
- 39 Ginzberg, p. 280.
- 40 Sefer HaYashar XXIII:62.
- 41 Ginzberg, pp. 274-275.
- 42 Shalom Spiegel, The Last Trial (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), pp. 84-85.
- 43 Ginzberg, p. 280.
- 44 Ginzberg, who states that "the binding of Isaac by Abraham was in conformity with the law, which prescribes the binding of a sacrifice before it is slaughtered," lists the following sources: Shabbat 54a; Enoch 59; Eldad 44 (p. 251, n. 242).
- 45 Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, p. 227.
- 46 Sefer HaYashar, XXIII:65

47 Marc Angel states in La América (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982) that between the years 1899 and 1925 more than 25,000 Sephardic Jews from the Levantine region immigrated to the United States, most of whom settled in New York City.

48 Catalán, Por campos del Romancero, p. 67.

49 Diego Catalán, "El sacrificio de Isaac: Ejemplo de recreación colectiva" in Por campos del Romancero, pp. 56-75.

50 Catalán, Por campos, pp. 74-75.

51 Suzanne Petersen, "Creación poética. Nuevos métodos de estudio" in El Romancero en la tradición oral moderna, ed. S. G. Armistead and Diego Catalán (Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1972), p. 170.

52 Petersen, "Creación poética," p. 170

53 Catalán, Por campos, p. 75.

54 Catalán, Por campos, pp. 66-67.

CHAPTER V

SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE
AKEDAH BALLADS: FINAL REFLECTIONSA. EL SACRIFICIO DE ISAAC WITHIN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in a dimension of the Romancero that had long been neglected by many critics, namely, the relationship that exists between a ballad and its social environment. Rina Benmayor is in the forefront of this new perspective. She strongly encourages students and scholars alike to begin to look at romances through a "wide-angle lens," to consider the social and historical factors that the comparative and structuralist schools have been avoiding for years:

...micro-analysis has flourished much to the detriment of macro-conceptualization, so that the concentrated effort on formal studies has marginalized historico-sociological dimensions, labelling them "external" factors.¹

Although she espouses the "diachronic" method of analyzing a ballad tradition through time and space, she finds that in most cases the focus of such a study is much too narrow:

...diachronic analysis has focused mainly on the internal dynamics of poetry. The influence of historical and social circumstance on oral poetry, as well as the function of such poetry as a tool for transmitting and shaping human consciousness has been treated only as tangential information by this scholarship.²

Ruth Finnegan, by the same token, has pointed to a certain lack of interest shown by the sociologists within the field of oral literature:

...oral literary forms are presumed to be natural, communal and unconsidered, and relatively free from the constraints of social differentiation, of prescribed roles or socially recognised conventions - things the sociologist looks for. As a result, oral poetry has often been ignored both in literary study and (still more, perhaps) in the sociology of literature, and, generally speaking, assumed to be of marginal interest.³

Benmayor, therefore, calls for "an integration...of poetic and social dimensions" as she urges that "oral popular traditions...be reconsidered as artistic processes in social context."⁴

But before we can begin to examine the relationship between a society and its oral literary tradition, we must define what we mean by "oral" poetry. Finnegan considers three important factors:

The three ways in which a poem can most readily be called oral are in terms of (1) its composition, (2) its mode of transmission, and (3) (related to (2)) its performance. Some oral poetry is oral in all these respects, some in only one or two.⁵

The social environment can be and often is a crucial factor at each of these three stages. That is to say, a romance is composed, transmitted and performed, not in a vacuum, but within the framework of a specific culture. We must therefore assume that (1) the composition of a certain ballad at a particular place and time may indeed be influenced by prevailing socio-historical circumstances; (2) the mode of

transmission of a ballad from one generation to the next may be conditioned by the culture and society in which this process takes place, and (3) many ballads must eventually find a "fitting" social context in which they are commonly performed.

When Rina Benmayor speaks of "social determinants," she is referring mainly to those aspects of a particular "social system" that seem to favor the creation and transmission of romances. In the case of the Judeo-Spanish community in exile, the institutions most involved have always been the synagogue and the home:

Spiritual leaders exercised a strong conservative hold on the community, since they represented one of its primary ideological foundations. The home was the immediate context for the transmission and survival of secular, as well as sacred traditions: language, rituals, artistic activities including ballad singing.⁶

The degree to which romances or cantares (as they are often known in Morocco) became an integral part of the Sephardic way of life cannot be overstated. Leon Algazi points to the fact that certain secular ballads have even had a profound influence on Jewish sacred music:

L'influence des romances fut telle que leurs mélodies furent adaptées à des poèmes religieux chantés à la Synagogue... Ainsi nous relevons dans Sefer Moadé Adonay (Livourne 5685), que Séu šearim doit se chanter comme Tres colores en una; Matai ya šuvkha, comme Porqué no me avlas; Téromem bat rama, comme En campos durme.⁷

There is no indication, however, that any of the biblical ballads have had the same influence. On the other hand, we

cannot but wonder whether the reverse may hold true in this case. In other words, could certain traditional piyyutim (liturgical poems in Hebrew of medieval origin) have inspired the composition of biblical romances? This theory will be further discussed in Section C of this chapter.

With regard to the transmission of ballads, one of the most misunderstood aspects has been the conservative tendency of the Judeo-Spanish tradition. This conservatism has often been explained in terms of the "nostalgia" long felt by the Sephardim for the language and customs of Spain. This rather simplistic interpretation does not seem to take into account the effect of a changing social environment on the evolution of certain romances:

No doubt Sephardim have always maintained a conscious awareness of their historical origins, but the "memory" alone could hardly have accounted for such sustained loyalty. What is at issue is precisely how the changing social contexts of Spanish Jews fomented, through a variety of forms, this cultural conservatism.⁸

In effect, the Romancero soon became an important vehicle through which the Sephardim were able to maintain their identity both as Spaniards and as Jews:

Singing romances then became one of the many ways of expressing and handing down the Sephardic way of life. ...the strength of the Judeo-Spanish ballad tradition in the Ottoman Empire [and in North Africa as well] was not a product of an antiquarian yearning for roots. It was a product of a social system and set of relations that allowed Jews to retain an identity distinct from that of the surrounding foreign context.⁹

Therefore, as each generation of Sephardim transmitted its romances to the next generation, it was establishing a chain

of tradition that would help to unify those Jews who were of Spanish descent, much as the traditions handed down by the Torah would keep Judaism alive for centuries.

The third aspect related to a ballad's social context is its actual performance. For many years, the main focus of traditional criticism has been the text itself; there has been relatively little attention paid to the social and literary ramifications of the recitation of a romance:

Oral poetry does indeed, like written literature, possess a verbal text. But in one respect it is different: a piece of oral literature, to reach its full actualisation, must be performed. The text alone cannot constitute the oral poem. This performance aspect of oral poetry is sometimes forgotten, even though it lies at the heart of the whole concept of oral literature.¹⁰

One cannot deny that the textual analysis of a significant number of versions of a particular ballad can and does often reveal a great deal about its transmission and evolution. Indeed, it is a necessary task if one wishes to examine and compare aspects of style and content with some degree of accuracy. But, as Finnegan observes:

... one also needs to remember the circumstances of the performance of a piece - this is not a secondary or peripheral matter, but integral to the identity of the poem as actually realised. Differently performed, or performed at a different time or to a different audience or by a different singer, it is a different poem.¹¹

In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in incorporating this important aspect of oral literature into the study of Spanish ballads. Louise Mirrer-Singer, who has

applied the "sociolinguistic approach" to the study of the Romancero, seems to be in full agreement with Finnegan:

The singers and their public are the essence of Romancero production. They are the determining factors with respect to both the language and the content of a Romancero text.¹²

Now that we have noted the importance attributed by a new wave of ballad scholars to the social context of oral literature, let us take a closer look at the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac and attempt to examine it in light of some of these theories.

We must first consider the time of composition of the original version. As we mentioned in previous chapters, the oldest known version of El sacrificio de Isaac was found in a 16th century manuscript, although critics such as Diego Catalán tend to date it as early as the late 15th century. The coexistence of a strong Peninsular tradition alongside the Sephardic tradition of Morocco would lead us to believe that the ballad originated in Spain before the Expulsion. Can we, then, make certain assumptions about the content, style or possible symbolism of this romance based on the social climate in which it was created? Perhaps, especially if we understand the unifying effect that a ballad can have within a given community:

For the most part, the thematic content of ballads did not directly express the reality of daily life. But ballads, like language, were tools for transmitting a sense of "otherness" with regard to the larger social context.¹³

Although this "sense of otherness" refers specifically to the situation of Spanish Jews in exile, it can very well be applied to the social reality of Jews and conversos living in Spain before and after the Expulsion. This important aspect as well as the likely Jewish origin of El sacrificio de Isaac is discussed in section B of this chapter.

With regard to the process of transmission, a process which has lasted almost five centuries, there are two points to be considered: (1) we are dealing with an oral tradition that has been perpetuated principally by women, and (2) the "social context" seems to have had a profound effect on the evolution of the content, style and symbolic value of our particular ballad.

Leon Algazi eloquently explains the traditional role of women in passing on the "Judeo-Spanish" cultural legacy:

... La femme était plus imprégnée de cet esprit que l'homme, celui-ci s'alimentant à la synagogue de prières hébraïques... il commerçait avec les autres citoyens du pays. Mais la femme, n'ayant d'autre contact qu'avec des coreligionnaires, maintint et développa la langue, le chant et les proverbes judéo-espagnols. Si donc les romances n'ont pas disparu, c'est surtout grâce à elle, qui les chantait en toutes circonstances, circonstances de joie comme la naissance d'un enfant, les fiançailles ou le mariage, circonstances tristes comme la maladie et la mort. C'est elle qui les transmettait, en les chantant, d'une génération à l'autre.¹⁴

Many of those who have studied the Sephardic Romancero as a primarily feminine genre have made some interesting observations. Some point to the predominance of erotic motifs as evidence that these songs reflect a feminine viewpoint.¹⁵

Armistead and Silverman's list of 24 thematic divisions of Judeo-Spanish ballads shows no less than 10 categories based on erotic motifs.¹⁶ Others cite the moral superiority of women which comes through in a great number of ballads. Yet others simply offer as proof the fact that the vast majority of informants have been women. It is generally agreed, therefore, that women have not only transmitted but also shaped and re-shaped the style and content of hundreds of romances through the centuries.

The biblical ballads of the Sephardic Romancero are no exception. Of the 30 songs and ballads that we have categorized as "biblical" [see Chapter I, part A], women play an important role in at least 18. There are, in fact, more than twenty female characters mentioned in these ballads, among them: Eve, Abraham's mother, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Dinah, Miriam (mother of Moses), Bitya (Pharaoh's daughter), Zipporah (wife of Moses), Hannah, Saul's daughter, Tamar, Absalom's mother (David's wife), Absalom's wife, Esther, etc. To these well-known biblical figures, we must add the two women mentioned in the ballad of "Solomon's Judgement" and the mothers who are forced to devour their children in "The Siege of Jerusalem." As we can see, the overwhelming majority of these women are portrayed in their role as mothers and/or wives. Only Eve, Dinah, Tamar, and Esther personify the theme of sensuality, an aspect that is well developed in the rest of the Judeo-

Spanish Romancero. To use Armistead and Silverman's terminology for ballad classification, these four women clearly fall under the categories of mujeres seductoras or mujeres seducidas.

In the case of El sacrificio de Isaac, Sarah's role as devoted wife and protective mother has shown an interesting evolution, particularly in the Sephardic tradition where the emphasis has clearly shifted to the matriarch's torment, first as her son leaves home and, later, as she hears rumors of his death. Sarah's death and burial are also described in detail in eight of the nine Moroccan versions studied [see Chapter II, part B]. The table below shows the percentage of verses devoted to Sarah in the most complete version known within each ballad tradition:

16th century Peninsular:	13 %
17th century Dutch-Sephardic:	14 %
Portuguese Crypto-Jewish:	0 %
Modern Peninsular:	23 %
Modern Moroccan:	50 %

In the most complete Moroccan version (Benoliel), as many as 55 of the 110 verses deal with Sarah. This would appear to indicate a strong feminine influence in the re-creative process of the Sephardic romance.

But as we mentioned earlier, the influence of "social context" on the nature of a particular ballad often goes beyond the feminine perspective that typifies this genre. Socio-historical events, conditions or special circumstances may also have a profound effect on content and style. A

study of the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac would not be complete if we did not stop to consider the historical symbolism of this well-known biblical episode and its possible repercussions in the Romancero. This is discussed further in section C of this chapter.

Finally, a word about the aspect that, according to Finnegan, lies at the heart of the whole concept of oral literature: the performance of a ballad. Unfortunately, we know very little about the performance of El sacrificio de Isaac before the twentieth century. We must assume that, at first, like most other romances of medieval origin, it was sung in public by juglares. After the Expulsion, however, the ballad tradition branched out and began to develop independently in five very distinct cultures held together by a common heritage: Holland, Portugal, Morocco, Greece, and Spain. It appears that each new "social context" not only gave new meaning to the ballad but also determined the place, time and circumstances of its performance. For the Crypto-Jews of Portugal, for example, who, two centuries after the Inquisition was abolished, continued to practice Judaism in hiding, the ballad was elevated to the status of oração and became part of the daily prayer. In an environment where Spanish Jews were able to exercise more freedom of expression, as in the case of North Africa, it became a romance de juego de columpio, as Larrea Palacín explains:

Al preguntar en qué ocasión se cantaban estos últimos versos siempre me fue respondido:

- Esta voz va bien para mecer o esta voz va bien para los columpios... De los romances religiosos, el número T. 42 [El sacrificio de Isaac]... una vez comenzado debe cantarse entero, sin omitir deliberadamente o por olvido ninguna palabra so pena de pecado.¹⁷

Interestingly, although the ballad is sung in Morocco in a rather superficial setting, a sense of obligation has remained in connection with its performance: that is, it must be recited in its entirety. Perhaps the romance once had a deeper, more symbolic meaning for the Sephardim than its current tradition would lead us to believe [See part C in this chapter].

But before we can attempt to decipher the possible symbolism or ideology connected with this ballad, we must try to understand the social, cultural and historical factors associated with its composition. In the next section, we shall examine the role of the Romancero in the daily lives of Jews in 15th century Spain.

B. A JEWISH ROMANCERO IN 15TH CENTURY SPAIN ?

Medieval rabbinic responsa make it quite clear that the study of Bible and Talmud was the basis of Jewish education in Spain up until the Expulsion.¹⁸ Likewise, much of what we know about the secular cultural and literary interests of Spanish Jews between the 12th and 15th centuries would seem to indicate that the art of trovar was very much a Jewish occupation.¹⁹ On the basis of these well-documented socio-cultural criteria, one could logically deduce that the composition of poetry with biblical themes must have been an integral part of the Judeo-Spanish subculture. What is the probability, we now ask, that certain romances, biblical and non-biblical, were composed by Jewish poets and specifically destined for a Jewish audience? Although it may be difficult to prove, the active participation of Jews in the creation of the medieval Spanish Romancero seems rather likely, especially in light of their subsequent major role as transmitters of this tradition for almost five centuries. But let us explore some of the social and historical factors that would lead us to make such an assumption.

Many critics have attempted to explain the preservation and continued vitality of the romance tradition among the Sephardim in terms of their patriotism and nostalgia for Spain:

Sephardic Jewry perpetuated the Judeo-Spanish *Romancero* after its expulsion from its beloved Spain - through five centuries - out of their profound attachment to the customs and traditions they brought from the country which they loved and cherished.²⁰

However, if we are to address this issue directly, we must be careful not to "romanticize" the cultural legacy left by Jews after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula nor their tenacious efforts to preserve their Spanish heritage in exile. Doing so would prevent us from seeing some of the socio-historical realities that shaped Jewish literary expression in Spain throughout the Middle Ages.

The relative isolation of the Judeo-Spanish community in exile was, by far, the most significant factor. In a new and strange environment, their "new" identity ironically became the cultural heritage they thought they were leaving behind:

Groupés en communautés fermées et peu perméables aux influences de l'extérieur, les Exilés ne connaissaient d'autre langue que celle de Cervantes, d'autres chansons que celles des troubadours espagnols.²¹

From the time the first group of Spanish Jews set foot in the area of the Balkans and in North Africa, their long-established traditions, be they of a religious, social or literary nature, were inevitably placed at the mercy of their new social environment. This was especially true of the *Romancero* which served as the vehicle through which some of the most authentic Spanish folklore would be perpetuated.

Rina Benmayor often stresses the effect of social and historical factors on the evolution of ballads:

The changes that took place in the poetic corpus have concrete roots in the historical and structural development of the Sephardic communities since the 16th century. Innovation, adaptation and sustained vigor were made possible by very specific social circumstances.²²

We know very well how the exiled Spanish Jews held on to the Romancero as if it were their own creation and how they managed to pass it on from generation to generation for almost five centuries. But what importance did these ballads have within the Jewish communities of Spain before the Expulsion edict of 1492? Based on what is known about the period, one would conclude that it had as much importance as it did for the rest of Spanish society. As Américo Castro so eloquently explained, the history and culture of Spain was being formed by the constant intertwining of its three major subcultures:

La historia entre los siglos X y XV fue una contextura cristiano-islámico-judía. No es posible fragmentar esa historia en compartimentos estancos, ni escindirla en corrientes paralelas y sincrónicas, porque cada uno de los tres grupos raciales estaba incluso existencialmente en las circunstancias proyectadas por los otros dos.²³

Historians have provided clear evidence of the successful social assimilation of Jews into the mainstream of Spanish society well before the 15th century. On the other side of the coin, Castro has often pointed to the willingness of Christians to mingle with the Jewish population:

Hasta el siglo XV los cristianos se habían mezclado con los judíos, ... y fue así posible que incluso cristianos de ascendencia regia amaran a judías, y que la madre de Fernando el Católico fuera de sangre hebrea.²⁴

But there remained one facet of Jewish life that continued to resist assimilation: religious beliefs and practice. In effect, the active participation of large segments of the Jewish population in almost every aspect of Spanish society has been seen by many historians, at least in part, as a "defense mechanism" against those who were quick to attack their religion as incongruous with the ideals of a Christian Spain:

El aristocratismo espiritual de los israelitas y su hábito de adaptarse miméticamente a las más difíciles circunstancias, permitieron a la raza perseguida transponer sus modos orientales de vida en genialidad de Occidente, aunque manteniéndose como una nación religiosa, acéfala y siempre "in partibus infidelium".²⁵

Although the hermitic existence of Jews who lived in the aljamas was a factor which contributed significantly to the preservation of their religious integrity, it did not create impenetrable walls. Even as late as the 15th century, the occasional violent uprisings that took place against Jewish communities in different parts of the Peninsula could not completely destroy the vestiges of many centuries of coexistence:

La hostilidad hacia los judíos, creciente, no era universal: las autoridades eclesiásticas se quejaban constantemente de que había muchos cristianos que visitaban a los judíos en sus casas, comían con ellos, e incluso acudían a las sinagogas para escuchar las homilías de los predicadores famosos.²⁶

It is quite evident that, within the realm of religious doctrine, Christians had much more in common with Jews than with their Moorish compatriots, as Américo Castro has keenly observed:

El cristianismo aceptaba como espina dorsal los libros del Antiguo Testamento, los más de ellos divinamente revelados, con lo cual se fortalecía la fe de los hebreos, que así veían aceptada y revalidada la totalidad de su fe... No es sorprendente que el cristianismo ibérico, apretado entre el Islam y Sión, se entendiese a veces afectivamente con el judío mucho más que con el moro, con una simpatía que se alzaba sobre la disparidad de creencias.²⁷

Although it was this faithful reliance on the Hebrew Scriptures that helped to create and sustain a common bond between Christian and Jew, the translations of the sacred text into Castilian would ironically cause a deep schism between the two groups. Bibles that were written in the vernacular became known as "Jewish Bibles," since the large majority of Christians continued to utilize Latin versions:

El pueblo cristiano no se servía del texto castellano de la Biblia para sus ceremonias religiosas, pero los hispano-hebreos sí lo hicieron, y se consideró peculiaridad suya leer el Antiguo Testamento en castellano. En 1487 la Inquisición acusa a un tal Pedro Serrano de leer "en casas de judíos la Brivia romançada segun la tienen los judíos" (Baer, II, 476). Esto vendría aconteciendo desde el siglo XIII, fecha de las primeras traducciones del Antiguo Testamento, las cuales adquieren sentido histórico como una floración de cultura en lengua vulgar, debida, muy en primer término, a las necesidades vitales de los judíos.²⁸

Between 1422 and 1433 Moses Arragel of Guadalajara completed a translation of the Scriptures and provided it with a commentary based on early rabbinic sources. It even-

tually became known as the Alba Bible and was considered to be one of the most genuine translations of the original Hebrew text. But the Alba Bible was just one of many such accomplishments:

Of the twelve Bible translations - partial or entire - issued before the Expulsion and still preserved in Spanish libraries, eight were translated directly from the Hebrew and the remainder from the Vulgate or Latin but with reference to the Hebrew text.²⁹

It is quite clear that the idea of translating the Hebrew Scriptures into the vernacular originated among the Jewish rabbis and that, as a consequence, Jews became more familiar with the "Castilian versions" of certain biblical episodes than their Christian counterparts. It is an accepted fact, for example, that the development of Spanish prose can be largely attributed to this "literary" use of the language:

El florecimiento de la prosa castellana...es solidario del uso del castellano como lengua ritual para los judíos parejamente con el hebreo. La familia judía comenzó a rezar en la Biblia romanzada, práctica que para sus vecinos cristianos carecía de sentido en el siglo XIII lo mismo que hoy.³⁰

Whether it was simply a desire to express the "hebraica veritas" of the Scriptures or an understandable phobia about the use of Latin as a ritual language, Spanish Jews began to analyze the Bible in Castilian as early as the 13th century in the court of Alfonso X. As Castro notes, by the 15th century, biblical commentary in the vernacular had become a Jewish trait:

...dos siglos más tarde, la situación sigue siendo la misma, pues son los judíos y no los cristianos

quienes usan la lengua vulgar para el comentario de las Escrituras, la prosa filosófica y los estudios astronómicos...³¹

It is with great pride that Moses Arragel, in his introduction to the Alba Bible, states that:

los comentarios de la Tora y las leyes y juicios, y las otras disciplinas que nosotros los judios poseemos hoy dia, fueron todos, o casi todos, escritos por sabios judios en Castilla.³²

Thus, for more than two centuries, the Bible text as well as a great deal of rabbinic literature was written and discussed by Spanish Jews in the various Romance languages spoken on the Peninsula. Midrashic sources were often used by rabbis in their sermons to make biblical episodes come to life. Furthermore, a steady flow of liturgical poetry composed in Hebrew by medieval Jewish writers such as Moses ibn Ezra and Solomon ibn Gabirol slowly began to appear as part of the Jewish religious service. This popular literary genre, known in Hebrew as piyyut (plural: piyyutim), represented an attempt to mold midrashic and exegetical material into poetic form:

[They were] poems describing episodes from biblical history which were of universal interest and had long been embellished by the fertile imagination of homilists and liturgical writers.³³

Some scholars have noted a clear influence of this type of poetry in the writings of Shem Tov, particularly in his Proverbios morales, as well as in certain medieval poems written in Spanish in Hebrew characters, such as the Poema de Yoçef:

In its form and strophic composition, the Poema de Yoçef combines in an original manner the ancient Spanish rhythm called cuaderna vja with features of the Hebrew piyyutim (religious poems)...³⁴

It appears that the Poema de Yoçef not only represented an interesting fusion of Spanish and Hebrew poetic styles in the literature of early 14th century Spain, but also paved the way for the use of Castilian as a vehicle for the popularization of certain stories of biblical origin.

As we mentioned earlier, the rabbis of medieval Spain tended to feel very strongly that a study of Scripture was not complete without a thorough consultation of such extra-biblical sources as the Talmud and Midrash and, perhaps to a lesser degree, kabbalistic literature. This was one aspect of religious education where Jews and Moors greatly differed:

[Although] Muslim leaders frowned upon the retelling of the Quranic stories in any form other than that contained in the sacred book itself...the tradition of talmudic homilists and payvetanim [composers of piyyutim] offered strong encouragement, with added incentive arising from the new general preoccupation with scriptural studies.³⁵

The controversy regarding the use of midrashic imagery as a complement to the Scriptural text, a controversy which dominated Jewish thought at the time of Maimonides, began to weaken in the early 14th century. Neuman explains, for example, how "the revered talmudist, Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier, arose to engage the adherents of philosophy in vigorous combat":

...Solomon anathematized the philosophic writings of Maimonides, interdicted the sciences and pronounced the sentence of excommunication against those who engaged in the study of profane literature or who treated the Bible allegorically and dealt too freely with the aggadic portions of the Talmud. It was an unprecedented act in mediaeval Jewry, and one can see in it the unfortunate Christian influence on Judaism.³⁶

It is important to keep in mind that the allegorical, the symbolic and the mystical applied to the biblical text was often considered "paganistic" not only by certain Jewish rabbis of 13th century Spain but increasingly so by the Church as well. The general trend within the Spanish Jewish community, however, was a growing interest in the mysticism and folklore associated with the Scriptures. Neuman keenly observes how, from the late 13th century on, Jewish freedom of thought seems to give way to an intellectual decline and how persecutions against Jews helped to foster a return to traditionalism:

...a period of general decline, political, social and intellectual, had set in among the chief Jewries at the end of the thirteenth century. Persecutions were being relentlessly visited upon them with ever-increasing regularity, and a series of local and general expulsions followed in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which changed the map of Jewish history. Inevitably, there resulted an ever-widening rift in the intellectual communion between the Jews and their environment. The Jews were thrown back more and more upon the mental and spiritual resources of their traditional lore, and the tendency to mysticism, which began to assert itself in Spain during the thirteenth century, made rapid headway.³⁷

Thus, as the year 1492 was approaching, the Jews who were not converting to Christianity were seeking to strengthen their sense of identity by reaching back to their own

cultural heritage. For religious leaders, this meant more than just strict adherence to the principles of the Torah. It also meant taking a closer look at the Talmud, exploring the mystical truths revealed in the Zohar, popularizing the biblical legends contained in the Midrash. Ironically, however, as the Jewish community was becoming more introverted, it was also holding on tenaciously to the language and customs of Spain:

As if prompted by a premonition of their destiny, the Jews of each Iberian province adhered to their beloved language all the more tenaciously as the century of doom and exile advanced upon them. It became increasingly the language in which they formulated the statutes and regulations of their social and communal life. They made it also the literary medium of their lighter vein.³⁸

It would certainly seem that by the mid-15th century, the climate in Spain was propitious for the development of a Jewish Romancero, that is to say, a body of "biblical" ballads and songs specifically composed by Jewish poets for Jewish audiences. Many of the midrashic legends of biblical heroes, which had already found poetic form in various medieval piyyutim, may very likely have inspired the composition of epic-style romances in the aljamas. That many of these ballads could have become popular in Christian circles would be not at all surprising, given the degree to which Jews and non-Jews mingled, even as late as the 15th century.

We know, of course, that the oral literary tradition began to develop on the Peninsula at a time when Christians were trying to assert themselves in a world dominated by Moors. But as Salo Baron explains, the traveling poet was not peculiar to any one segment of Spanish society:

At times poets improvised on street corners, vying there for popular favor with the storytellers and itinerant preachers. When they overstayed their welcome at one court or lost popularity with the public of one city, they often moved to another. Thus arose in Spain and neighboring Provence the traveling troubadour, Arab, Jewish, or Christian, who apparently paved the way for his more renowned French successor.³⁹

The uninterrupted presence of well-known Jewish jugglers and minstrels throughout the Iberian Peninsula up until the year of Expulsion has been well documented.⁴⁰

Another literary genre popular before the 13th century in Arab-dominated Spain was essentially a mixture of poetry and fictional prose and may have influenced the subsequent rise in interest in midrashic literature:

Wide popular interest in Hebrew poetry stimulated the use of a new genre: fictional narratives (sadj) with sections ending in rhymes and interspersed with poems. Jewish interest in such novelistic accounts was very old. It went back to the ancient Aramaic translation of the Ahiqar story and the biblical or apocryphal elaborations of the stories of Esther, ... or Judith. As we recall, subsequently ancient and medieval homilists often indulged in the recitation of tales and parables, and, particularly in the Arab world, Jewish preachers had their field day in including regular storiottes in their sermons, oral and written.⁴¹

But as Salo Baron points out, not only the poets and rabbis but "the populace, too, then as in later generations, must have created all sorts of folksongs."⁴²

There is indeed every reason to believe that the Jews of 15th century Spain, despite the dramatic rise of popular uprisings against their communities, or perhaps, precisely because of these events, continued to participate fully in the preservation of many Spanish folk traditions, among them the Romancero. It would not be surprising to discover that El sacrificio de Isaac may be just one of many ballads composed by Jewish poets or rabbis, perhaps with a Jewish audience in mind. The presence of midrashic elements in the oldest Peninsular version known seems to attest to this fact [See Chapter IV]. What is more puzzling, however, is the persistence of such elements, clearly derived from rabbinic literature, in the post-Expulsion Peninsular Romancero, whether it be in Northern Spain or in Portugal. As we shall see more clearly in the next section of this chapter, the explanation for this phenomenon may very well lie in the symbolic importance that the Akedah episode has had throughout history for many Jews suffering religious persecution.

C. AKEDAH SYMBOLISM IN THE ROMANCERO

William R. Bascom, in an in-depth study of the relationship between folklore and culture, has come up with a list of four "functions" which might help us to explain the continued vitality of oral literary traditions such as the Romancero. In essence, he states that folklore acts: (1) as a mirror of culture; (2) as a means of validating culture; (3) as a pedagogical device; and (4) as a tool for maintaining conformity to accepted patterns of behavior.⁴³ The application of Bascom's theory to the Romancero clearly supports certain well-established notions about the function of ballads, namely that (1) cultural changes are reflected in romances as they travel from one cultural sphere to another and as they are transmitted from one generation to the next; (2) an important objective of many ballads is to instruct, to set an example, or to record an important event for posterity; and (3) as Rina Benmayor has explained, ballads often serve "to maintain an ideology, an identity, and a social cohesiveness, thus serving a concrete purpose in the community."⁴⁴

The Romancero, therefore, represents an interesting dichotomy: on the one hand, it aims to preserve a tradition, to maintain an identity, to conform to a specific ideology; on the other, it is an evolutionary genre, subject to the influences of local folk traditions and ever so sensitive to

changing cultural environments. The Judeo-Spanish ballad tradition, for example, which essentially became frozen in time, is considered to be much more conservative than its Peninsular counterpart; that is to say, that over a given period of time, the process of re-creation has been somewhat slower, there has been less invention and, at the same time, less deterioration. In the case of the Sephardic "biblical ballads," however, whether or not their origin can be traced to the pre-Expulsion era, the general trend has been toward the expansion of the biblical narrative to include various elements from rabbinic and midrashic sources. Of course, these particular ballads never went through the process of "dechristianization" that many other Peninsular romances had to undergo as they became part of the Judeo-Spanish repertoire.⁴⁵ As would be expected, however, they became more "traditionally Jewish," since a great deal of the "new blood" came not from the universally accepted biblical text but from Jewish folk traditions perpetuated by rabbinic literature, as exemplified by the commentaries contained in the Meam Loez [See chapter II, section D]. Bénichou refers to this process as judaización positiva.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the Peninsular versions of these biblical ballads [see Chapter I, section B for a complete list] tend to be shorter in length, the action tends to be more concentrated, the dialogue more suggestive, the style more lyrical. Although the basic narrative elements are

generally the same as those of the Sephardic versions, we often get the feeling that we are dealing with a completely different romance. No one has explained the effect of ballad fragmentation better than Menéndez Pidal:

la simple fragmentación es un poderoso acto creador, desbordamiento de lirismo que infunde en los versos viejos una poesía nueva de incalculable virtualidad. ... el fragmentarismo del romancero viene a ser una suspensión del interés, pero no como la del arte dramático, suspensión que espera un desenlace. El romance no hace esperar nada; conduce la imaginación hacia un punto culminante del argumento y, abandonándola ante un tajo de abismo impenetrable, la deja lanzar su vuelo a una lejanía ignota, donde se entrevé mucho más de lo que pudiera hallarse en cualquier realidad desplegada ante los ojos.⁴⁷

In the case of El sacrificio de Isaac, the Sephardic tradition seems to have made a conscious effort to lengthen the romance, perhaps following a period of deterioration, by including narrative elements borrowed principally from midrashic sources [See Chapter II, section B]. The Peninsular ballads, on the other hand, have clearly become more fragmented, although a good number of midrashic motifs have persisted. Some of these versions, the Leonese in particular, have become shrouded in an atmosphere of mystery. The climactic dialogue between father and son before the fire reflects this highly lyrical style:

Mira el hijo para el padre
con unos ojos quebrados.
-¿Tú qué me miras, mi hijo,
qué me miras, mi regalo?
-Miro, padre, aquella lumbre
como se va alborotando. (Valdeteja)

There is more repetition in the Peninsular romances, yet every word seems to carry more weight. Although we are always conscious of its biblical origin, the story appears to have acquired a life of its own, to the point where, quite often, the characters are not even mentioned by name. Menéndez Pidal accounts for this phenomenon and considers it to be one of the stylistic traits of the Romancero:

Puede olvidarse la leyenda que sirve de apoyo. El romance se basta a sí mismo; busca en su concisión la totalidad de su ser. No sólo se niega a dar antecedente ninguno de los personajes que presenta, sino que a veces ni nombre les quiere dar...⁴⁸

And so, the well-known biblical heroes, always mentioned by name in the Sephardic ballads, are reduced to el padre and el hijo in certain Peninsular versions; in others, Abraham is known as Arabán or Pedro Adán. It is equally interesting to note that the Crypto-Jewish version, found in the hills of Tras-os-Montes in Portugal, is the only one that refers to a "victim" in connection with the sacrifice:

-Senhor! está aqui o fogo,
E a lenha para acender;
-Mas onde está a vítima?

The same type of rhetorical question can be found in one of the Leonese versions. As Isaac gazes into the fire, he asks, in a seemingly fatalistic tone:

¿quién será el manso cordero
que en ella se verá asado? (Valdeteja)

At this point, we must begin to ask ourselves some questions about the extent to which the Romancero is a

reflection of a specific social and cultural milieu. Is the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac a "mirror" of the society in which it was created? Does the subsequent re-creation of the ballad reflect in any way changes in the cultural environment or a new set of social rules? Should we attempt to "read into" the text and go beyond its literal meaning? In short, can El sacrificio de Isaac be read on a more symbolic level than we are accustomed to? Before we attempt to answer these questions, we must not only understand the nature of the Romancero as a vehicle for the perpetuation of folk traditions, but also consider the symbolic value attributed to the Akedah in Judaism.

In the first place, it is important to note that the function of romances as transmitters of a particular ideology is a very vital one. There are quite a few ballads whose ultimate objective is to uphold a certain belief or point of view, generally of a religious nature. A case in point would be El idólatra de María (Catalog-Index, U2), which tells about the captain of a ship whose death in a seastorm is his punishment for believing in the miracles of the Virgin Mary. This is one of those rare examples of blatant anti-Christian sentiment in the Sephardic ballad tradition.⁴⁹ In another romance religioso known as La tormenta calmada (Catalog-Index, U1), it is the protagonist's unbending faith in the Lord of the World which saves him in a terrible storm. The themes of other well-

known ballads, such as La conversa and La expulsión de los judíos de Portugal, are a clear reflection of the social dilemmas confronted by Iberian Jews in the 15th and 16th centuries. Furthermore, the Sephardic biblical ballads are themselves replete with symbols and allegory. Raquel nuestra madre (Catalog-Index, E6), for example, has often been interpreted as a ballad of lament over the plight of Spanish Jews; Los siete hijos de Hana has come to symbolize the heroism of those who would rather be tortured to death than renounce their Jewish faith. So too, El sacrificio de Isaac may fall into one of these categories. The biblical story of the binding of Isaac may possibly have served to uphold some particular ideology or reflect a contemporary historical situation. A thorough examination of the Akedah theme in art, literature and philosophy would likely provide us with additional clues. More relevant to our study would be a consideration of this biblical tale and its surrounding legends within the context of Judeo-Spanish history and culture.

As we noted in Chapter II, the story of the binding of Isaac has become an integral part of the Jewish religious ritual. According to Sephardic custom, the passage is to be read daily during the morning service as well as on the second day of the New Year (Rosh Ha-Shanah). As a "prayer of remembrance," it has also become a central motif of the High Holy Day service:

In the Zikhronot ("Remembrance") prayers of Rosh Ha-Shanah, there is an appeal to God to remember the Akedah: "Remember unto us, O Lord our God, the covenant and the lovingkindness and the oath which Thou swore unto Abraham our father on Mount Moriah: and consider the binding with which Abraham our father bound his son Isaac on the altar, how he suppressed his compassion in order to perform Thy will with a perfect heart. So may Thy compassion overbear Thine anger against us; in Thy great goodness may Thy great wrath turn aside from Thy people, Thy city, and Thine inheritance.⁵⁰

An interesting aspect of this prayer is the connection made between Abraham's heroism and a plea for God's forgiveness. Some have seen in this the influence of Christianity:

Geiger ... suggests that interpretations of Isaac's sacrifice as a means of atonement for his descendants were influenced by Christian doctrine.⁵¹

Moses Arragel seems to make that connection quite clear in his 15th century Alba Bible:

...que por muchos pecados que sus fijos fiziesen, nunca montarian tanto a que viniesen en se perder e acabar del mundo, mas que sienpre aueria dellos; e avn asy lo testimonia Jesucristo en el su evangelio...
(Alba Bible, p. 131)

Whereas many rabbis have historically rejected this theory, the Church has gone beyond it with its traditional treatment of Isaac as a precursor of Christ:

...the picture of Isaac sensing the solemnity of the occasion and yet walking in perfect obedience, while carrying the wood upon which he is to be sacrificed, ranks among the most christological portraits found in the Old Testament... As Isaac was obedient unto the point of death, so Christ offered himself in perfect obedience to the Father's will; and it is in the same sacrificial self-giving that the Christian is called to share. Isaac's sacrifice would serve as a "type", first for Christ, who fulfilled it perfectly, then also for Christians, who are Abraham's seed after the spirit.⁵²

The sacrifice of Isaac is considered to be one of the most important scriptural episodes dealt with in the New Testament. Christian art and literature has reflected this interest since the early part of the 3rd century. The Index of Christian Art at Princeton lists 1450 entries for Genesis 22:1-19. Numerous medieval miracle plays, autos sacramen-
tales, modern dramas and philosophical treatises have been written on this subject by Christian writers through the centuries. But there is one genre within the Akedah theme that has not generated much Christian interpretation: the midrashic legends and other Jewish folklore surrounding the biblical account.

In rabbinic literature, Akedah symbolism emphasizes Isaac's readiness for martyrdom. One of the most insightful studies on this subject is Shalom Spiegel's analysis of the "legends and lore" of the binding of Isaac in The Last Trial.⁵³ In its introduction, Judah Goldin explains how each generation sees something of itself reflected in this powerful tale of sacrifice:

...the story of Abraham and Isaac rises almost spontaneously in the mind of one generation after another. But each generation has its own experiences and its own concerns. These inevitably affect the conception of the story; they also affect the way the story is used. At one time, a mother bereaved of her seven martyred sons will suddenly cry out: Abraham, how can you compare your trial to mine? At another time, as ideas of atonement, of merit of the Fathers, of the divine attributes of justice and mercy, of the role of the righteous slain for His sake, are explored, again the conduct of the patriarchs is recalled. So too at still other times when the supreme self-sacrifice is enacted.⁵⁴

Other Jewish thinkers, such as Elie Wiesel, have broadened the meaning of the biblical story by considering it the ultimate universal symbol of Jewish suffering:

...the theme and term of the Akeda have been used, throughout the centuries, to describe the destruction and disappearance of countless Jewish communities everywhere. All the pogroms, the crusades, the persecutions, the slaughters, the catastrophes, the massacres by sword and the liquidations by fire - each time it was Abraham leading his son to the altar, to the holocaust all over again.⁵⁵

If these concepts were applied to the ballad tradition of El sacrificio de Isaac, and there seems to be no reason why they could not be, one would be prompted to ask the following questions: did the Jews who suffered persecution in 15th century Spain see their plight reflected in the Akedah episode? If so, did they identify with Abraham, with Isaac, with both? Did the romance subsequently have a different symbolic value for exiled Jews than it did for Crypto-Jews or conversos? The preservation of El sacrificio de Isaac in the Peninsular tradition as well as in the Crypto-Jewish communities of Portugal do suggest that the ballad may have taken on a special meaning after the Expulsion.

According to Spiegel, what "compelled the faithful of Israel to depart from the clear statement of Scripture" and look for "paradoxical haggadic lore" was a strong desire to approximate the story of Isaac to that of Jesus.⁵⁶ In quite a few midrashim, for example, Isaac is actually killed by

his father and later resurrected. The parallel with Christ is evident:

Shalom Spiegel has demonstrated ... that such views enjoyed a wide circulation and occasionally found expression in medieval writings, possibly in order to deny that the sacrifice of Isaac was in any way less than that of Jesus; or as a reflection of actual conditions in the Middle Ages when the real martyrdom of Jewish communities demanded a more tragic model than that of a mere intended sacrifice.⁵⁷

As far as our romance is concerned, the latter is perhaps more likely than the former. In other words, there is little to indicate that Isaac's ordeal is to be compared to the sufferings of Jesus. The sacrifice is not carried out in any of the versions known, Peninsular or otherwise, although some of the Moroccan variants seem to leave open that possibility with the ambiguous verses: "Cuenta que ya le dio el golpe / cuenta que no se le ha dado." What seems more evident, however, is that the narrative may somehow reflect the social upheaval created by the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Spiegel has demonstrated how, time and time again, actual events in history have called to mind the story of the Akedah. During the period of the Hadrianic persecutions, for example, such parallels were made, often to the detriment of the biblical tale:

In the light of the historical reality of the second-century persecutions under the Roman Empire, it seemed almost as though something of the splendor and awe of the biblical Akedah story was diminished. Who cares about some ancient, far off in time, who was merely thought of as a possible sacrifice on the altar, but who was delivered from danger, whom no misfortune overtook; when right before your eyes, in the immediate

present, fathers and sons en masse ascend the executioner's block to be butchered and burned, literally butchered and burned?⁵⁸

One of the tragic events associated with that period, the story of The Woman and Her Seven Sons, has become a poignant midrashic tale as well as a popular romance in the Eastern Sephardic tradition. In the Midrash, Hannah defies Abraham to compare his experience with her very painful ordeal:

...Go and tell Father Abraham: Let not your heart swell with pride! You built one altar, but I have built seven altars and on them have offered up my seven sons. What is more: Yours was a trial; mine was an accomplished fact!⁵⁹

Spiegel also explains how the persecutions brought about by the Crusades caused many devout Jews to "sacrifice" one another rather than bow down to the enemy or be forced to convert:

There is none better to sacrifice our lives to than our God. Let every one who has a knife inspect it lest it be flawed. Let him come forth and cut our throats for the sanctification of Him who Alone lives Eternally; and finally let him cut his own throat...Whereupon all of them, men and women, rose and slew each other.⁶⁰

Once again, the chroniclers of the period used the example set by the Akedah to stress the gravity of the situation:

When were there ever a thousand and a hundred sacrifices in one day, each and every one of them like the Akedah of Isaac son of Abraham? Once at the Akedah of one on Mount Moriah, the Lord shook the world to its base!... O heavens, why did you not go black, O stars, why did you not withdraw your light, O sun and moon, why did you not darken your sky? - when in one day one thousand and one hundred pure souls were slain and slaughtered!⁶¹

As one would suspect by the emotive, almost lyrical style of these chronicles, many Jewish historians of the period would painstakingly record some of the bloodiest persecutions and most memorable acts of heroism with the primary purpose of inspiring prayer and "strengthening failing hearts":

It is apparent from the language of these records that they were written in the first place for synagogue purposes, as reading matter along with public recitation of prayers, as liturgical poetry and penitential hymns based on current events.⁶²

Thus, as Spiegel explains, a particular style of piyyut (Hebrew liturgical poetry) quickly gained acceptance, the penitential hymn well-grounded in historical fact. The Akedah episode seen within the context of actual events has been the inspiration for quite a number of piyyutim, the most famous of which is perhaps Ephraim of Bonn's The Slaughter of Isaac and his Revival, also known simply as The Akedah.⁶³

Medieval Spain has contributed significantly to the development of this poetic tradition. Such important poets and philosophers as Maimonides, Ibn Gabirol and Judah Samuel Abbas have all composed piyyutim based on the story of the binding of Isaac, one of the favorite themes of medieval Hebrew poetry.⁶⁴ Although it is difficult to tell with any degree of certainty whether or not these liturgical poems served as a direct source for our romance, it is not unlikely that one or two may have inspired a 15th century

Spanish rabbi or poet to compose El sacrificio de Isaac. The two points of similarity would be, of course, the literary medium as well as a predilection for the midrashic versions of the biblical tale. In the Akedah composed by Judah Samuel Abbas in the 12th century, for example, we find a series of midrashic motifs which reappear in the 15th century ballad: the concern for Sarah, Abraham's tears, the details of the binding, Isaac's courage. However, the concluding stanza of the piyyut, a cry of desperation followed by an explicit affirmation of hope, represents a radical departure from the strictly narrative style of the romance:

Oh, dweller of the seven heavens,
remember Your covenant with this
storm-tossed and tormented people.
Hear the sound of the ram's horn, and
proclaim to Zion: 'The time of salva-
tion has come. I shall send you Yinon
(the Messiah) and the prophet Elijah!'⁶⁵

Can it be said that similar feelings are implicitly expressed in the ballad tradition? Let us take a closer look at the romances.

What we have essentially are three branches (Spanish, Moroccan, and Portuguese Crypto-Jewish) of El sacrificio de Isaac that have developed, more or less independently, for almost five centuries. We know that they share a common foundation: the 15th century Spanish Romancero. What, then, are the narrative elements, inherited, invented or re-created, contained in these ballad traditions that would lead us to look for a more symbolic dimension? What aspects

of these ballads could be said to reflect or "validate" a particular culture or social environment? An examination of the more "controversial" scenes and motifs, many of which have already been alluded to in previous chapters, may shed some light on the matter:

(1) Emphasis on Abraham's indulgence of his prized son and on their high social status as a prelude to God's command that Isaac be sacrificed (Modern Peninsular). The ballads from Santander tell the story of the prized son of an aristocrat who is whisked away from his comfortable home to be sacrificed in the name of God only to be saved by the Virgin Mary. Could Isaac's unexpected role as a martyr be a reflection of the sudden loss of prestige experienced by many Jews in 15th century Spain? or sudden loss of identity felt by conversos after the Expulsion?

(2) Reference to Mount Moriah as el monte de los anublados (Modern Peninsular: Santander). Why does this metaphor, of talmudic origin and often identified with kabbalistic literature, appear only in the "Christian" ballads? One could point to the Jewish roots of the great majority of Spanish mystics of the Golden Age as a possible explanation. Many of these mystics studied and perpetuated certain kabbalistic symbols which may have found a place in popular literary genres such as the Romancero.

(3) Use of "fire" imagery (Modern Peninsular: León):

Dios, por saber su entención,
dice que ha de ser quemado. (Villarino)

-Estoy mirando la lumbre
cómo se va apoderando. (Villamanín)

¿quién será el manso cordero
que en ella se verá asado? (Valdeteja)

así me hi d'esbastar yo
como un corderito manso. (Villarino)

These verses were probably introduced into the Peninsular romances after 1492. There is no trace of this kind of imagery in any tradition other than the Leonese ballads, not even in the 15th century Peninsular version. Are these scenes then a vague reminder of the public burnings of false conversos, which took place quite frequently in Spain between the 16th and 18th centuries?

(4) Isaac's apparent decision to embrace Christianity (Modern Peninsular: León). As he is about to be sacrificed, Isaac thinks of his mother and utters these words:

si le pregunta por mí,
dígale que estoy con amo,
si le pregunta que a dónde,
cerca del Monte Calvario. (Villamanín)

Does Isaac want his mother to know that he will die a true Christian? Why this sudden preoccupation? And why is it revealed at the last minute? As a final act of repentance, perhaps. In effect, this is suggested by the last two verses

of the ballad, which seem to be directed not at Abraham but at his son:

A mi Dios tienes contento,
y el cielo tienes ganado. (Villamanín)

(5) Intervention by the Virgin Mary (Modern Peninsular: Santander). Is the appearance of the Virgin a mere juxtaposition or does it represent an inner conflict having to do with loyalty to more than one religious faith? This may be another indication that the Peninsular versions were preserved by conversos or cristianos nuevos.

(6) Isaac's apology (Modern Peninsular: León). In one version, Isaac goes so far as to apologize for everything that he has done:

-Voy a pedirles perdón
pol tiempo que me han criado
y a la mi madre querida
por la leche que me ha dado.
¡Válgame nuestra Señora,
válgame el señor Santiago!

Although the last two verses ring of superficiality and are, in fact, a standard formula with which the recitation of certain romances is concluded, the first four are unique to this ballad. It seems that Isaac would like to forget everything about his past and start anew. Can this be symbolic of the cultural "amnesia" that many Spanish conversos had to undergo as part of their assimilation into a newly established Christian society?

(7) The mecatreg spreads false rumors about Isaac's fate (Moroccan). In a relatively free cultural environment, the exiled Spanish Jews were able to replenish the ballad with many of their favorite midrashic motifs: the reference to Abraham's ten trials, the appearance of the mecatreg, the death and burial of Sarah, the marriage of Isaac to Rebecca, etc. Thus, the Sephardic ballad tradition, rather than reflect actual events, became petrified within its own folklore. Nevertheless, the Satan-like figure of the mecatreg, mentioned in the Talmud and in midrashic literature, is reminiscent of another notorious figure well-known in 15th century Judeo-Spanish society: the malsín. Américo Castro explains:

El más dañino habitante de la judería era el "malsín" o calumniador, gemelo de aquel siniestro personaje analizado en otro lugar, el "wasí" o mesturero, polilla de las cortes musulmanas y cristianas. Tan arriesgado y difundido estaba el tipo del malsín, que la palabra entró a formar parte del español... El malsín denunciaba a sus correligionarios a las autoridades cristianas. ...La delación aportaba al malsín una recompensa en dinero, o el placer de la venganza. Las autoridades hebreas lo perseguían con todo el posible rigor, mientras los oficiales del rey procuraban beneficiarse del malsín y de su víctima.⁶⁶

(8) Reference to Isaac as the "victim" (Portuguese: Crypto-Jewish). Does this reference, which appears in no other ballad, specifically reflect a Crypto-Jewish perspective of life? These secret Jews, who were forced to live in hiding for many centuries, became helpless witnesses to the

persecution and execution of their own people. Did Isaac's impending sacrifice become a symbol of their own existence?

(9) Ballad serves as a prayer (Portuguese: Crypto-Jewish). The mere fact that this romance has actually become part of the religious ritual in certain Crypto-Jewish communities adds to its symbolic value. It is known as Oração ao sacrifício de Isaac and ends with the following blessing:

Oh! Benzer-te benzerei, aplicar-te aplicarei, que as tuas sementes sejam tantas, como o mar de areias, céu de estrelas, árvores de folhas, e sementes por todo o mundo. Amém, Senhor Deus de Adonai, Amém.

This blessing, which is very similar to the ending of Et Sharei Ratson, the well-known Sephardic piyyut mentioned earlier, is essentially a prayer for the continued survival of the Jewish people. It was often used in medieval rabbinic accounts of the binding of Isaac as a hopeful reminder of the promise that had been made to Abraham, and found its way into the commentaries of Moshe Arragel:

Ya ante desto le tenia Dios asegurado que le multiplicaria su generacion asy como las estrellas de los çielos e como la arena del mar... (Alba Bible, p. 131)

(10) Finally, Isaac's affirmation that he who dies for God will be rewarded (Portuguese: Crypto-Jewish):

Quem morre pelo Senhor
No céu é coroado.

This is the only modern ballad that has preserved these two verses, which are at least as old as the 15th century Peninsular text:

que quien muere por su Dios,
en el cielo es coronado.

There seems to be little doubt that the Crypto-Jews of Portugal were inspired by Isaac's heroism. Is this, then, a formula of consolation for a community who lived under the constant threat of being caught and punished for practicing their true faith? This brings to mind the words of Elie Wiesel who has so eloquently interpreted the Akedah as a universal symbol of Jewish destiny:

Terrifying in content, it has become a source of consolation to those who, in retelling it, make it part of their own experience. Here is a story that contains Jewish destiny in its totality, just as the flame is contained in the single spark by which it comes to life. Every major theme, every passion and obsession that make Judaism the adventure that it is, can be traced back to it: man's anguish when he finds himself face to face with God, his quest for purity and purpose, the conflict of having to choose between dreams of the past and dreams of the future, between absolute faith and absolute justice, between the need to obey God's will and to rebel against it; between his yearnings for freedom and for sacrifice, his desire to justify hope and despair with words and silence - the same words and the same silence. It is all there.⁶⁷

Indeed, El sacrificio de Isaac may well be more than just another biblical ballad. One cannot overlook, as Rina Benmayor puts it, "the function of such poetry as a tool for transmitting and shaping human consciousness."⁶⁸ Américo Castro has explained how the Hebrew poetry composed in Spain often expressed the despair of the Jewish people:

...la poesía hispano-hebrea...deja oír a menudo el eco profundo y solemne de la desesperación de Israel.⁶⁹

Perhaps the same can be said about certain romances. The Peninsular ballad tradition may not establish a direct parallel with the tragic events of 15th and 16th century Spain, as did certain piyyutin after the massacres of Jews during the time of the Crusades. Still one cannot help but wonder if these ballads were, at any point, a reflection of prevalent socio-historical conditions, and, if so, who their composers might have been. Could midrashic elements, for example, have been incorporated into a Christian ballad composed in the 15th century? Or was this primitive version of El sacrificio de Isaac of Jewish or converso origin? Could a lost or unpublished piyyut have served as a model for the medieval ballad? Do the modern Spanish versions reflect the dilemma of cristianos nuevos, just as the Portuguese ballad expresses the Crypto-Jewish perspective? These are questions that must continually be asked if we accept the premise that folklore very often acts as a mirror of culture, especially if we take into account the deep historical symbolism of the Akedah in Jewish tradition.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

¹ Rina Benmayor, "Social Determinants in Poetic Transmission or A Wide-Angle Lens for Romancero Scholarship" in El Romancero Hoy, Armistead, Catalán, Sánchez Romeralo, eds. (Madrid: Gredos, 1979), vol. 3, pp. 153-154.

² Benmayor, p. 154.

³ Ruth Finnegan, Oral Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 2.

⁴ Benmayor, p. 154. In the last few years there has been an increased interest in this "sociological" approach to literature, particularly with regard to the Romancero. See, for example, Louise Mirrer-Singer, The Language of Evaluation. A Sociolinguistic Approach to the Story of Pedro el Cruel in Ballad and Chronicle (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Publ. Co., 1986).

⁵ Finnegan, p. 17.

⁶ Benmayor, p. 159.

⁷ Leon Algazi, Chants Séphardis (London: World Sephardi Federation, 1958), p. XI.

⁸ Benmayor, pp. 156-157.

⁹ Benmayor, p. 159.

¹⁰ Finnegan, p. 28.

¹¹ Finnegan, p. 28.

¹² Mirrer-Singer, The Language of Evaluation, p. 21.

¹³ Benmayor, p. 159.

¹⁴ Algazi, p. X.

¹⁵ See Harriet Goldberg's review of Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York in Romance Philology, vol. XXXVII, no. 2 (Nov. 1983), pp. 233-234.

¹⁶ They are categories J through S, listed in the Catalog-Index, vol. I, p. 32:

J. AMOR FIEL	O. RAPTO Y FORZADORES
K. AMOR DESGRACIADO	P. INCESTO
L. ESPOSA DESGRACIADA	Q. MUJERES SEDUCTORAS
M. ADÚLTERAS	R. MUJERES SEDUCIDAS
N. MUJERES MATADORAS	S. VARIAS AVENTURAS AMOROSAS

¹⁷ Arcadio de Larrea Palacín, Romances de Tetuán (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1952), vol I, pp. 25-26.

¹⁸ Abraham Neuman, The Jews in Spain (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), pp. 69-70. As Neuman states, "in Spain,...the basis of Jewish education was a knowledge of the Hebrew prayers, the Bible and the Talmud. The first Hebrew words which the Jewish child learned to recite in infancy proclaimed: "Moses commanded us the Law as an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

¹⁹ See Salo W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), vol. 7, p. 151; Iginio Anglés provides an extensive list of popular medieval Jewish troubadours in "Jewish Music in Medieval Spain", Yuval, I (1968), pp. 207-227.

²⁰ William Samelson, "Romances and Songs of the Sephardim," Sephardi Heritage, ed. Richard D. Barnett, I (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1971), p. 531.

²¹ Algazi, p. X.

²² Benmayor, p. 156.

²³ Américo Castro, España en su historia (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1948), p. 471.

²⁴ Castro, La realidad histórica de España (México: Porrúa, 1962), p. 54.

²⁵ Castro, España, pp. 472-473.

²⁶ Luis Suárez Fernández, Judíos españoles en la Edad Media (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1980), p. 238.

²⁷ Castro, España, p. 472.

²⁸ Castro, España, p. 486.

- 29 Moshe Lazar, The Sephardic Tradition (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 20.
- 30 Castro, España, p. 499.
- 31 Castro, España, p. 503.
- 32 Suárez Fernández, p. 239.
- 33 Salo W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), vol. 7, p. 167.
- 34 Lazar, p. 16
- 35 Salo W. Baron, p. 167.
- 36 Neuman, pp. 119-120.
- 37 Neuman, p. 144.
- 38 Neuman, p. 102.
- 39 Salo W. Baron, p. 151.
- 40 See H. Anglés, "Jewish Music in Medieval Spain" in Yuval, I (1968), pp. 207-227.
- 41 Salo W. Baron, p. 183.
- 42 Salo W. Baron, p. 204.
- 43 William R. Bascom, "The Four Functions of Folklore," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 279-298.
- 44 Benmayor, p. 155.
- 45 See Armistead and Silverman, "Christian Elements and De-Christianization in the Sephardic Romancero," in Collected Studies in Honour of Américo Castro's 80th Year (Oxford: Lincombe Lodge Research Library, 1965), pp. 21-38; also Paul Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos (Madrid: Castalia, 1968), pp. 286-290.
- 46 Bénichou, Romancero judeo-español, p. 288.
- 47 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Romancero hispánico: Teoría e historia (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953), pp. 74-75.
- 48 Menéndez Pidal, p. 72.

49 See Diego Catalán's study, entitled "El idólatra de María: Judaísmo frente a cristianismo" in Por campos del romancero (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), pp. 270-280. Armistead succinctly explains Catalán's theory on the origin of the ballad: "En vista del tono profundamente anti-cristiano de las formas sefarditas y, además, del desacuerdo de los mismos textos peninsulares con las normas del romancero religioso tradicional (la Virgen rechaza la invocación del pecador), se impone, según arguye Catalán, la conclusión de que el romance es de origen judío. [Diez romances hispánicos en un manuscrito sefardí de la isla de Rodas (Pisa: Istituto di Letteratura Spagnola, 1962), p. 31].

50 "Akedah," Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 1, p. 482.

51 "Akedah," Encyclopedia Judaica.

52 "Isaac," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. 2, pp. 729-730. See also Israel Levi, "Le Sacrifice d'Isaac et la mort de Jésus" and G. Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis XXII," in The Sacrifice of Isaac: Studies in the Development of a Literary Tradition, ed. Eli Yassif (Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1979).

53 Originally published in Hebrew, the complete title of the English translation is The Last Trial; On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice: the Akedah, trans. Judah Goldin (New York: Pantheon, 1967).

54 Judah Goldin, in "Introduction" to Shalom Spiegel's The Last Trial, p. XVI.

55 Elie Wiesel, The Messengers of God (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 91.

56 Spiegel, The Last Trial, p. 8

57 "Akedah," Encyclopedia Judaica.

58 Spiegel, p. 15.

59 Spiegel, p. 15 (Quoted from a Midrash collection entitled Yalkut Shemoni, Deuteronomy 26, # 938).

60 Spiegel, pp. 18-19. (Quoted from A. Neubauer and M. Stern, Hebraische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge (Berlin, 1892), p. 8).

61 Spiegel, p. 20. (Quoted from Neubauer and Stern, p. 53).

62 Spiegel, p. 17.

63 Ephraim of Bonn's 104-verse Akedah, written in the 12th century, is the "leit-motif" of Shalom Spiegel's The Last Trial (pp. 143- 152). It is also included along with an English translation in The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, ed. T. Carmi (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 379-384.

64 The best known piyyut on the binding of Isaac in the Sephardic tradition was composed by Judah Samuel Abbas in the 12th century and is usually known by its first three words in Hebrew: Et Sharei Ratson ("When the gates of mercy"). Its text can be found in The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, pp. 357-359. Of this particular piyyut, Carmi says that it is "the most famous akeda in Hebrew poetry. It served as a model for many imitations, including one by Maimonides. It is chanted to an impressive melody in Sephardic communities before the blowing of the Shofar during the New Year service," (p. 110). Israel Davidson's Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry (New York: Ktav, 1970) lists 18 references to Akedah poems, including the two piyyutim just mentioned.

65 T. Carmi, The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, p. 359.

66 Castro, España, pp. 548-549.

67 Elie Wiesel, The Messengers of God, p. 69.

68 Benmayor, p. 154.

69 Castro, España, p. 563.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPANISH-JEWISH DIALECT: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND GLOSSARY

A. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS: LADINO, JUDEZMO, HAKITÍA...

Our primary objective in this chapter is to outline some of the major phonetic and morphological characteristics of Judeo-Spanish and to explain a series of words and expressions used in the Sephardic biblical ballads that might present some difficulty to the reader. The latter will be done in the form of a glossary.

Before undertaking a linguistic analysis, certain terms must be made clear. There has been some controversy in the last few decades concerning the correct designation for the Spanish-Jewish dialect once spoken widely in parts of the Balkans and North Africa. Some of the traditionally accepted labels have been: djidió, djudezmo, espaniolit, hakitía, ladino, romance and sefardí, among others. Henri Besso, who has studied how each of these terms has been used through the centuries, makes the following observation about ladino:

The term ladino, or enladinar, was used to designate the familiar tongue of the Spanish Jews and to differentiate it from the Hebrew.¹

He adds that the term romance lost its usage near the end of the 16th century and seems to suggest that many of the other terms are specific to particular areas. Djidió, for example, was used predominantly in Bosnia; djudezmo in Salonika,

Bucharest, Istanbul, etc.; hakitía in North Africa; and espaniolit is the Judeo-Spanish spoken today in the State of Israel.

If ladino was used to distinguish the Spanish vernacular from Hebrew, then which term can best designate the compendium of Spanish-Jewish dialects in opposition to modern Spanish? Some scholars have come to accept the all-encompassing term sefardí. However, Besso considers this a misnomer:

Sefardí is the generic adjective of Sefarad, meaning Spain in Hebrew; and sefardí, therefore would mean "Spaniard."²

The tendency of many linguists has been simply to rely on the term ladino and to apply it broadly. David Barrocas, among other critics, strongly discourages this practice:

The dialect spoken by the Spanish Jews of the Orient does not have a specific name. As a means of identifying it, those who had received a western education in Turkey, called it Judeo-Español. The unschooled called it "muestro espaniol". Here in America our scholars call it Judaeo-Español. It is an error to call it Ladino or Djudezmo.³

Professor Benardete agrees:

We never called our dialect Ladino. We had a vernacular, a spoken language which did not follow the Hebrew syntax. It followed the Spanish syntax, the Spanish grammar, the Spanish language. That is not Ladino. The Sepharadim in general have no name for their vernacular, and Ladino is not the name.⁴

Neither is Djudezmo, according to Benardete, as he illustrates with the following example:

If I had a Spaniard coming to my house in Istanbul, and if the Spaniard were to ask my mother "Señora,

cómo se llama la lengua que hablan?" my mother would not know what to answer, but cornered in a tight spot, she would say "La lengua de los djuđiós."... Djuđezmo is not the name for a language. You can not say for example, we speak Englishness, or Frenchness or Spanishness.⁵

In North Africa, however, where close contact with the Peninsula has contributed to the gradual assimilation of modern Spanish by the Sephardic population, a very clear distinction was always made between español and hakitía (the Jewish-Spanish dialect of the region). Surprising as it may seem, the terms ladino and judezmo are quite foreign to the North African Sephardim.

It seems, therefore, that the term "Judeo-Spanish" may well be the most sensible manner to refer to the totality of Spanish Jewish dialects spoken for centuries by the descendants of those Jews who were exiled from Spain. Its use has been widely accepted by scholars in the field. In the course of this chapter, if we need to distinguish between the Oriental dialect of the Balkans and that of North Africa, we will use respectively the terms djuđezmo and hakitía.

In the evolution of Judeo-Spanish, we find that the Sephardic Romancero is a very important link in the chain that stretches from the very early works, written in Hebrew characters while reflecting clearly the lexicon and syntax of 16th century Spanish, and the decaying dialects still heard today in parts of America and in Israel:

Al estudiar las obras españolas antiguas, escritas en caracteres hebreos, encontramos en primer lugar algunas

cuyo lenguaje es impecable y que no se diferencian en nada del español de la época... Lugar intermedio ocupan los romances y canciones populares así como muchos refranes que conservan en parte la antigua pureza del estilo, pero que contienen numerosas expresiones de formación reciente. Finalmente encontramos una serie de dialectos locales generalmente barbarizados y hoy día en plena decadencia.⁶

As we attempt to categorize and synthesize the many peculiarities of the Judeo-Spanish dialects, we must be clearly aware of the difficulties involved:

La gran variedad de dialectos judeo-españoles y la falta de normas generales no permite sacar conclusiones amplias acerca de fonología, morfología, sintaxis y otros aspectos del ladino...⁷

B. PHONETICS

We will begin by pointing out some of the important phonetic differences that exist between Judeo-Spanish and modern Castilian, keeping in mind that there is no uniform standard of pronunciation for all regions nor a universally accepted system of transcription, as Pascual Recuero wisely observes:

Sobre la fonética del judeo-español han tratado diversos autores, cada uno desde un punto geográfico distinto, y todos han procurado dar normas generales sobre la pronunciación del ladino, con la particularidad de que no coinciden unos con otros, aunque todos estén en lo cierto, después de observar atentamente los fenómenos comunes en los sujetos que manejaron.⁸

With that in mind, let us examine some of the characteristics of the Judeo-Spanish phonetic system. It contains at least 6 sounds which have disappeared from modern Spanish:

(1) The voiceless, palatal sibilant š (English "sh", French "ch") - This sound is often transcribed as "š" ("Ven aquí, Mošé" - Attias, ballad 78). Benoliel opts for "x" ("Moxé subió a los xamáim" - ballad 2) and in some cases modernizes it to "s" ("Mosé estaba en el campo" - ballad 9).

(2) The voiced, palatal sibilant ž (French "j") - This is usually transcribed as "ž": hižo, ožo, mužer, although some opt for "zh" (muzher). Some transcriptions retain the "j" symbol (barbej, truje) without indicating how it is to be pronounced.

(3) The voiced, alveolo-palatal dž (English "j") - This sound is more common in the Oriental dialects than in North African Hakitía. It is often transcribed as "dž" or "dj" (džudezmo, djidió) to differentiate it from the softer "ž" of hižo. Attias simplifies it to "j".

(4) The voiced, dental sibilant z - The intervocalic "s" is usually voiced, whether it is transcribed as "s" or "z": coza, casa, dezir, ermoza; "ss" may be used to indicate a voiceless sound: passado, fuesssa. As an initial sound or next to a consonant, it is voiceless, as in fuersa and sinco.

(5) The voiceless, glottal fricative h - The silent "h" of modern Spanish either disappears completely, as in ermozo, or becomes a slightly aspirated "h" based on the Hebrew sound ה (hey): Abraham, azzahar.

(6) The voiced guttural fricative ħ - This sound is peculiar to the Judeo-Spanish of North Africa, as Benoliel indicates:

Es este un sonido guttural que entra sin alteración en muchas dicciones hakíticas, derivadas o literalmente tomadas del árabe o del hebreo.⁹

Although probably derived from the Arabic ع ("ain"), it is usually found in words of Hebrew origin. The sound is very similar to the Hebrew א ("ayin"). Benoliel transcribes it by doubling the vowel: meàará (cemetery), seùudá (banquet). In most ballad transcriptions, however, this sound is not accounted for. Indeed, the task of accounting for every phonetic nuance known to exist in Judeo-Spanish,

particularly in the Moroccan dialect, seems quite difficult.

José Benoliel sums it all up in one succinct paragraph:

El teclado fónico del Judío hispano-marroquí, particularmente del de Tánger, es vastísimo, pues abarca todos los sonidos que entran en los idiomas castellano, hebreo y árabe.¹⁰

There are, on the other hand, two sounds common in modern Castilian which are rarely found in Judeo-Spanish:

(1) The voiceless, dental fricative θ of cielo and zarza.

These usually become sielo and sarsa. The Castilian "z" is transcribed as "ç" by Manrique de Lara: de corazón, çarça verde, descalços. In an intervocalic position, it is often pronounced as a voiced, dental sibilant: dezir.

(2) The voiced, lateral palatal "ll" of llamar becomes a much less liquid "y" in Judeo-Spanish, and is usually so transcribed: yevas, yamado, cueyo, cuchiyo. It is often assimilated before or after an unstressed "i": encapiados (Be, MR)

It is important to note that the voiceless, velar fricative x (as in juego) of modern Castilian has continued to exist in all branches of Judeo-Spanish. But the transcriptions of this sound are extremely varied. Attias, for example, uses three different symbols depending on the equivalent letter in Hebrew: h if it corresponds to ך ("heth") as in alhadro; k or kh if it corresponds to כ ("khaph") as in anokí and zekhut. Benoliel simply italicizes the "h" to indicate that it is velar. Larrea Palacín and

García Figueras modernize it to read "j". In Manrique de Lara's texts, it is difficult to say for sure whether an "x" is to be read as a velar or as the palatal š: truxe, barbex.

It must also be pointed out that, due to the influence of Arabic and Hebrew, there is a tendency in Judeo-Spanish to double certain consonants: rabbenu, saddika, azzahar. A double consonant is usually a transcription of a stressed or prolonged sound in Arabic or Hebrew.

Finally, to add to the complexity of an already chaotic system of transcription, or perhaps as a partial explanation for it, we should take note of the fact that the informants of the Sephardic ballads that we have seen no doubt spoke a mixture of Judeo-Spanish and modern Castilian. This would especially be true in the case of the Moroccan ballads, which began to circulate quite freely to and from the Peninsula as early as the mid-19th century. Benoliel points out that by the 1920's there were serious inconsistencies in the pronunciation of Hakitía in and around Tangier.

C. HAKITÍA: THE JUDEO-SPANISH DIALECT OF MOROCCO

Benoliel's first efforts to find the derivation of the term "Hakitía" led him to suspect that it may have originated among the Arabic-speaking Jews of Morocco, known as los forasteros by the Sephardim:

En este caso, Hakitía vendría de Haquito, aféresis de Ishaquito, diminutivo de Ishac, muy usado por los Judíos de origen español, y significaría: idioma de los Haquitos, haciéndose esta palabra una especie de apelativo común a todos aquellos Judíos.¹¹

However, after considering the popularity of so many other Judeo-Spanish nicknames in Morocco, Benoliel found this particular etymology to be too simplistic to be regarded as conclusive. He finds much more plausible the theory that the word "Hakitía" is derived directly from the Arabic:

...la palabra Hakitía, como millares de otras, podría muy bien haber sido formada de raíz árabe y terminación castellana; lo que es tanto más probable cuanto que, en la misma Hakitía, figura no raras veces la voz هكايا hekaia o hekaia, y el plural hekaia con la significación de dicho agudo, ocurrencia feliz, acción o chasco digno de atraer la atención; y derivada del verbo هكاه haka, conversar, hablar, decir, narrar, cuyo pasivo, como se sabe, es palabra consagrada en principio de cualquier narrativa.¹²

With regard to the antiquity of Hakitía, Benoliel seems quite convinced of the existence of a Judeo-Spanish dialect on the Iberian Peninsula as far back as the early 15th century:

No tengo duda que la Hakitía es de creación mucho más antigua y remota de lo que vulgarmente se supone. Que era ya usada por los Judíos de España y Portugal antes de la expulsión es cosa fácil de demostrar.¹³

He proceeds to cite various examples of Judeo-Spanish words and expressions used in Peninsular literature between the 15th and 17th centuries by such figures as Cervantes, Gil Vicente, and the Portuguese poet Luis Anrriques.

Benoliel also stresses the fact that Hakitía seems to reflect not one but many of the dialects and languages of pre-Expulsion Spain:

He dicho "castellano", pero más propiamente creo hubiera debido decir "español", para conglobar en esta palabra todos los lenguajes usados antes de la expulsión en las diferentes regiones de España de donde los Judíos de Marruecos proceden, y que por ser muchas y por tener cada una su modo especial de decir y de pronunciar, debían dejar, como dejaron, sensibles huellas de sus provincialismos en el habla de aquellos Judíos, y, por consiguiente, en la misma Hakitía.¹⁴

This may help to explain some of the linguistic differences that continue to exist in the various Sephardic communities of Morocco:

...si en ciertas ciudades, Tánger, por ejemplo, las palabras y las sílabas son escrupulosa e integralmente pronunciadas, en otras, como Tetuán, las consonantes finales son generalmente mudas por completo...¹⁵

Benoliel gives other interesting examples of phonetic discrepancies in the Moroccan Judeo-Spanish dialect as he emphasizes its eclectic origin. Moreover, if we were to compare Hakitía to the Eastern Sephardic dialects, we would surely find the former to be less rigid, less archaic, and consequently less uniform. There are, of course, historical reasons for such a divergence. The European colonization of North Africa, which began in the 1850's, was a very crucial

factor in the evolution of Judeo-Spanish in Morocco [See Chapter I]. As it turned out, Hakitía, as a language, became subjected to the effects of modernization at least a century before its Eastern Mediterranean counterpart. Thus, this dialect of Spanish, founded upon the 15th century speech common in many different regions of the Iberian Peninsula, and influenced by Hebrew and Arabic, began to incorporate into its lexicon words and expressions borrowed from European languages. As summed up by Benoliel, the originality and evident complexity of Hakitía lies on one hand on its conservative nature, but on the other, on its tendency to enrich itself by borrowing freely from Arabic and Hebrew and, to a lesser degree, from languages such as French, Portuguese and English.¹⁶

D. MORPHOLOGY

Due to the slower evolution of Judeo-Spanish and its close contact with other languages, there are noticeable differences to be found as we compare it to modern Spanish. The following is a list of linguistic peculiarities observed in the Sephardic versions of El sacrificio de Isaac as well as in other biblical ballads:

(1) Diphthongation > Simplification

o > ue > e :

fosa > fuesa (ML) > fuesa (Bn) > fesa (MR2)
 probado > pruebado > prebado (ML, Ca)
 - - - > fueron > feron (Bn)
 - - - > fuera > fera (Bn)

In other biblical ballads, the unstressed "o" and "u" frequently alternate: cumadre, mochacho.

(2) Omission of final "s" or "z"

diez > die (AL)

(3) Apocope

a dónde > a dó (AL)
 en casa de > en ca de (Bn)

(4) Prothesis: a-

arregalado (Bn, ML, MR2, GF)
 aseñalado (Bn, ML, GF, LP, Ca, AL)
 ataparte (Be)
 alímpiase los ožos ("Rahel nuestra madre")

In very few cases the opposite occurs: an initial "a" is dropped. In Siete hijos de Hana (Molho), the penultimate verse reads: se rojó de allí abašo.

(5) Change from "n" to "m"

nueve meses > nueve mezes ("Nac. de Abraham")
 nos > mos rigma el Dio ("Isaac II")

(6) Change from "r" to "l"

zarza > çalça (Ca)
 contarlo > contallo (ML)

(7) Metathesis: dl > ld (especially with commands)

paradle > paralde (ML)
 llevadle > yevalde ("Juicio de Salomón")
 decidle > dizilde ("Nac. de Abraham")

(8) Assimilation: nr > rr

honrado > horrado (ML, MR, LP, Ca, AL)

(9) Hay + P. P. Often used in place of ha or he:

Con Abram hay platicado ("Isaac II")

(10) Other archaic forms

mesmo (ML)
 sos (Bn, MR, LP, Be, AL); sox (ML)
 truje (Ca); truxe (ML); truxi (Be)
 vos (ML, GF, MR, Be, Ca, AL)

(11) Verb endings

a. PRESENT INDICATIVE. The final "y" tends to drop off
 in the first person singular of certain verbs:

soy > so ; voy > vo ...

b. PRETERITE. With very few exceptions, the first
 person singular of the preterite always ends in -i:

andí (MR2); traí (MR); truxí (Be)

But, as Alvar López points out:

En la hakitía el perfecto de "traer" es "truje"...;
 al adquirir el moderno "traje", es probable que se
 pensara en algún "trají" que igualaría éste con la
 enorme masa de perfectos en "-í."17

Thus, in the variants of El sacrificio de Isaac we see truje and traí as well as truxe and truxí.

c. IMPERATIVE. The second person plural loses the final -d. It is usually replaced with -i:

- ad > -ai : ataimé (GF, Be)
paraile (Bn, MR2)
tapaime (GF)
- > -ei : ateime (Ca, AL)
- > -eis : amarreisme (LP)
ateisme (Bn, ML)
tapeisme (Bn, ML)
- > -is : atisme (MR)
matis (MR1)
tapisme (MR)
- > -i : atapime (AL)

It is interesting to note that the "-is" ending is peculiar only to the ballads recorded in Alcazarquivir (Martínez Ruiz collection).

d. IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE. Some of the archaic forms for the second person plural ending remain, especially in such traditional formulas as si viérades and si viéredes (Bn).

Before we go on to the glossary, we must clarify one final detail about the changing structures of words in Judeo-Spanish. When dealing with the Romancero, one must be especially careful to distinguish between the legitimate linguistic evolution of certain words and expressions and the irregularities caused by the poor memory and spontaneous

creativity of a particular singer. For example, the word escasos which appears only in the Larrea Palacín version of El sacrificio de Isaac was merely due to a failure on the singer's part to remember descalzos. The word descapillados of the García Figueras text did not evolve linguistically from encapillados. Rather, it became confused with the prefix of descalzos which immediately precedes it. There are may other such cases:

tapeisme (ML)	>	atapeisme (LP)	>	ataime (Be)
honrado (Bn)	>	corado [confused with "coronado"]	(Be)	
mal airado	>	mal mirado (Ca)		

E. ANNOTATED GLOSSARY

INDEX OF SOURCES

The names mentioned in the glossary represent a variety of sources, ranging from simple dictionary definitions to complete linguistic analyses of Judeo-Spanish idioms. The following is an alphabetized list of names cited followed by a brief description of their respective works:

- Alcalay:** Reuben Alcalay, The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary (Jerusalem: Massada, 1981). Includes derivations and cross-references to words with similar roots.
- Attias:** Moshe Attias's 350-word glossary in his Romancero Sefaradí (Jerusalem: Instituto Ben Zewi, 1961), pp. 263-269; as well as comments made throughout the collection on individual ballads.
- Benoliel :** José Benoliel, "Dialecto judeo-español marroquí o hakitía" in BRAE, vols. XIII, XIV, XV (1926-1928). In volumes XIII and XIV, Benoliel deals mainly with the origin and formation of Hakitía, as well as its phonetic and morphological characteristics. He also gives numerous examples of Judeo-Spanish refranes and many other colorful expressions typical of the region. An informative but incomplete glossary (A-M) of Hakitía terms can be found in volumes XIV (pp. 566-580) and XV (pp. 47-61, 188-223). Almost sixty years after publication this study continues to be one of the most thorough and insightful investigations of the Moroccan Judeo-Spanish dialect.
- Cantera :** Francisco Cantera, "Hebraísmos en la poesía sefardí" in Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal, vol. V (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954), pp. 69-98. From a number of Sephardic romances and canciones, Cantera has selected a series of words and expressions of Hebrew origin and explained them within their context. This very useful but somewhat limited list was complemented many years later by Iacob M. Hassan's "Más hebraísmos en la poesía sefardí..." [See below].

- Danon: Abraham Danon, "Recueil des romances judéo-espagnoles chantées en Turquie" in Revue des Études Juives 33 (1896), pp. 255-268. Contains only one biblical ballad ("El Nacimiento de Abraham I"), followed by a useful list of Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish terms.
- Hassán: Iacob. M. Hassán, "Más hebraísmos en la poesía sefardí de Marruecos" in Sefarad, 37 (1977), pp. 373-428. A supplement to Francisco Cantera's list published in 1954. [See Cantera].
- Jastrow: Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: The Judaica Press, 1971). A very useful guide of both Hebrew and Aramaic elements in rabbinic literature.
- Larrea: Larrea Palacín's glossary in Romances de Tetuán (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1954).
- Martínez Ruiz: "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional" in Archivum XIII (1963), pp. 79-139. Notes at the conclusion of each ballad contain the derivation of certain problematic words as well as translations into modern Spanish.
- Miller: Royce W. Miller, "A Linguistic and Literary Study of the Sephardic Romancero: Historical, Moorish, Carolingian, Biblical and Classical Ballads." Doctoral dissertation: Washington University. Includes detailed linguistic analyses of most ballads as well as a 100-word glossary.
- Molho: Michael Molho, "Tres romances de tema bíblico y dos canciones de cuna" in Comentario 4 (1957), pp. 64-70. Contains translation of a number of words of Hebrew origin.
- Nehama: Joseph Nehama, Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1977). Despite the fact that this is one of the largest Judeo-Spanish dictionaries in print, it contained only about half of our glossary entries.
- P. Recuero: Pascual Pascual Recuero, Diccionario básico ladino-español (Barcelona: Ameller, 1977). Small but useful collection of Judeo-Spanish terms, mostly from the Eastern Sephardic tradition.

GLOSSARY

Each entry is followed by the name of the ballad where it is found. The particular edition or version is indicated in parentheses: the "Isaac I" versions, for example, are accompanied by the two-letter collector's abbreviation used earlier; all other ballads are followed by the collector's name and the corresponding ballad number within the collection. Each definition contains an English translation, the derivation, selected translations into modern Spanish, and, in certain cases, additional information about usage.

a dó. "Isaac I" (AL). = WHERE. Archaic form of a dónde. Sometimes written as one word: ¿adó el hombre? ¿adóle? (Benoliel glossary).

Abel. "Isaac I" (ML). = MOURNING. From the Hebrew אָבֵל Not to be confused with Cain's brother אָבֶל (actually pronounced "He-vel"), as Benoliel points out (XIV, p. 222): "Un judío no diría Abel, pero sí Hébel, si quisiera designar al segundo hijo de Eva... Por 'abel', los judíos sólo entienden los siete primeros días de 'luto' por muerte de persona muy próxima."

Aífto. "Nacimiento de Moisés" (Attias 77). = EGYPT. Egipto became Aífto probably due to the confusion in Hebrew between the "f" and "p" sounds, represented by the same symbol (פ) and by assimilation of the velar "g".

ajadró. "Isaac I" (LP). Alternate form of alhadró.

alhadró. "Isaac I" (Bn, ML, MR1, MR2). = APPEARED. A derivative of the Hebrew פָּתַח ("to enter"). García Figueras translates it as estaba presente; Martínez Ruiz as se presentó; Attias as se aparó. Benoliel italicizes the "h" and includes asistir as an optional translation.

aljadró. "Isaac I" (Be, Ca). Alternate spelling of alhadró.

- alzación.** "Isaac II" (Attias 128). = OFFERING, SACRIFICE. Used in the Ferrara Bible ("toma agora a tu fijo ...y anda a tierra de Moriah y alça lo ahí por alçaçon..."). Related to alzar ("to elevate").
- anokí.** "La Ley" (Attias 81). = I (the first word of the Ten Commandments). From the Hebrew אֲנֹכִי ("a-no-hi") Benoliel spells it Anoif (ballad 2) and translates it as Yo soy.
- ayegó, ayegues.** "Isaac II" (Attias 128). = BRING NEAR, LIFT. In modern Spanish, the definition of allegar that applies here is: "acercar una cosa a otra." Expressions such as ayegó por alzación and lo ayegues por gorbán ("offering") are an attempt to approximate the literal meaning of God's order as phrased in the Scriptures: "LIFT HIM UP (on the altar) as an offering" (Genesis 22:2).
- barbé.** "Isaac I" (AL). Abbreviated form of barbej.
- barbej.** "Isaac I" (Bn,MR1,Ca). = SHEEP, RAM. From the Latin vervex which was eventually substituted in Spain with carnarius. Other forms in Judeo-Spanish are barbex, barbez, barvés, barbel and barber. Benoliel italicizes the "j" and defines it as morueco, carnero padre. García Figueras gives cordero as the translation.
- barbel.** "Isaac I" (GF,MR2). Variant of barbej.
- bárber.** "Isaac I" (LP). Variant of barbej.
- barbex.** "Isaac I" (ML). Alternate form of barbej.
- barvex.** "Isaac II" (Attias 128). Alternate form of barbej.
- besorá.** "Isaac II" (Attias 128). NEWS, TIDINGS. From the Hebrew בְּשׂוּרָא. Attias gives noticia as the Spanish equivalent. Benoliel adds generalmente buena. Cantera translates it as albricias.
- cade.** "Isaac I" (Bn). Apocope of casa de. This is very common in Hakitfa. Benoliel gives numerous examples: "Está en cade la vezina."
- corado.** "Isaac I" (Be). honrado. Transcription most probably formed by contact with final "c" of preceding word: Isaac horrado > Isaac corado.

corbán. "Isaac I" (Be). = SACRIFICE, OFFERING. May also be spelled gorbán or korbán. From the Hebrew קרבן. Cantera's translation is ofrenda, sacrificio.

deklaro. "Meam Loez". = COMMENTARY. Pascual Recuero explains it as an archaic form of the word declaración. Nehama's definition is more thorough ("deklaro = commentaire, explication, glose, éclaircissement; interprétation d'un texte obscur").

Dió. "Isaac I" (Bn,ML,MR,Ca,AL). = GOD. Alternate form of Dios often used by Spanish-speaking Jews to stress their monotheism. As Corominas explains, it is usually accompanied by the article el: "los judíos españoles [acusaban] a los cristianos de ser politeístas, ... en su dialecto empleaban ellos 'el Dío' para nombrar a Jehová..." ("Dios", Diccionario crítico etimológico...). In most of our ballad texts, the stress has shifted to the "o" (el Dió). Larrea Palacín and García Figueras fully modernize it to el Dios.

El. "Pecado Original" (Benoliel 10). = GOD, THE LORD. Abbreviated form of Elohim אֱלֹהִים. Benoliel translates it as Dios. Cantera considers it an ellipsis of El Adón and adds Señor to the explanation.

encapillado. "Isaac I" (Bn,ML,MR,LP,Ca,Be,AL) = SHROUDED. Adjective form of encapillarse ("to cover oneself"), it is often transcribed as encapiado, which Alvar explains as "cubierto con la capa" (Poesía tradicional..., p. 228). In the context of our ballads, it refers to Abraham and Isaac dressed in mourning as they prepare to bury Sarah.

fesa. "Isaac I" (MR2). Variant of fuesa.

fuesa, fuessa. "Isaac I" (Bn,ML). = GRAVE. Archaic form from the Latin fossa. The two forms that have survived in modern Spanish are fosa and huesa.

gueburá. "Isaac I" (Bn,ML). = HEROISM, STRENGTH. From the Hebrew גבורה. Translated by Benoliel as fuerza viril, valentía. Cantera also gives poder, bravura, victoria.

haladró. "Isaac I" (GF). Metathesized form of alhadró.

Hodú ladonay ki top. "Isaac II" (Attias 128). = GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR HE IS GOOD. Direct transliteration from the Hebrew verse (Psalm 136). Cantera translates this phrase as alabad al Señor porque es bueno.

horrado. "Isaac I" (ML,MR1,MR2,LP,Ca,AL). Alternate form of honrado used in most of the Sephardic versions. As Miller points out, horrado "may well be influenced by ahorrado (TREASURED, PRIZED)."

imá. "Isaac I" (GF,MR1,MR2). A variant of umá. Martínez Ruiz's definition, based on Cantera's glossary ("mamá, del hebreo imma o del árabe") does not explain the verse Imá Abraham. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for MOTHER is usually stressed on the first rather than on the last syllable. See umá.

malairado. "Isaac I" (ALL except Ca). = UPSET, AGITATED. This is an alternate form of airado used in modern Spanish. In most versions, it appears as two words (mal airado).

malaj. "Isaac I" (Bn). = ANGEL. From the Hebrew מלאך. Cantera translates it as angel, mensajero. It is perhaps because of its secondary meaning that it replaces the mecatreh of most other versions.

malak. "Nacimiento de Abraham I" (Attias 127). Alternate spelling of malaj.

mecate. "Isaac I" (GF). Assimilated form of mecatreh.

mecatreh. "Isaac I" (ML,MR1). = ACCUSER, GOSSIPER. Cantera gives a very complete explanation: "El vocablo, según el Diccionario de la Academia Española, quizá derive del árabe مكاتريف magatref 'petulante'. Benoliel lo deriva del hebreo. Sería un participio מגטרף del verbo denominativo מגטרף hebreo-rabínico, derivado de מגטרף 'acusador' de origen griego. El sentido de la palabra MEKATREG sería 'maligno, nocivo, acusador, perseguidor' según Benoliel. Coincide casi exactamente con malsín, acusador, calumniador. Y ese sería el significado primario de mequetrefe (más bien que de petulante), que hoy denota, como dice bien el referido Diccionario, hombre entremetido, bullicioso y de poco provecho." García Figueras' translation of Satanás is not at all far-fetched. Jastrow indicates that mecatreg is used in the Talmud not only to mean "accuser" but also to refer to Satan's evildoings. He traces it back to

the verb **לְהַאֲדִיף** meaning "to denounce, bring charges; to incite anger against."

mecatrej. "Isaac I" (MR2,Ca). Alternate spelling of mecatreh. Catalán capitalizes it as if it were a title or a name.

mehara. "Nacimiento de Abraham I" (Attias 127). = CAVE. From the Hebrew **מְהָרָא**. The spelling given by Attias does not account for the usual stress on the last syllable. A more standardized spelling would be meharâ. Benoliel indicates a guttural sound in the Hakitía pronunciation by doubling the vowel: meàarâ. [See Phonetics: the guttural "h"] The translations into Spanish are diverse: gruta (Molho); cueva, caverna (Cantera); cementerio (Benoliel).

mejatrê. "Isaac I" (Be). Variant of mecatreh.

mejatreh. "Isaac I" (LP). Variant of mecatreh.

mientes. See "parar mientes."

miría. "Isaac I" (LP). = LOOK. According to Miller, this is an "assimilated form of miradla > miraila > mirilla, the last form as miría in Ladino." Cantera suggests otherwise: "No nos parecen seguras las transcripciones de dicho colector. Quizá el vocablo es el arameico **ܡܪܝܐ** mārē 'maestro, señor'". Miller's explanation, which corresponds to that of Larrea, seems to make more sense.

Misraín. "Consagración de Moisés II" (Larrea 44). = EGYPT. Approximation of the Hebrew **מִצְרַיִם** (Mi-ts-ra-yim).

mižrit. "Nacimiento de Moisés" (Attias 77). = EGYPTIAN. This is the female form, from the Hebrew **מִצְרַיִם**. Attias tries to reproduce the "ts" sound ("ž") of the original Hebrew as does Cantera (mišrit) although it is usually lost in Judeo-Spanish.

mižvot. "La Ley" (Attias 81). = COMMANDS, PRECEPTS. From the Hebrew **מִצְוֹת**, plural of mizva **מִצְוָה**. Cantera translates it as prescripción religiosa, ordenanza, mandamiento de la Ley mosaica; Molho adds y el mérito de su cumplimiento. Benoliel, who spells it misvá, misvot (to reflect the Hakitía pronunciation), stresses its broader meaning: "...toda obra de caridad o humanidad."

- nabí. "Nacimiento de Moisés (Attias 77). = PROPHET. From the Hebrew נ'בִי ("na-vi"), as in Eliahu hanaví ("Elijah the Prophet").
- ogaño. "Isaac II" (Attias 128). = IN THIS YEAR. From the Latin hoc anno, this expression is still used in modern Spanish (hogaño, opposite of antaño).
- paitanim. "Ginzberg". author of piyyutim (liturgical poems).
- parar mientes. "Isaac I" (ALL versions). = TO BE MINDFUL OF. Pascual Recuero defines miente as pensamiento, suposición. The verbal idiom has many shades of meaning in Judeo-Spanish: "parar (poner) en su mente = considerar, pensar detenidamente, prestar atención," says P. Recuero. According to Nehama, "parar myentes = fixer son attention, observer avec soin, être attentif; être en état d'alerte"; García Figueras translates it simply as tenerle en cuenta.
- parašah. "Meam Loez". Torah portion of the week.
- Parhó. "Consagración de Moisés II" (Larrea 44). = PHARAOH. Approximation of the Hebrew פֶּרֶחַ ("par-'o") which became faraón in modern Spanish.
- qorbán. "Isaac II" (Attias 128). Alternate spelling of corbán.
- rabbenu. "Vocacion de Moisés" (Attias 78). = OUR TEACHER. From the Hebrew רַבֵּנוּ, epithet commonly associated with Moses. Benoliel and Cantera give nuestro maestro as the Spanish equivalent; the more conservative Attias translates it as nuestro Rabí.
- rigma. "Isaac II" (Attias 128). = REDEEMS. According to Miller, "from the Latin redimire and Castilian redimir (perhaps influenced by regenerare and regere to create the Ladino form)." Danon defines it as salvar, librar.
- rigmición. "Rahel nuestra madre" (Attias 130). = REDEMPTION. From the Judeo-Spanish verb form rigmir. (See rigma).
- rizá. "Rahel nuestra madre" (Attias 130). = KERCHIEF. Attias and Pascual Recuero translate it as pañuelo. Nehama points out that it is a form of the Turkish word rido, meaning "handkerchief."

saddika. "Isaac I" (Bn). = SAINT, PIOUS ONE. Feminine form of the Hebrew צַדִּיק ("tsad-dik") which Hassán translates as justo. Benoliel accounts for the feminine version in Hakitía and defines it as justa, piadosa, santa. But Nehama's definition is perhaps the most complete: "sadiK = personne d'une loyauté scrupuleuse, attentive à observer toutes les recommandations de la Loi; très pieuse, très vertueuse."

tate. "Isaac I" (ALL except Ca). = BE STILL. Assimilated form of estáte (from the verb estar). In the Salonikan version of the "Isaac" ballad, we find a less eroded form: "State, state, tú, Abram." It continues to exist in modern Spanish in such colloquial expressions as tate quieto. In another context, Alvar translates this expression as poco a poco.¹⁸

topó. "Nacimiento de Abraham I" (Attias 127). = FOUND. Topar, which is still used in modern Castilian, often takes the place of encontrar and hallar in Judeo-Spanish.

truje. "Isaac I" (Ca). See truxe.

truxe. "Isaac I" (ML). = I BROUGHT. Archaic form of traje, first person preterite of traer. Pascual Recuero accounts for this particular spelling.

truxí. "Isaac I" (Bn). See truxe.

tual. "Isaac I" (ML,GF,Ca). = ROPE. Benoliel lists it as a word of Arabic origin (XIV, p. 518) and translates it as cuerda.

umá. "Isaac I" (ML,GF,Be). = AND HOW. Based on a combination of the Hebrew conjunction ו ("v") 'and', which becomes ו ("u") before the letter מ ("mem"), and the preposition מָה ("mah") 'what, how'. The imá of other versions seems to be a variant of umá, probably formed by the substitution of the Hebrew conjunction with its Spanish equivalent y. This usage seems more logical within the context of our ballad than Cantera's translation of imá as "mother" or Nehama's definition of umá as "people, nation."

verbor. "Isaac I" (Ca). Alternate transcription of fervor which is the form used in every other version.

ẖekut. "Nacimiento de Abraham I" (Attias 127). = MERIT.
From the Hebrew מַעַדְת , it is also spelled zejut
and sejut in Judeo-Spanish ballad texts. Molho
defines it as mérito; Cantera adds justicia,
favor.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

- ¹ Henri Besso, "Judaico-Spanish - Its Growth and Decline" in The Sephardi Heritage, ed. Richard Barnett (New York: Ktav, 1971), p. 606.
- ² Besso, p. 608.
- ³ David Barrocas, "The Spanish Jewish Dialect" in Ladino, Judezmo and the Spanish Jewish Dialect (New York: Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, 1976), p. 132.
- ⁴ Mair José Benardete, quoted by David Barrocas in "The Spanish Jewish Dialect", Ladino, Judezmo..., p. 132.
- ⁵ Benardete, Ladino, Judezmo..., p. 132.
- ⁶ "LADINO" in Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana, pp. 492-493.
- ⁷ "LADINO" in E. J. C., p. 493.
- ⁸ Pascual Pascual Recuero, quoted by Raymond Renard in Sépharad (Mons, Belgium: Annales Universitaires de Mons, 1966, p. 111, n. 3).
- ⁹ José Benoliel, "Dialecto judeo-español-marroquí o Hakitía", Boletín de la Real Academia Española, XIII (1926), p. 233.
- ¹⁰ Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 214.
- ¹¹ Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 209.
- ¹² Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 210.
- ¹³ Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 210.
- ¹⁴ Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 213.
- ¹⁵ Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 213.
- ¹⁶ Benoliel, "Hakitía", BRAE, XIII, p. 214.
- ¹⁷ Manuel Alvar López, Cantos de boda judeo-españoles (Madrid: C. S. I. C., Instituto Arias Montano, 1971), p. 180.
- ¹⁸ Alvar, Cantos de boda, p. 205.



ISAAC SAVED BY THE HAND OF GOD.
SPANISH MANUSCRIPT, 12TH CENTURY

Golden Haggadah, BL, Add. 27210

Barcelona, c. 1320

ויעקב איבערצייגט

והנה אר

שכי וצלה לידו ייחוד



THE GOLDEN HAGGADAH
Isaac saved by the angel



fol. 93v: The sacrifice of Isaac

Hispano-Moresque Haggadah
(Castile, c. 1300)



Alba Bible Illustration
 Early 15th century



SARAJEVO HAGGADAH
 Bottom illustration:
 Isaac carrying the firewood



SARAJEVO HAGGADAH
 Top illustration:
 Isaac on the altar

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Aarne, Antti. The Types of the Folktale. Transl. Stith Thompson. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961.
- "Akedah." Encyclopedia Judaica. 1971 ed.
- Alcalay, Reuben. The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary. Jerusalem: Massada Publishing, 1981.
- Algazi, Léon. Chants séphardis. London: World Sephardi Federation, 1958.
- Alvar López, Manuel. "Amnón Y Tamar en el romancero marroquí." Vox Romanica, XV (1956), pp. 241-258.
- , Cantos de boda judeo-españoles. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, 1971.
- , Endechas judeo-españolas. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, Sección de Estudios Sefardíes, 1969.
- , Poesía tradicional de los judíos españoles. Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1966.
- , El Romancero. Tradicionalidad y pervivencia. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1970.
- , Textos hispánicos dialectales: Antología histórica. 2 vols. Revista de Filología Española, Añejo 73, (1960).
- Angel, Marc. La América. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982.
- Anglés, H. "Jewish Music in Medieval Spain." Yuval, I (1968), pp. 207-227.
- Armistead, Samuel G. "Recent Developments in Judeo-Spanish Ballad Scholarship." In Studies in Jewish Folklore. Ed. Frank Talmage. Cambridge, Mass: The Association, 1980. pp. 21-32.

- , "Romancero Studies." Corónica, 8 (1979), pp. 57-66.
- , Diego Catalán and A. Sánchez Romeralo, eds. El Romancero en la tradición oral moderna. Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal y Rectorado de la Universidad de Madrid, 1972.
- , Diego Catalán, and A. Sánchez Romeralo, eds. El Romancero hoy: Poética. (Coloquio Internacional, University of California, Davis / Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal). Madrid: Gredos, 1979.
- , et al. El Romancero judeo-español en el Archivo Menéndez Pidal. (Catálogo-Índice de romances y canciones). 3 vols. Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1978.
- Armistead, Samuel G. and Joseph H. Silverman. "El antiguo Romancero sefardí: citas de romances en himnarios hebreos." Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, 30, no. 2 (1981), pp. 488-489, 500-504.
- , "Christian Elements and De-Christianization in the Sephardic Romancero." In Collected Studies in Honor of Américo Castro's Eightieth Year. Ed. M. P. Hornik. Oxford: Lincombe Lodge Research Library, 1965, pp. 21-38.
- , "La colección Nahón de romances judeo-españoles de Tánger." Corónica, 5 (1976), pp. 7-16.
- , Diez romances hispánicos en un manuscrito sefardí de la isla de Rodas. Pisa: Istituto di Letteratura Spagnola e Hispano-Americana, 1962.
- , "Hispanic Balladry Among the Sephardic Jews of the West Coast." Western Folklore, 19 (1960), pp. 229-244.
- , The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacov Abraham Yoná. Berkeley-L.A.: University of California Press, 1971.
- , eds. Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York. (Collected by M.J. Bernadete). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- , "The Judeo-Spanish 'Romancero' in Israel." Corónica, 7 (1978), pp. 105-106.

- , "A New Sephardic 'Romancero' from Salonika." Romance Philology, 16 (1962), pp. 59-82.
- , "Para un gran Romancero sefardí." In Actas del Primer Simposio de Estudios Sefardíes. Eds. Iacob M. Hassan et al. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, Sección de Estudios Sefardíes, 1970. pp. 281-294.
- , "El romancero hispánico entre los sefardíes estado-unidenses." Davar, 102 (1964), pp. 17-31.
- , eds. Romances judeo-españoles de Tánger. (Collected by Zarita Nahón). Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1977.
- , "Three Hispano-Jewish romances from Amsterdam." In Medieval, Renaissance and Folklore Studies in Honor of John Esten Keller. Ed. Joseph R. Jones. Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 1980, pp. 243-254.
- , Tres calas en el Romancero sefardí. Madrid: Castalia, 1979.
- , and Iacob M. Hassán. Seis romancerillos de cordel sefardíes. Madrid: Castalia, 1981.
- , and Israel J. Katz. "Judeo-Spanish Folk Poetry from Morocco: The Boas-Nahón Collection." In Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council (1979), pp. 59-75.
- , and J.M. Solà-Solé. Hispania Judaica: Studies on the History, Language and Literature of the Jews in the Hispanic World. Barcelona: Puvill, 1980.
- Attias, Moshe. Cancionero judeo-español. Jerusalem: Centro de Estudios sobre el judaísmo de Salónica, Tel-Aviv, 1972.
- , Romancero sefardí. Jerusalem: Instituto Ben-Zewi, Universidad Hebrea, 1961.
- Avenary, Hanoch. "Cantos españoles antiguos mencionados en la literatura hebrea." Anuario Musical, 25 (1971), pp. 67-79.
- Baer, Yitzhak. A History of the Jews in Christian Spain. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961-6

- Barnett, Richard, ed. The Sephardi Heritage. Vol. 1. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971.
- Baron, Salo Wittmayer. A Social and Religious History of the Jews. 2nd ed. 18 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952.
- Barrocas, David. "The Spanish Jewish Dialect." In Ladino, Judezmo and the Spanish Jewish Dialect. New York: Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, 1976, pp. 131-157.
- Bascom, William R. "The Four Functions of Folklore." In The Study of Folklore. Ed. Alan Dundes. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965, pp. 279-298.
- Beatie, Bruce. "Oral-Traditional Composition in the Spanish Romancero of the Sixteenth Century." Journal of the Folklore Institute, I (1964), pp. 92-113.
- Ben-Ami, Issachar, ed. Proceedings of the First International Congress for the Study of the Heritage of Sephardic and Oriental Jewry. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1982.
- Benardete, Mair José. Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews. 2nd. ed. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press for the Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, 1982.
- , "Los romances judeo-españoles en Nueva York." Diss. Columbia University 1923.
- Bénichou, Paul. Creación poética en el Romancero tradicional. Madrid: Gredos, 1968.
- , Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos. Madrid: Castalia, 1968.
- , "Romances judeo-españoles de Marruecos." Revista de Filología Hispánica, 6 (1944), pp. 36-76, 105-138, 255-279, 313-381.
- Benmayor, Rina. "New Directions in the Study of Oral Literature." Corónica, 7:1 (1978), pp. 39-42.
- , "Oral Narrative and the Comparative Method: The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yoná." Romance Philology, 31:3 (1978), pp. 501-521.

- . Romances judeo-españoles de Oriente. Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal: Gredos, 1979.
- . "Social Determinants in Poetic Transmission or a Wide-Angle Lens for Romancero Scholarship." In El Romancero hoy. Vol. 3. Eds. Armistead, Catalán, Sánchez Romeralo. Madrid: Gredos, 1979, pp. 153-165.
- Benoliel, José. "Dialecto judeo-español marroquí o hakití." Boletín de la Real Academia Española, XIII (1926), pp. 209-233, 343-363, 517-538; XIV (1927), pp. 137-168, 196-234, 357-373, 566-580; XIV (1928), pp. 47-61, 188-223.
- Berlin, Adele. The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Besso, Henri. "Judaico-Spanish: Its Growth and Decline." In The Sephardi Heritage. Ed. Richard Barnett. New York: Ktav, 1971, pp. 604-635.
- Biblia en lengua española traducida palabra por palabra de la verdad Hebrayca por muy excelentes letrados, vista y examinada por el officio Inquisicion (Ferrara, 1553). Amsterdam, 1630.
- Biblia traducida del hebreo al castellano por Rabi Mose Arragel de Guadalfajara (1422-1433) y publicada por el duque de Berwick y de Alba. Madrid, 1920.
- Bidjarano, Haim. "Los judíos españoles de Oriente, lengua y literatura popular." Boletín de la Institución Libre de enseñanza, IX (1885), pp. 23-27.
- Bunis, David. Sephardic Studies. A Research Bibliography. New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1981.
- Cantera, Francisco . "Hebraísmos en la poesía sefardí." In Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal. Vol. V. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954, pp. 69-98.
- Carmi, T. The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse. New York: Penguin Books, 1981
- Castro, Américo. España en su historia. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1948.
- Castro, Américo. La realidad histórica de España. Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1962.

- Catalán, Diego. "Análisis electrónico de la creación poética oral: El programa Romancero en el Computer Center de UCSD." In Homenaje a la memoria de don Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino. Madrid: Castalia, 1975. pp. 157-194.
- , "La creación tradicional en la crítica reciente." In El romancero en la tradición oral moderna. Eds. S. G. Armistead et al. Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1972. pp. 153-165.
- , Por campos del Romancero. Madrid: Gredos, 1970.
- Cejador y Frauca, Julio. Vocabulario medieval castellano. New York: Las Américas Publishing, 1968.
- Colson, F. H. and G. Whitaker, transl. Philo. 10 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958-68.
- Conroy, Patricia, ed. Ballads and Ballad Research. Seattle: Washington University Press, 1978.
- Corominas, J. Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana. Berna: Editorial Francke, 1954.
- Cossío, José María de, & T. Maza Solano. Romancero popular de la montaña. 2 vols. Santander: Talleres tipográficos de la Librería moderna, 1933-34.
- Danon, Abraham. "Recueil des romances judéo-espagnoles chantées en Turquie." Revue des Études Juives, 32 (1896), pp. 102-123, 263-275; 33 (1897), pp. 122-139, 255-268.
- Davidson, Israel. Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry. New York: Ktav, 1970.
- Diccionario de la lengua española. Madrid: Real Academia Española / Espasa-Calpe, 1970.
- Di Stefano, G. Sincronía e diacronía nel Romanzero. Pisa: Istituto di letteratura spagnola e ispano-americana dell'Università di Pisa, 1967.
- Dundes, Alan. "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory." In Analytic Essays in Folklore. The Hague: Mouton, 1975, pp. 17-27.

- . "The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation." Journal of American Folklore, 78 (1965), pp. 136-142.
- Durán, Agustín. Romancero General. 2nd ed. (Vols. X and XVI of "Biblioteca de Autores Españoles") Madrid: Imprenta de Rivadeneyra, 1848-51.
- Finnegan, Ruth. Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Flores, Pedro de, comp. Romancero General. 2 vols. New York: De Vinne Press, 1904.
- Fuentes, Alonso de. "Libro de los quarenta cantos...divididos en cuatro partes." Anales de la Universidad de Chile, 98 (1897), pp. 273-285.
- Galante, Abraham. "Quatorze romances judéo-espagnoles." Revue Hispanique, X (1903), pp. 594-606.
- García Figueras, Tomás. "El sacrificio de Isaac." In Homenaje a Millás-Valllicrosa, I. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954-56, pp. 697-700.
- Gersh, Harry. The Sacred Books of the Jews. New York: Stein and Day, 1968.
- Gil, Rodolfo. Romancero judeo-español. Madrid: Imprenta Alemana Fuéncarral, 1911.
- Ginzberg, Louis. The Legends of the Jews. 7 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968.
- Glaser, Edward. "Un patriarca bíblico en el Romancero." Sefarad, 16 (1956), pp. 113-123
- Goldberg, Harriet. Review of Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New York, eds. Armistead and Silverman. Romance Philology, 37, no. 2 (Nov 1983), pp. 230-235.
- González, William H. "Oral/Traditional Arts." Corónica, 5:1 (1976) (Fall), pp. 46-47.
- González Llubera, Ignacio. "Three Jewish Spanish Ballads in MS British Museum, Add 26967." Medium Aevum, VII (1938), pp. 15-28.

- González Palencia, Angel, ed. Romancero General. 2 vols. (Vols. 3 and 4 of "Clásicos Españoles"). Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1947.
- Harrison, G.B., ed. The Bible for Students of Literature and Art. New York: Doubleday, 1964.
- Hassán, Iacob M. "Más hebraísmos en la poesía sefardí de Marruecos: Realidad y ficción léxicas." Sefarad, 37 (1977), pp. 373-428.
- Hemsi, Alberto. Coplas sefardíes. 10 vols. Alexandria, Egypt: Édition orientale de musique, 1932.
- Hertz, J. H., ed. The Pentateuch and Haftorahs. London: Soncino Press, 1970.
- Holtz, Barry W., ed. Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts. New York: Summit Books, 1984.
- The Holy Scriptures. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966.
- "Isaac." The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- Jastrow, Marcus. Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature. New York: The Judaica Press, 1971.
- Kamen, Henry. The Spanish Inquisition. New York: New American Library, 1966.
- Kasher, Menahem. Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation. Vol. 3. Transl. Harry Freedman. New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1957.
- Katz, Israel J. "Judeo-Spanish Traditional Ballads from Jerusalem." Diss. University of California 1967.
- Keller, John Esten, ed. El libro de los exenplos. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1961.
- Motif-Index of Mediaeval Spanish Exempla. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949.
- "Ladino." Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana. 1949 ed.

- Larrea Palacín, Arcadio de. Canciones Rituales Hispano-Judías. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1954.
- . Romances de Tetuán. 2 vols. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1952.
- Lazar, Moshe, ed. The Sephardic Tradition: Ladino and Spanish-Jewish Literature. New York: Norton, 1972. pp. 13-72.
- Lehner, Frederick. "The Influence of the Bible on European Literature." In The Jews. Vol. III. Ed. Louis Finkelstein. New York: Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 408-422.
- Leite de Vasconcellos, J. "Dois romances peninsulares." Revista de Filología Española, IX (1922), pp. 395-98.
- . Romanceiro português. Coimbra: Por ordem da Universidade, 1958-60.
- Levy, Isaac. Antología de liturgia judeo-española. 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1965.
- . Chants judéo-espagnols. 4 vols. London: World Sephardi Federation, 1959.
- Librowicz, Oro Anahory. Florilegio de romances sefardíes de la diáspora. Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1980.
- Llamas, P. José, O.S.A., ed. Biblia medieval romanceada judío-cristiana. Madrid: Instituto Francisco Suárez, 1950.
- Madrigal, Miguel de. Segunda parte del Romancero General. 2 vols. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Filología Hispánica, 1948.
- Maeso, David Gonzalo and Pascual Recuero, eds. Meam Loez, el gran comentario bíblico sefardí. 3 vols. Madrid: Gredos, 1964-74.
- Martínez Ruiz, José. "Poesía sefardí de carácter tradicional." Archivum, XIII (1963), pp. 79-215.
- Matenko, Percy and Samuel Sloan. "The Aqedath Jishaq: a sixteenth century Yiddish Epic." In Two Studies in Yiddish Culture. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968

- Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. Catálogo del Romancero judeo-español. (Excerpt from Cultura Española). Madrid: Imprenta Ibérica, 1907.
- . "Cómo vive un romance; dos ensayos sobre tradicionalidad." Revista de Filología Española, Añejo 60 (1954), pp. 277...
- . Flor nueva de romances viejos. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1965.
- . El Romancero; teoría e investigaciones. Madrid: Editorial Paez, 1928.
- . Romancero hispánico: Teoría e historia. 2 vols. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953.
- . Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas. 9 vols. Madrid: Gredos, 1957-78.
- . Los romances de América y otros estudios. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1941.
- Menéndez y Pelayo, Marcelino. Antología de Poetas Líricos Castellanos, vols. IX and X. Madrid: Perlado, Paez y Ca., 1913.
- "Midrash." Encyclopedia Judaica. 1971 ed.
- Midrash Rabbah. Eds. Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon. New York: Soncino Press, 1983.
- Miller, Royce W. "The Biblical Ballads of the Sephardic Jews." Hispanic Review, 37 (1969), pp. 352-361.
- . "A Linguistic and Literary Study of the Sephardic Romancero: Historical, Moorish, Carolingian, Biblical and Classical Ballads." 2 vols. Diss. George Washington University, St. Louis 1967.
- Mirrerr-Singer, Louise. The Language of Evaluation. A Sociolinguistic Approach to the Story of Pedro el Cruel in Ballad and Chronicle. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1986.
- Molho, Michael. Literatura sefardita de Oriente. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, 1960.
- . "Tres romances de tema bíblico y dos canciones de cuna." Comentario, 4 (1957), pp. 64-70.

- Nascimento, Braulio do. "Eufemismo e Criação Poética no Romanceiro Tradicional." In El romancero en la tradición oral moderna. Eds. Armistead and Silverman. Madrid, 1972. pp. 233-275.
- , "Processos de Variação do Romance." Revista Brasileira do Folclore, IV (1964), pp. 59-125.
- Nehama, Joseph. Dictionnaire judéo-espagnol. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, 1977.
- Netanyahu, Benzion. The Marranos of Spain. New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966.
- Neuman, Abraham A. The Jews in Spain. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942.
- Ontañón de Lope, P. "Veintisiete romances del siglo XVI." Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, XV (1961), pp. 180-192.
- Ortega, Manuel. Los hebreos en Marruecos. Madrid: Editorial Hispano Africana, 1929.
- Pascual Recuero, P. Diccionario básico ladino-español. Barcelona: Ameller, 1977.
- Patai, Raphael. Gates to the Old City: A Book of Jewish Legends. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981.
- Paulo, Amílcar. "Os marranos em Trás-os-Montes (Reminiscências Judio-Portuguesas)." Douro-Litoral, 7 (1956), pp. 523-560, 627-660.
- , Romanceiro criptojudáico: Subsídios para o estudo do folclore marrano. Bragança: Escola Tipográfica, 1969.
- Petersen, Suzanne H. "Creación poética. Nuevos métodos de estudio." In El romancero en la tradición oral moderna. Eds. S. G. Armistead et al. Madrid: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1972, pp. 170-181.
- Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer. Transl. Gerald Friedlander. New York: Hermon Press, 1965.

- Porter, James. "Principles of Ballad Classification: A Suggestion for Regional Cataloguing of Ballad Style." Jahrbuch fur Volksliedforschung, 25 (1980), pp. 11-23.
- Propp, Vladimir. Morphology of the Folktale. 2nd. ed. Transl. Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.
- Rechnitz, Florette M. "Tres romances de Tánger." Estudios Sefardíes, 1 (1978) pp. 121-128.
- Renard, Raymond. Sépharad (Le monde et la langue judéo-espagnole des Séphardim). Mons, Belgium: Annales Universitaires, 1966.
- Rodríguez-Moñino, Antonio. Diccionario bibliográfico de pliegos sueltos poéticos. Madrid: Castalia, 1970.
- , ed. Silva de varios romances. Valencia: Editorial Castalia, 1953.
- , ed. Silva de romances (Zaragoza, 1550-1551). Zaragoza: Publicaciones de la Cátedra Zaragoza, 1970.
- Roth, Cecil. The Spanish Inquisition. London: R. Hale, Limited, 1937.
- Samelson, William. "Romances and Songs of the Sephardim." In The Sephardi Heritage. Ed. Richard D. Barnett. New York: Ktav Publishing, 1971, pp. 527-551.
- Sánchez Romeralo, Antonio. "Razón y sinrazón en la creación tradicional." In El Romancero hoy: Poética. Madrid: Gredos, 1979. pp. 13-28.
- Sefer HaYashar or The Book of Jasher. Transl. Mordecai Manuel Noah. New York: Hermon Press, 1972.
- Spiegel, Shalom. The Last Trial (On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice). New York: Pantheon Books, 1967.
- Sternberg, Meir. The Poetics of Biblical Narrative. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Stolz, Benjamin and R. S. Shannon, eds. Oral Literature and the Formula. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976.

- Suárez Fernández, Luis. Judíos españoles en la Edad Media. Madrid: Rialp, 1980.
- Szertics, Joseph. Tiempo y verbo en el Romancero viejo. 2nd. ed. Madrid: Gredos, 1974.
- Thompson, Stith. Motif-Index of Folk Literature. 6 vols. Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1955-1966.
- Van Praag, Jonas Andries. "Dos comedias sefarditas." Neophilologus, XV (1939), pp. 23-24.
- Weber de Kurlat, Frida, ed. Diego Sánchez de Badajoz. Recopilación en metro (Sevilla, 1554). Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1968.
- Webber, Ruth H. "Ballad Openings: Narrative and Formal Functions." In El Romancero hoy: Poética. Madrid: Gredos, 1979. pp. 55-64.
- , "Formulistic Diction in the Spanish Ballad." Univ of California. Publications in Modern Philology, XXXIV (1951), pp. 175-278.
- Wiener, Leo. "Songs of the Spanish Jews in the Balkan Peninsula." Modern Philology, I (1903), pp. 205-216, 259-74.
- Wiesel, Elie. Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends. New York: Random House, 1976.
- Wischnitzer, Rachel. "Judaism and Art." In The Jews. Vol. III. Ed. Louis Finkelstein. New York: Schocken Books, 1971, pp. 154-177.
- Yassif, Eli, ed. The Sacrifice of Isaac: Studies in the Development of a Literary Tradition. Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1979.
- Zafrani, Haim. Poésie Juive en Occident Musulman. Paris: Geuthner, 1977.
- Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment. Trans. & intro. Daniel Chanan Matt. New York: Paulist Press, 1983.